Eros & Psyche

by RZZMG

Summary

Draco Malfoy, Blaise Zabini, Theodore Nott, Pansy Parkinson, Daphne Greengrass, and Tracey Davis all challenge Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, Ron Weasley, Ginny Weasley, Lavender Brown, and Seamus Finnigan to play EROS & PSYCHE, a scandalous magical
It's Slytherin vs. Gryffindor, pride vs. desire, male vs. female. Who wins in the game of hearts & amour... and is the game as harmless as the players all believe it to be?

**WINNER - "BEST SMUT: WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS" & NOMINATION - "BEST WORK-IN-PROGRESS: UP TO NO GOOD" - 2017 GRANGER ENCHANTED SURVIVORS-ENCHANTED AWARDS ON FACEBOOK**

Notes

This is a FIC CHALLENGE from NEVILLES_GIRL! Here was her criteria:

1. Dramione – hot, hot sex – lots of it
2. AU, during Seventh Year
3. Harry, Ron, Pansy, Blaise & Seamus must also appear
4. A contest or bet of some kind must be the main plot
5. Characters that can't appear in speaking roles: the Dursleys
6. You have to use at least 20 song titles or lyrics in the story somehow
7. Lots of angst and romance
8. These words must appear: dangle, candle light, sex toys, Save The Queen, Veela, and Quidditch
9. I want a scene with a sexy massage, a scene using food in a sexual manner, and a scene with a kiss that leads to love
10. Happy ending

Revision 1.0 - 2 August, 2010 (*posted on Fanfiction.net)
Revision 2.0 - 2 August, 2012

**STORY DETAILS:** Hogwarts-era, 7th Year -Altemate Universe (events after novel #4 never happened; Cedric Diggory didn't die, Harry won the Tri-Wizard Tournament, Voldemort was not resurrected, and there was no war). Years five, six and seven were filled with regular teenage angst stuff for our cast. The Room of Requirement was discovered by the Weasley twins years back, and now all of the students know about it (they keep it a secret from the teachers and Filch, obviously). Quidditch was a bigger deal, too (because it's not like there's anything else major going on), so everyone on team has bulked up for the competition over the years (in other words, those who play are more of an athletic build and less lean/willowy as most wizards would be). Also, for the sake of this fic, all of the main guys featured play Quidditch (even those who didn't in the novels), and Ginny plays Quidditch. Characters are OOC (out-of-character), and I'm taking serious creative license here because it's a smut-fun fic and none of these character hook-ups would happen otherwise. You're forewarned! Card game based upon an idea I had for "La Cerise: The Sweetest Cherry" fic, but decided to scrap. At last, I can use it finally! This will be a multi-part fic.
Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, Scotland

Gryffindor Boys Dorms - Harry Potter's room

Wednesday, June 10, 1998 (early evening)

Re-reading the note that Malfoy had passed to Harry during Potions class this afternoon, Hermione took a deep breath and slowly let it out, her mind a riot of thoughts over its contents.

~.~.~.~.

\textit{E&P cards}

Sat. 7pm, RoR

\textit{Pick 3 F, 3 M – over 16 – must be Gryfs!}

\textit{No cherries.}
Too chicken?

~.~.~.~

He’d included the card game’s rule book with the note, which Hermione had already skimmed.

Godric Save the Queen, was that no-count Ferret serious? He really wanted a six-on-six, evenly gender-mixed game of *Eros & Psyche* this Saturday night in the Room of Requirement, pitting his Housemates against the Gryffindors?

She snorted in partial amusement, partial incredulity. The blond git was so obvious sometimes! Clearly, Malfoy wanted to get even for losing the Quidditch House Cup this last weekend, their last game of their high school experience. She bet it just ate at the pure-blood, overachieving snob that Harry Potter, a half-blood who did so extraordinarily well in classes and out on the Quidditch pitch on mostly sheer talent, had beaten him one final, irrefutable time. Now, he was apparently looking for revenge.

Bloody hell, that meant he’d do anything to win, wouldn’t he?

Having intimate knowledge of the snake's most afflicting moves, for she had been on the receiving end of his scathing taunts, cruel looks and occasional hexes more than anyone else in school, she wondered if she could really do this?

*Eros* was a legendary magical card game that had its origins in the decadently wicked Masked Gentlemen’s Clubs of the nineteenth century in England. The objective was rather simple: you played from the time the first card was turned until the final question card was read, and all turns had come to a close.

More specifically, the game was played with an even number of participants on two teams, split between genders, and was typically engaged in a location that would remain secret to all except to the currently engaged players. It was comprised of four blank decks—so named *Partners*, *Interrogations*, *Forfeits*, and *Deeds*—the content of which was determined in advance by the players themselves.

The first deck, *Partners*, was simply a deck made up of the names of all participants in the current game set. These cards were charmed to create a magically binding contract with anyone who signed their name to them; once you accomplished that, you were bound to play the current game set to its completion—much like *Jumanji* in that way, Hermione thought. The signatory release also bound you to an Oath of Secrecy; in effect, you were gagged from talking about the specifics of what happened in the game with any outsiders.

Once all players had signed their *Partners* cards, the women put theirs into a pile, which was then shuffled. The men—the *Eros* component to this whole shenanigan, as he represented the primordial God of Sexual Love—would then take turns drawing a card of his intended *Psyche*, the mythological woman Eros fell in love with. That witch would then remain the man's committed partner throughout the entirety of the game set.

After partners had been determined, each player was then given two blank *Interrogations* cards that he or she would fill-in with two questions of their choice. They were also given two blank *Forfeit* cards which he or she would assign a heinous punishment to, and two blank *Deeds* cards, from which he or she would dispense a delicious reward to balance out the punishment. This was done twenty-four hours in advance of the game's beginning, to give time for players to think up suitable content for their cards.
In the case of the Interrogations cards, the questions you made up were required to always start with the phrase, "If you had to..." What you asked after that was entirely up to your deranged, little mind. You wanted to be positive, however, that you would only write down a question that you wouldn't mind answering yourself, out loud, in front of all of the other players. The challenge was therefore to balance out your insane curiosity of the other players' secrets versus your own comfort level in dispensing your confidential information to those same people.

On the night of the actual game, everyone's Interrogations cards were put into a single deck and shuffled well. Then, taking turns in a clockwise direction, a player was to draw a card and read it aloud. Each question represented a 'round,' which would only end once all players had either answered the question, or refused to answer the question. There were consequences for either decision, of course.

For players who actually chose to answer the Interrogations question, they were compelled to do so with honesty, as the enchantment on the spelled deck coerced the truth from a person's mouth as if they'd been dosed with Veritaserum. When they completely answered the question, they were then allowed to draw from the Deeds deck. This set of cards was made up of suggested 'rewards' for the players who showed remarkable courage in answering the questions put to them, and because this compensation was determined by the players themselves in advance, the Deeds card drawn could vary between something as simple as a foot massage to something a little more risqué, such as claiming a kiss from your partner, to the full kit and caboodle of engaging in sex with your partner. The partner, in this case, had no choice but to submit to the Deeds card's requirements placed upon them or they would be required to bow out of the game, similar to the game 'Truth or Dare'.

If a partner forfeited the game, both players were 'retired,' with the surrendering half considered the 'loser' for their team's final number advantage.

To add to the excitement, the charm on the game itself allowed any number of accoutrements to magically appear as necessary to fulfill a Deeds card's requirements. Hermione was guessing that they just popped into the air and then were whisked away when no longer needed, although she had no idea how a card deck could be spelled to do such a thing, honestly. So, one could literally put just about anything down on a Deeds card and the magic would assure that any necessary items to fulfill that card's requirements would be made conveniently available.

On the other hand, if a person was uncomfortable answering a question from the Interrogations deck, they could choose to pass and draw instead from the Forfeits deck. The intent of this deck was to punish those who lacked courage. These cards were penalties made up by the players, too, and contained shocking and scandalous fines. Short of death, pretty much anything else was acceptable torture. The trick in writing up your Forfeits cards was to balance out what you wanted to discipline others with versus what you, yourself, would tolerate acting out, in case you picked your own card.

The amount of time to indulge in each Deeds card or to participate in a Forfeit card was exactly twenty-five minutes per action. Meaning, you and your partner would typically closet yourselves away from the others to act out your cards for a total of fifty minutes per round, with the remaining ten minutes in the hour relegated as a 'rest' period—read: making yourself presentable again for public view, or getting your emotions under control.

The game ended when the last Interrogations card was turned, or when one of the two finalist partners caved, refusing to perform a Forfeit, whichever came first. The team with the most players still 'standing' at that point won.

Hermione realized with a start that this game set could quite possibly string out into a full twenty-four hour ordeal given that there would be twenty-four questions to answer, and each round lasted
approximately an hour.

No wonder Malfoy picked Saturday night to start; that way they could have all of Sunday night to recover from whatever happened!

Ugh.

Seriously, could she do this?

Looking across at Harry's eager face, it was clear her best friend wanted to play and she'd always have Harry's back, no matter what, so...

Besides, this might very well be her last chance to sock it good to that Malfoy git for all of the years of torture he'd rained down upon her head, if she was lucky enough to be partnered with him.

Looking back down at the rumpled paper in her sweaty, ink-stained hand, two words stuck out like a beacon of hateful contention to rile her anger once more:

**Too chicken?**

Yeah, *he'd* like her to be, wouldn't he? That monstrously stuck-up, rodent-faced Pygmy Puff!

Swallowing her fear, Hermione looked Harry in the eye and nodded.

"I say we take the challenge."

The others all gaped at her, mouths hinging open like rusted steel traps, this clearly being the last thing they'd expected her to announce.

"Really?" Harry asked, his emerald eyes alight with a combination of relief and skepticism. "I mean, well, anything goes in this game, 'Mione. *Anything.* You know…sex stuff."

Raising an eyebrow at him, she smirked.

"It's not as if I'm unfamiliar with what to do behind closed doors, and Malfoy did specify 'no cherries.'" She looked at her two girlfriends sitting at her side on Seamus' bed, then at the three men sitting opposite her on Harry's twin. "I don't think that will be a problem with this group, and we all know it."

Ginny face vaulted, her pretty cheeks flaming red with embarrassment. Lavender giggled, and the three wizards across from them all looked somewhat sheepish, staring at their feet or the wall as to avoid Hermione's direct gaze.

Really, it's not as if they were children anymore!

How did they expect to beat the Slytherins at a game of naughty sex fetish if they grew embarrassed about just conversing on the subject? It was no secret, after all, that Hermione and Ron had lost their virginities to each other last summer, after they'd tried dating for two months. She really hadn't seen what all the fuss had been about in the ainters, as she'd received more pleasure from chewing a stick of Drooble's Strawberry Gum and her own fingers wiggling under her knickers than she'd ever gotten from Ron's penis. Not that he wasn't a fun lover, but she'd just never gotten off with him.

Harry and Ginny had gone for it just this last February, she knew, breaking each other in on Valentine's Day. However, the novelty had worn off quickly for both of them, and they'd realized they'd had even less in common than she and Ron had had. They'd amicably parted ways a month
later. Ginny had then hooked up with Seamus once, who'd already been with quite a few girls by then. It had just been a bit of fun for them, though, and not repeated since.

And she knew that Lavender had given her virginity to the Irish wizard two years ago. Nothing had come of that, though, except Lavender's resentment for the man. It had taken until this year for them to just be comfortable in the same room together. In the meantime, Ron had been on and off with Lav for the last several months in a fuck-buddy manner, neither taking it as anything more than a bit of fun.

They'd all been sexually active, so what was the big deal?

Ron's face turned an interesting shade of puce. "Since no one else is saying it, I've got to: are you barking mad, 'Mione? You can't be serious? We're talking about Slytherins here–Malfoy as head git of the lot. You talk about shagging any one of them as easily as tying your shoes!"

Staring him down with her most confident glare, her smirk widened.

"Crass, Ronald. But you're forgetting a couple of very important things: one, that Draco and his choice of male teammates might end up with the girls from their own team, instead of any of us, and two, that I am still a woman, after all. It only takes a pair of decent, half-naked breasts to make your gender come to heel."

Lavender giggled.

"And what are you on about?" Ron asked his on-again, off-again bed warmer. "It's not bloody funny!"

The honey blonde patted her beau's broad shoulder. "I think 'Mione's right. Forcing Malfoy and his friends to do the bidding of one of us women, and make them panting hot for more at the same time would be priceless. I can think of more than a few tricks to humiliate the blue-blooded caps right off of their precious heads."

Ginny recovered, catching on to the idea, eyes bright. "Ha! I'd make one of them kiss my feet and beg my forgiveness for every horrible thing they've ever said to me."

Brown laughed. "Honey, you're thinking too small. I'd tie them up and use a stinging hex on their privates. On and off for a good hour, at least. Let them try to reproduce after I'm through!"

Hermione grinned like a shark. "It would be brilliant revenge for the years of horribleness the Slytherins have all forced us to endure."

Harry stood and nodded at Ron first, and they both turned to Seamus. "Right, Ron and I are in. You?"

"Do ya have any idea who th' Slytherins will be invitin'?" he asked, his Irish brogue thick with excitement.

Harry leaned against the back wall and crossed his strapping arms over his broad chest, which had expanded with hard packed muscle this last year, as he and the other members of the Quidditch team had begun a rigorous workout routine this last September, all so they could claim the House Cup this, their final year. "As I said, it'll be Malfoy as Slytherin team captain, and I'm guessing Zabini and Nott will round out the blokes, since Crabbe and Goyle would hardly make it a challenge for any of us, and that git's smart enough to know it. He didn't name the girls, but I'll place money on Pansy Parkinson and Daphne Greengrass at least. The third…maybe Bulstrode?"
“Or Tracey Davis,” Lavender said. “She’s always sitting with Parkinson at lunch and I think shares a
dorm with Greengrass.”

Harry frowned. “Who?”

Hermione sniffed at the line-up. "Parkinson would be perfect. I’d love to see her squirm. How galling
would it be to her pride for any one of you three to touch her ‘precious’ pure-blood body, much less
bring her to heel?"

Harry looked at her with amusement. "Some days, you really scare me, 'Mione."

"She bloody terrifies me on a regular basis," Ron added.

Seamus snickered. "Are ya sure ya were sorted into th' right House, lass?"

Ignoring the ragging, Hermione shared a look with Ginny and Lavender, the three of them silently
communicating their agreement to go ahead with the plan. When consensus had been reached, she
turned back to Harry.

"Tell that rat bastard, Malfoy, that we're all in–to win."

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**Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, Scotland**

**Slytherin Boys Dorms - Draco Malfoy’s room**

**Wednesday, June 10, 1998 (late evening)**

The owl arrived to his window in the dorms that night about two hours after dinner. With a tiny bit of
trepidation, Draco held the parchment in his hands and threw a silent prayer to Slytherin that first,
Potter and company had accepted his challenge, and second, that the predictable ponce had picked
Granger, the one girl he was simply dying to lock horns—and other parts—with.

"Open it already!" Nott growled. His blue eyes were bright with anticipation as he leaned in, eager
for the results. "Go on!"

At the foot of Draco’s cot sat a silent, unruffled Blaise Zabini, his attention wholly on the note.
Draco knew the façade his friend wore to be a carefully crafted lie, however. Deep in the depths of
the man’s usually enigmatic, dark stare, the same burning desire for answers simmered.

With careful deliberation, Draco opened the letter.

Reading its contents, his heart let out a loud and lusty shout of triumph.

Beaming ear to ear, he read the response aloud:

_Malfoy,_
We're on. If you chicken out, we'll let the whole school know it. Unless there's a need for a last minute substitution because of illness, here's our team roster: me, R. Weasley, S. Finnigan, H. Granger, L. Brown, and G. Weasley.

Be prepared for your arses to be handed to you,

- H. Potter

Theo hooted with laughter.

"Gods, I can't wait to mess with Granger!" he said, pumping a fist into the air. "That girl gets under my skin with her virginal attitude."

Keeping his face as neutral as possible, Draco tamped down on the jealous surge that shot through him at Theo’s interest in the Head Girl. "If you're lucky enough to draw her name, she's all yours," he said, when really, the urge to rip his friend’s bollocks off was something he struggled to restrain.

No one was going to touch Hermione Granger but him.

She was his.

He turned to Blaise. "Bet you can't wait to give it to the She-Weasel, especially after the last match."

As a Chaser, Ginny Weasley had been assigned to check Blaise any time they'd faced off across the Quidditch pitch. The two had formed an antagonistic relationship over the last two years since she'd joined the Golden Lions, one that was nearly as rancorous as Draco's own had been with Granger at the start of their school years.

Zabini's dark eyes glittered, and a small smile graced his full lips.

"As you say…if I'm lucky enough to draw her name."

In that moment, Draco knew the gig was up; his best friend suspected that he intended on cheating to arrange things in his favour with Granger. In the manner of Slytherins, though, his best friend was wordlessly conveying an offer to keep his mouth shut about the subterfuge in return for fixing the arrangement with Weasley for him as well. Draco nodded in silent understanding and acceptance.

"I have a good feeling about this," he casually announced. Dropping the parchment into his lap, he stretched his arms together over his head, cracking his knuckles by interlacing his long, pale fingers. "This'll be a game to remember."

Nott stood to grab a piece of parchment, his quill, and an ink bottle from his school bag, turning them over to Draco. "Let them know we're in agreement. I don't want any crying foul later that there wasn't an official accord."

Taking the items, Draco conjured a wooden lap board for writing and got down to penning a reply.

Potty,

Terms accepted, dandelion. Our team is as follows: me, Zabini, Nott, Greengrass, Davis, and Parkinson.
Get ready to beg for mercy,

- D.M.

P.S. Don't forget to pack your hankies for when the crying starts.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, Scotland

Seventh Year's Defence Against The Dark Arts Classroom

Thursday, June 11, 1998 (morning)

Harry glared across the aisle at Malfoy.

As all exams had been taken the previous week, and this week was simply a wrap-up and individual review of results, classes had officially ended for seventh-years. With next week, their final week, assigned to personal counselling—when professors met individually with students to discuss their future options based upon their aptitude and N.E.W.T. scores—there wasn’t much for them left to do, honestly.

That left plenty of time for gossiping and note passing in classes.

Ever the shit-disturber, Malfoy had just thrown a small, waded up piece of paper at the back of Hermione's head.

From her seat two rows up, Harry’s best friend looked up at Professor Moody, noted the man was distracted by Terry Boot's final interview, and bent over to pick up the wad of paper. She opened it and read. Whatever it said made her stiffen and he could practically feel her ire from across the row.

She picked up her quill and scribbled something on it, then hiding the paper in the sleeve of her robe, she raised her hand.

Harry glanced over at Malfoy, who tsk’d and sat back in his chair, knowing he was busted this time.

"What is it, Miss Granger?" Moody asked, looking up from the paper in front of him.

Hermione cleared her throat. "Sir, I'm afraid I'm feeling a little dizzy. Since we've already had our review, may I go to the Hospital Wing to have a lie down for a bit?"

Moody stared hard at her for a second, and then nodded. "Potter, you're done as well, so escort your Housemate to Madam Pomfrey, to make sure she gets there safely." He returned to talking to Terry, ignoring everyone else, who sat around in groups and whispered, making plans for the weekend and after graduation.

"Yes, sir," Harry replied and stood without needing to be told twice.

Truth be told, he was bored off his gourd, too.
Ron threw him a ‘you lucky bastard!’ expression and waved him off, then moved his chair back to Seamus, Neville, and Dean's little gathering one row back to join in their discussion about next Friday night's farewell Formal.

Making his way to Hermione's side, Harry took her bag and slung it over her shoulder, and then the two headed out. On the way past Malfoy's desk, Hermione locked eyes with their rival, smirked, and pressed the wadded up paper into his free hand.

Without skipping a beat, she kept walking, so Harry didn't stop either.

When they were far enough down the corridor for no one to hear, Harry finally had to ask. "Right, so what did Slytherin's Prince have to say to you, and what did you say back that's got you grinning like the Cheshire Cat?"

Hermione chortled. "I wondered how long it would take before you broke. He asked me if I liked kneeling, because he planned to have me in that position for him this Saturday night if he pulled my name as his partner."

Harry clenched his jaw at that kind of juvenile boorishness that was common of Malfoy. "How did you reply?" he asked.

A blush came to life under Hermione’s cheeks. "I told him he should get his cushioned Quidditch leggings out of storage because it wouldn't be me on my knees if we were lucky enough to be thrown together. I further intimated that I might just write up a Forfeit card that required all of the men on his team to suck each other off if he kept harassing me."

Harry burst into laughter. "Brilliant, 'Mione!"

His best friend shrugged. "Top of the class, you know," she joked, fluffing her hair in playful teasing.

They both erupted into fresh gales of mirth then and changed topics, discussing their all of their test scores to date.

As Hermione critiqued her own essay for Potions (which had—gasp—earned her an "E" instead of an "O"), Harry considered his best female friend from the corner of his eye, catching every third word or so.

The truth was he'd fancied 'Mione in third year, and for a little bit of fifth year, too, but hadn't wanted to step into Ron's territory either time, knowing the guy had secretly fancied their shared best friend back. Now, though, she was free and clear, as that relationship hadn't worked out and he knew she wasn't currently dating anyone. So, for just those few minutes, as they walked together side-by-side up to Madam Pomfrey’s territory, Harry let himself consider the possibilities.

Covertly, he let his gaze stray down her body, appraising…

Hermione had definitely grown-up, hadn't she? Her bushy hair and teeth had been tamed by fourth year, and her overall figure had matured into ample curves. She was really quite pretty, too, in a girl-next-door sort of way, with a light sprinkling of freckles across the bridge of her nose and intelligent eyes that sparkled with flecks of gold in the sunlight. Her smile was genuine, her long, shiny curls a warm mahogany that nicely offset her honey-coloured skin.

Overall, he found he was still physically attracted to her.

Perhaps it wouldn't be a total disaster if he drew her name from the deck tomorrow, as he'd worried
when the thought occurred to him last night. Their personalities sometimes clashed, yes, but she was someone he could be honest with and he felt comfortable talking about private things with her. Maybe that would be enough for a start?

On the other hand, 'Mione was the upwardly mobile, independent type, always looking for that next plateau to conquer. She didn't need someone to emotionally lean on, and her intellect and personal ambition far outstripped everyone else's he'd ever known. He knew from Ron that she was also a bit aggressive between the sheets. Harry was exactly the opposite; he was more laid back about his future, content to enjoy his work. He wanted a woman who would need him and let him be the strong one in the relationship, who would let him romance her, and who would actually enjoy long love-making sessions.

Nope, clearly 'Mione, like Ginny, was not the girl for him, no matter how sexually attracted to her he may be, and he knew it deep down inside.

In fact, if they messed around, he was worried he'd become even more attached to her than he already was, which would be very bad for their friendship in the end. Theirs would be a messy break-up...

No, he decided, it would be a really bad thing were he to draw her name as his partner for the game.

Leaving Hermione at the entrance to Madam Pomfrey's lair, he turned about and headed back towards D.A.D.A., wondering if he would ever find a girl who actually wanted to fall in love the old-fashioned way.

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Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, Scotland

Dining Hall - Slytherin House Table

Thursday, June 11, 1998 (mid-afternoon)

Blaise stared across the Great Hall at Weasley and felt that strange hitch in his chest once more.

Crimson fire flashed in the sunlight streaming through the front windows as she brushed a long gathering of her hair over her shoulder, laughing in delight over something Seamus Finnigan, her Quidditch teammate, had said, and once more he was taken back to that day of their final match...

“It was fun, Zabini.”

Her pink lips were turned up in a beauteous smile that lit up the room, and Finnigan laughed in conjunction around his sucking on the end of a Sugar Quill. The two shared a secret smile.

He snarled and nearly bent his fork in half as rage filled him once more.

He couldn't believe it: she'd fucked the Irish, too! Blaise could see it in the intimate look that passed between them that the two had been intimate not too long ago. It was bad enough Potter had taken her virginity, but Finnigan was an unapologetic man-slag with a roster that outstripped even Blaise's list of conquests.
He dropped his gaze to his plate, struggling to get himself under control.

Weasley was his.

The sexy, little minx had spent the last two years taunting and haunting him from the Quidditch pitch…and in his dreams…and in the bed he'd shared with others during that time, as well. Every partner, no matter their skin or eye colour, their gender or body shape, or how they smelled or sounded, all were her as he shut his eyes and took them. They all had her dark eyes that sparkled, her shiny, straight strawberry-blond mane that she'd randomly dyed black at the tips just to be controversial, her full bottom lip that begged for kissing, and her lightly freckled skin that smelled of spicy orange and cinnamon perfume. Every single time he'd orgasmed over the last two years, whether in a partner or in his own hand, he'd cried out for Ginevra in his mind, pretending it was her sweet, tight body he was pouring his seed into.

Despair threatened to send him over the edge once more, right there in the middle of the dining hall.

It took everything within him to back away from that edge, his fear of being discovered the weight that kept him in his seat. Why wouldn't she even give him a chance? So, he was Slytherin, big deal! He'd fucked plenty of others outside his House, uncaring as to their sortings, friendships, even their blood status, despite the pure-blood brainwashing that tended to go on in his elite circle. Yet, Weasley—for all her talk of ‘fairness’ and ‘doing the right thing’—still refused to give him a second look. Her House prejudice was firmly ensconced by a generational Gryffindor brainwashing…and her contempt for him as a result cut him up inside and out.

From their very first formal introduction across the Quidditch arena two years ago, Ginevra Weasley had effectively ruined Blaise's calm. She continually distracted his concentration, made him feel ineffectual, and manoeuvered him into positions where the consequence was him acting the fool, and she'd accomplished that task with minimal effort.

He intended on making her pay for that.

This coming Saturday, he was going to destroy her senses as much as she did his! Once he had Draco fix the cards so he was partnered up with her, and he'd had a chance to fuck her good, he would drop little Miss Weasley on that prissy, snooty ass of hers with relief and finally be free of this obsession that had made him pathetic for far too long.

Having reined in his temper with that vow, he released his death grip on his utensils and took a deep, calming breath.

Glancing to his side, he caught his best friend's wintery grey gaze zero-in on Granger once again. He was scowling as Potter tugged on the witch's hair to get her attention, and a beat later looked positively murderous as the bloke proceeded to make her laugh at something he'd said. "Patience," he cautioned under his breath to his friend, low enough for only the two of them to hear. Where Blaise’s temperament was like a storm’s—quick to move in and blow over, Malfoy's disposition was always fireworks-in-the-sky volatile. The last thing they needed was to be called 'foul' by the other team and be disqualified for provoking pre-game fighting, thus losing before the contest could commence. "And more care, if you don't mind. We've both read the rules of the game. Your little stunt this morning in class could have cost us."

Draco's head turned towards him and his lids lowered in an unspoken warning. He didn't take well to
being chastised, Blaise knew. "I'm well aware of how much skirting the edge I can do. Besides, I knew she wouldn't cry foul."

Blaise nodded, turning his attention to slicing up his pot roast, smearing a daub of gravy on it with his knife. "Just don't anger her enough into crossing a line. I want to play this one out to the end."

Turning back to the object of his interest, Malfoy speared a potato wedge and popped it into his mouth while continuing to watch the Head Girl. She was engaged now in a serious discussion with Ginevra.

"As eager to get at our little red bird as Finnigan is?" Draco taunted, also noting the way the two shared an easy rapport.

"My little red bird," Blaise growled under his breath, clenching his jaw at the man's audacity. His grip on his silverware tightened again. "Don't forget that."

Glancing sideways at him, Draco grinned, knowing he'd made his point, too. "Wouldn't dare," he replied, popping another chip in his mouth.

They shared a moment more in silent understanding: he would not interfere with Draco's pursuit of Granger, and in return, his friend would show him the same courtesy in regards to the Weasley girl, his lioness.

That agreement made, Blaise consumed the rest of his meal in quiet introspection and with restraint, refusing to look back up at his little firebrand's goings-on, not wanting to appear soppish or imprudent. He'd leave that sort of thing to Draco, who was clearly besotted with Gryffindor's Princess.

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Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, Scotland

Seventh Year's Charms Classroom

Thursday, June 11, 1998 (afternoon)

Pulling the Pixie Pop from his mouth, relishing its honey flavour across his tongue, Seamus drifted in and out of the conversation he was sharing with his mate, Michael Corner. His attention was currently fixated on the front of the classroom, where Flitwick was going over Lavender's final exam results with her in a semi-private interview.

Even as he half-listened to his friend brag on and on about applying for a position within Magical Law Enforcement over the summer, Seamus' eyes meandered of their own accord over the curve and dip of his ex's long, graceful neck. Absently, he wondered what it would feel like to touch that soft-looking skin of hers again…

Lavender Renelle Brown.

For some unfathomable reason, this one witch had driven him fair mad since the first time they’d met on the train heading to Hogwarts. Something about her kept drawing him back in, no matter how
many others he'd taken to bed since their one-off in fifth year. He'd been the lucky bloke to win her virginity back then, and although the event hadn't been all roses and romance, it had definitely haunted him since…and not in a good way.

Alright, so admittedly, his technique had seriously sucked back then, and he could understand why she would pretend as if shagging him had never happened. In his defence, though, it had only been his second time having sex.

He knew he'd hurt the lass with his lack of skill, his over-eagerness, and his size, but he'd also known that it always hurt for a girl the first time. He'd tried to make it right afterwards, though, by cuddling with Lavender, but she'd been strangely stiff in his arms, as if she hadn't wanted him touching her in the afters. She hadn't returned any of his kisses either. In fact, she'd cringed away from him and all his efforts to make it all right. When she'd made it clear by her lack of response that she'd wanted him gone and the incident forgotten, he'd taken the hint, picked up his seriously bruised ego from the floor and left. He'd wanted to respect her need for privacy, so she could take care of the more feminine, delicate matters of her clean-up, and he'd needed the retreat so he could cover up his embarrassment at having failed to make her come. He'd been little more than a 'two-pump chump' himself and that had bit into his male pride something fierce.

Of course, he'd learned since how to properly minimize the pain for the girl if it was her first time, how to last while inside a woman, and he'd also come to appreciate the finer points of bedroom etiquette…such as assuring his partner's care-taking in the afters. It was knowledge that he wished he'd had back then, however, as it continued to be a major regret of his that he hadn't had such proficiency available to make Lavender's first time all it should have been. He'd wanted her to scream with pleasure, not moan with pain.

He still regretted the fallout from the event, too—specifically, that she'd written off both him and their long-time friendship. He'd really been head-over-boots for Brown since their first year, but she'd made it very clear that she wasn't having anything to do with him after their one night together.

At the time, he'd been brassed off at her for deliberately avoiding his sincere attempts to apologize the next day. He'd meant to make up his inept treatment of her the night before by going down on her and giving her some pleasure, but she had flatly refused to meet him again. After a week of repeated rejections, he'd finally given up, assumed she'd had her piece of him and was moving on—which had, at the time seriously stung and made him feel quite used. He hadn't bothered to approach her again for any reason thereafter, and for the next year and a half, things had remained severely strained between them…to the point where they were never alone, she'd hardly glanced in his direction, and she'd made sure to keep at least one person between them at all times.

It had only been since she'd hooked-up as Ron's casual bedmate this year that she'd marginally relaxed in Seamus' presence.

It had taken Ron to bring her back around his way, something Seamus kind-of resented, ‘though he’d never tell his friend that. Bloke was happy and relaxed, a bit more confident with women since Lav had become his friends-with-benefits, so the relationship had been a mutual win for them both…

…and even as it left Seamus feeling hollow and sick to think of it.

And more than a little jealous.

Feeling a bit petulant over the memories, he shoved the Pixie Pop back in his mouth and took another good suck at it. The sweet, addicting taste helped his mood, somewhat.

As he considered the upcoming challenge this weekend, an exciting idea occurred to him: perhaps
he'd get a second chance this Saturday night to make up for their first time. If he drew Lavender for a
counter, he'd have the opportunity to not only apologize for the rough treatment she'd experienced
under him back when they'd both been fifth years, but also to give her that orgasm he'd been dying to
give her ever since.

Hell, with what he knew now, he could give her multiple orgasms and leave her begging for more.

Ah, the luck of the Irish would tell what came this Saturday, as his Mam was so fond of saying. He'd
cross his fingers and toes, and hope for the match.

"Mate, you all right?" Michael asked, looking at him askance.

Seamus turned his head and focused on his friend, pulling his mind back into the here and now for
the moment. "Sorry, was thinkin' o' next week's graduation. Whaddya say?"

Corner accepted his excuse and picked up right where he'd left off, so engrossed in talking about
himself that he hardly noticed that his audience's attention was not wholly recaptured. In fact,
thereafter Seamus' responses to him consisted of little more than a series of party nods.

His gaze traveled back to Brown's profile as she animatedly spoke with Flitwick, entranced by the
way her mouth moved and her indigo-coloured eyes sparkled. Letting his gaze drift downward, he
grew hard in his trousers at noting the curve of her ample breasts sweetly outlined from the side, as
her summer uniform blouse was pulled tight across the lovely mounds of flesh. When she laughed at
something the professor said Seamus' attention was drawn back upwards to her lips again.

He'd kissed that mouth once...

Licking his own lips, he took her all in once more, from head to toe. Gods alive, she was lovely! She
reminded him of a fairy, with her pretty features and her golden hair, and he secretly chuckled over
the idea. Now wouldn't that just beat all if she were?

When she stood up and shook their instructor's hand in thanks, there was a happy bounce to her
movements that captivated him as assuredly as her brilliant smile did. She moved with confidence
and a flirty, enthusiastic grace, and once more he was helpless but to note just how comfortable she
had become in that body of hers now that she was all grown up and knew how to use it. If only he
could convince her to use such charms on him any time before graduation! All he'd need is one more
chance with her...

Godric's bollocks, he hoped she was his partner this weekend for the game, because he'd waited long
enough for her to come back around his way!

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Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, Scotland

Seventh Year's Charms Classroom

Thursday, June 11, 1998 (afternoon)

As Lavender turned away from her interview with Professor Flitwick, who had encouraged her plans
to apply for a position at *The Daily Prophet* post-graduation, her eyes roamed the room…

…and froze on Seamus, who was staring at her again with some serious heat while sucking on a Pixie Pop. The ‘I want to fuck you’ look he was tossing her made her heart thump hard enough to taste its beat in her mouth.

Godric, how was it the man she’d lost her heart and virginity to could still make her feel like a foolish first year with a crush?

It was his eyes, she told herself. Spring green, like Irish fields in sunlight, surrounded by dark, thick lashes that made even girls envious. He could seduce anyone he put his mind to with just his eyes alone…

Oh, who was she fooling? He did *exactly* that!

Everyone knew Sea’s sexual conquest card was filled with a long list of tallies. To her humiliation, even she appeared on the list. Thank the Founders she'd had sense to only make it a one-time mistake, though. At least she didn't look quite as foolish as some of the girls who mooned all over him after he'd kicked them to the pavement, girls like Lisa Turpin or Romilda Vane. At least she…

Shite, he was playing the game tomorrow night, wasn't he?

There was a one in six chance that he could draw her card on Saturday night. If that happened, going by the eye-fucking he was giving her now, a whole lot more than gawking was going to happen between them.

Oh, no. Please, no! She wasn't sure she'd be able to face that kind of grief again!

…But she had promised 'Mione that she'd try to stick it out in the game, if only so Gryffindor would be able to smash another triumph in Slytherin's face, hadn’t she? She owed her dormmate a huge debt, even though she could never tell Granger such a thing. Her conscience tugged at her to accept this responsibility as part of her penance.

No choice then: she'd have to suck it up and deal like a true Gryffindor if she *did* end up partnered with Sea. The Irish was one man she knew could break her emotionally in half if she let him; he almost had after their brief little affair when she'd been fifteen. Since he'd only had time to hone that charming charisma over the years, she knew that meant she'd have to be extra careful guarding her heart this time around if, indeed, it was her fate to be stuck with the man.

Better to not think like that for now. Better to simply hope the cosmos partnered her with Ron instead. She was comfortable with her current, casual lover. They knew each other well enough that nothing they did on Saturday night would, in any way, damage what they had. After all, how could you ruin a friendly shag arrangement when there were no deeper feelings involved?

As she bent to retrieve her satchel from the floor to put her test scores away, she felt a single finger trail down her spine in passing. Jerking upright, her spine tingled with mini-electric shocks and she knew instantly who had touched her… Seamus threw her a naughty wink over his shoulder as he made his way to the front of the room for his interview with the Professor. He held his hand low at his side, but waggled the one finger he'd just touched her with in a playful backwards wave.

Blushing to the roots of her hair, Lavender hurriedly stuffed her papers into her bag and sat down in her chair.

"Did Sea just pinch you?" Parvati whispered to her, scandalized. "You jumped as if he had."
Struggling to regain composure, Lavender tried for nonchalance, laughing the incident off. "Oh, you know how he is. He's just trying to get a rise."

"Looked to me like he succeeded," her friend joked. "His pants were tenting rather inappropriately just now." The witch whistled in appreciation. "I'd forgotten how big he is. Yum!"

Oh, that was right. Parvati had had a piece of Seamus a couple of times, too, hadn't she?

"He's not that big," Lavender sniffed, trying not to think about Seamus like that again, if she could help it.

Her friend's eyebrows achieved a world record jump for height. "Don't tell me you've had bigger, because I'd say that wasn't possible. The boy is a good ten to eleven inches long, and thicker than my wrist."

Lavender blinked, feeling the rush of her blood travel like a locomotive steam engine all the way to her toes.

Had Sea really been that big?

She honestly couldn't summon up a memory of such a detail, because she hadn't actually looked at his dick or touched it with her hand the night they'd had sex. What she did recall from their time together wasn't so pleasant a memory, though…

He laid her down on a flat, cold, foreign bed in an empty dorm room. The light was so dim, Lavender could hardly see Seamus' expression, but she could most certainly feel everything happening to her. It seemed like a dream come true. She'd wanted this with him for the last year, and now it was really happening!

Her unbuttoned shirt was parted and her bra tugged down. Sea's hot, wet mouth wrapped around a nipple and began sucking.

Founders, that felt good!

He switched between her breasts, giving each equal attention.

Distracting her with sensations she'd never known before, he slyly scooted her knickers down her legs and off, pushing her skirt up over her waist. His hand delved between her legs, touching her in a place she'd only recently discovered herself. But she wasn't moist at all. Talk about embarrassing! Sea didn't seem put-off by that, though. He licked his fingers several times and brought the wetness of his saliva to her slit until her body began to relax and her natural arousal overcame her fear.

Suddenly, what they were doing wasn't so scary…and it was beginning to feel really good, too.

His mouth lifted to hers and he kissed her once more, pumping his tongue sloppily into her mouth. It was clear Sea was only a little more experienced than she was at this, but they learned together how to properly kiss in those minutes, even as one of his fingers entered her and began slowly pumping back and forth.

At some unspoken signal, his hand moved out of her and the sound of his trouser zip coming down was loud in the silent room. The sharp rasping noise brought her back to reality better than a bucket of ice water would have. She was actually going to have sex with him, here, tonight, wasn't she? Her thighs quaked at the thought. Sure, she'd been daring and brave earlier when he'd suggested they try this, but now she wasn't so sure she was ready.
There was absolutely no time to tell Sea any of this, though, as he quickly spread her legs apart, and using his hand, lined his member up with her opening.

Right as she was about to tell him, "maybe we should wait," he thrust. A series of hard shoves followed, as he tunneled into her virginal channel, opening her wide and splitting her hymen with a powerful shove.

Lavender bit her lip to keep from screaming at the searing pain that followed the loss of her innocence, whimpering instead as he inelegantly moved in and out of her at a fast pace.

Godric, this was nothing like she'd expected. She'd known it would hurt the first time, but this was just...terrible. She felt absolutely no pleasure from the act whatsoever.

To her relief, however, it was quickly over. Sea groaned around a kiss, and then stiffened with a cry, his back arching, his hips rolling forward one more time. He came inside her, but she couldn't feel it. Wasn't it supposed to feel warm? Gooey? Sticky? There was nothing except the feeling of being stretched too far and an ache in her hip bones that wouldn't go away.

When he was spent, he collapsed on top of her, breathing hard.

As he finally recovered a bit of his strength and sanity a few moments later, there were some kisses, and his arms came around her, but Lavender felt oddly disconnected to what she'd just experienced, as if it had happened to someone else. Her arms refused to obey her mind's command to hug him back and her lips felt too cold to move. She was numbed by shock.

Her first time had been absolutely horrid—not at all the romantic moment she'd imagined.

Abruptly, Seamus pulled out of her body, and it was then that she finally felt the rush of warm fluids as they followed in the wake of his quick withdrawal. Her body was too tender and her pelvis too sore for her to sit up just then, so all she could do was watch as Sea stumbled around, getting re-dressed. When he was presentable, he murmured a series of repeat apologies, and then he turned and left.

He just...left.

How could it have gone so wrong?

Lavender flinched from the memory of what had come after.

Once the dazed astonishment had worn off, the tears had come. They had been scalding and bitter, and her accompanying sobs had been loud. Yet, even in the middle of her regretful snuffling, she'd found a moment of unexpected pleasure: a series of rolling, electric shocks—tiny fingers of stroking, erotic pleasure—had come upon her without warning, caressing up and down her spinal column with a pressure that had had her whole body tightening up. Her eyes had rolled back in her head as the sudden, overwhelming sensation had ridden her every sense, and a moment later, she'd orgasmed.

The warm, lovely feeling of peaking, flying, and finally melting had hovered around her senses for a few minutes after that, until eventually the cold of the room had seeped back into her tired bones, and with it had returned hateful reality.

Instead of giving her a sense of peaceful satisfaction and closure, that bizarre, after-the-fact climax she'd experienced that night had only served to remind her of how deficient her first sexual experience had truly been.

Her body had been so shocked by what Sea had done to her that it had actually delayed her ability to
come! She still felt that to be a totally fucked-up reaction.

She'd gotten up after that and cast the Contraceptive and Disease Charm on her belly, as taught by Madam Pomfrey in her Health and Healing Class. The stinging pain between her legs and the heavy throb in her hips had been sheer torture to endure all the way back to her dorm, but it had been a toss-up to say whether it was physical or emotional pain that hurt worse then. It had been especially difficult not to feel so wounded by the feel of Sea's sperm, deposited so casually and indifferently into her just minutes before, finally dripping down her thighs as she'd done the 'walk of shame' back to her bed.

As she'd lain down to sleep in her room later that night, she'd berated herself for having had sex for the first time on the spur of the moment—and all because she'd been hot for Finnigan, and he'd been able to talk her into taking such a big step with a few messy kisses. An even bigger blow was when she'd had to admit the fact that in walking out on her as he had, Seamus had let her know that she'd meant nothing more to him than a hole to fill. She'd thought him her friend, a good and close friend, after all the years they'd spent together—perhaps even her best friend, in all truth, even more so than Parvati. It had been as she'd feared, though: she'd been only a bet for him to win with Dean Thomas. The crush she'd had for the Irish literally did as the name suggested then, and she'd cried to sleep that night.

Her sorrow over the one-off didn't abate for quite a long time. The painful weight of regret and the major blow to her pride at being so thoroughly used, and by someone she'd believed to have genuinely cared for her as a person, had continued to press down on her ribcage and linger over her shoulders for months after the event.

Finally, time had been merciful and done its usual favour in abating the worst of it, but it had taken almost two years for that to happen. During that time, Lavender had vowed never to be used by another man, and she'd decided that if there was to be sexual servicing going on, it would be on her terms. She'd become a take-charge girl when it came to her sexuality, no longer afraid of it or of the men she took to her bed.

As she watched her first lover with Professor Flitwick now she made a vow to them both: *I’m not that weak-kneed little girl anymore, my Irish, so if we’re partnered up this weekend, you’re in for a B-I-G surprise.*

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**Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, Scotland**

**Dining Hall - Slytherin House Table**

**Thursday, June 11, 1998 (evening)**

Daphne was squeezed between her best girlfriend, Pansy, on one side of the dining table, and her younger sister, Astoria, on the other, pretending to be engrossed in consuming her cheese, onion, and leek quiche while drowning out the gossip and prattle amongst her female Housemates.

She was, instead, fine-tuning her ability to eavesdrop on the conversation happening a little further down the table, where Theo sat next to Mister Zabini and Mister Malfoy.
Shutting out extraneous noise and focusing on a specific voice or series of voices while surrounded by others was a trick she’d learned over the years to survive living in Slytherin House, for the more secrets you knew, the more you were left alone by others who feared your knowledge against them. Daphne had never had cause to use such a weapon to date, as it wasn't in her nature to want to abuse people’s weaknesses, but one never knew what the future might bring, so she kept those confidences locked in her brain for a rainy day.

As she ate, she picked up wisps of conversation floating on the air, capturing the essence by filling in the blanks. Theo had just intimated that everyone should dress-up for their game night, and the other two wizards in his accompaniment had readily agreed.

Oh dear, she could just envision what that meant. It was no small stretch to assume that if Theo had his way, all six of the women would be pasted into either tight leather corsets and lacy, barely-there bits of lingerie. Six-inch heels and some sort of restraining device around the neck, wrists, or waist would also, no doubt, be in fashion.

She may love the charming, silly Slytherin, but she was also well aware of Theo's sexual depravities from having observed him in secret for years. He was a visual sensualist, stimulated by colours and shapes, more than any other sense. Physically monitoring the reactions he purposefully elicited from others—seeing their eyes flare and their cheeks pink with panic or anger or desire—aroused him more than touching them. Consequently, that also made him a natural voyeur, and a daring and uninhibited exhibitionist.

It would be best to warn her friends of their male Housemate's intentions in this case, so the women would have input into their wardrobe choices.

"It sounds as if our male teammates have determined that we three ladies are to embellish our clothing options this weekend for their amusement," she leaned over and whispered in Pansy's ear.

Immediately, her friend curtailed her unflattering comparison to Millicent of Professor Snape to Sanguini, the world's most famous 'outed' Vampire, turning rounded, surprised eyes on Daphne. "What?" the witch hissed in anger. Clearly, she understood the situation. "We'll have to talk about that after dinner. I don't like things sprung at me at the last minute, especially costuming."

Daphne did not look up as she continued to cut into her meal with genteel precision. "Agreed," she murmured.

Having heard that last bit, Astoria leaned in. "What is?" she asked in a low murmur.

"You need not be concerned with our discussion," Daphne coolly replied. She loved Tori, truly, but the girl's curiosity was simply too rambunctious for long-term exposure. She should never have been sorted into Slytherin House. Hufflepuff would have been a far better match for her sister's temperament. Daphne suspected that the only reason her younger sister had been selected to join her in the ‘Silver and Green’ was because the girl had wished not to be parted from her older sibling, and everyone knew the Sorting Hat took a person's private wishes into account when making its final decision.

Tori pouted. "You always say that. I'm not a baby anymore, Daph."

Taking a deep, calming breath, Daphne turned to address her sister and tried not to sound like a horrid bitch, keeping her voice even and mild, and her tone low enough so that no one else knew she was gently rebuking the girl. "I have never stated that you were, Tori. I recognize that you are fast maturing at the proper physical rate. However, your mental development must occur at a synonymous rate if you are to survive in this House. That includes making smart decisions and
rummaging for social cues before interjecting yourself into a conversation or situation. To speak ahead of considering your questions or imparting information could mete out your downfall. We have discussed this before." Conveying such wisdom was the only way Daphne saw of helping her little sister survive dwelling alongside the other Slytherins once she graduated in a week, for Tori still had two more years until she matriculated from Hogwarts, and unless she appreciated and assimilated these important lessons soon, her final four Terms would be utterly miserable for the girl. Daphne would spare her affable, guileless, gullible sister such pain, if she could.

Putting her fork and knife down, Daphne daubed her lips with her napkin, and then put a hand over Tori's as it rested on the bench between them. "In this case, what Pansy and I are discussing is truly nothing of significance, just a bit of tittle-tattle."

Tori's brilliant smile lit up her face and she looked with honest eyes up at the taller Daphne. "Sorry for being so nosy, sis."

Daphne shook her head and smiled back. "Curious, remember? Snape is the only nosy one around here." It was an oft-told joke around their House that their Head's hooked beak was large enough to rival a hippogriff's.

Her sister erupted into peals of laughter once more at the sly innuendo. The sound was merry and frank and artless—a sound not ever heard at a Slytherin gathering.

Out of the corner of her eye, Daphne caught sight of Theo as he turned his attention in their direction to investigate the commotion.

Her heart beat just a little faster under his scrutiny.

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Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, Scotland

Hallway to Transfiguration Classrooms

Friday, June 12, 1998 (morning)

Ron was walking the hallway, his satchel the lightest it had been all term now that exams were over. He slung the bag about in the nearly empty corridor, late for McGonagall's class but not truly concerned, since he'd already had his final exam interview with her, and was merely required to show up out of a need for the school to maintain routine.

He considered whistling a merry jig taught him by Charlie over the Easter break, but ditched the idea in a heartbeat when he heard the sound of a female in tears coming from a window niche up ahead. Slowing, he stopped swinging his bag and within three steps, had come to a complete halt.

Yes, that was definitely a girl crying. Shite. What should he do? Should he keep walking and pretend he didn't see or hear the girl, who sounded as if she was valiantly trying to stifle heavy sobs against some sort of fabric, or did he run past her at top speed instead? He had to get to class; old McGonagall would notice he was missing and might even use that as the excuse to flunk him, as she'd threatened to do to anyone who skived off her classes this week or next, passing exam scores or not.
He shifted around as he contemplated his options, his feet scuffing the stone flooring.

The girl's crying abruptly stopped. "Who's there?" she demanded.

"Uhhhh," he began, but that was as far as he got before Pansy Parkinson popped out of her hidden location, face streaked with tears, cheeks reddened by embarrassment and anger, and dark eyes spitting mad.

"Weasley!" she snarled in righteous fury, spitting his name out as if it were a blasphemous thing. "Spying, were you? I shouldn't be surprised. I'd expect no less from the *boy*," she emphasized the word, "who'd been caught sneaking peeks in the Prefect's bathroom every Sunday afternoon last year. What despicable manners you have!"

Taken aback at the unfounded attack, Ron could only stare at Slytherin's Bitch Queen with open-mouthed astonishment.

Spying? Was she serious?

"I wasn't! I didn't!" he refuted, feeling indignation pitting a corrosive hole in his stomach. He'd put up with Parkinson's bite for the last seven years, giving it back to her every time she challenged and sassed him, so he expected ridiculousness to spew from her mouth every time she opened it. But to have her unjustly accuse him of stalking her like some sick pervert was pushing it. He may have been caught in a few compromising positions with Lavender over the past year, but he'd never peeped the Prefect's bath, and he certainly wasn't spying on this witch! "You're in the middle of the hallway, Parkinson! How's a bloke supposed to get to class and not notice your weeping mug gushing all over the place? Bloody drama queen!"

Parkinson's eyebrows shot into her hairline and her fists clenched at her side. She stomped forward, bristles up like some sort of badger on the attack.

"How dare you, you hideous, intellectually-challenged carrot top!" she screeched in ear-splitting volume, closing the distance between them. "I'll have you know, Weasley, that I'm considered quite beautiful by some people!" In one of her hands, she held a piece of wadded up paper that she shook at him now. "Some wizards find me so attractive, in fact, that they've sued my father to court me already!"

He scoffed and shook his head. "Well, obviously, they're blind, aren't they? And clearly deaf." He stuck a finger in one ear and wiggled it around, as if to clear it of the ringing her high-pitched voice had caused. "Honestly, you screech like a lunatic Veela. I s'pect you might've deafened me." Pulling that same finger out of his ear, he pointed it directly in her face in a moment of brilliant clarity. "Hey, I've got an idea: you could put those big lungs of yours to use and make an honest living after graduation. I'm sure there are plenty of openings for a good tuba player or balloon blower out there somewhere, and it beats whoring yourself out to some pure-blood ponce just to make Dad and Mum happy, yeah?"

As if he'd thrown a bucket of frozen water over her, Parkinson's cheeks went as white as a sheet and hot tears flooded her eyes again. Her lower chin quivered, her lips pursed into a thin, straight line, and her jaw clenched as she struggled not to fall apart in front of him.

For a second, staring into the raw, naked hurt etched into her face, Ron felt real shame. Sure, he and this infuriating witch had traded some nasty barbs over the years, but he'd always assumed those were just empty words meant to rile and blow off steam, or occasionally to jab or prod to test each other's strength. They'd never been meant to seriously wound, however. Now he realized something important: sometimes words weren't just meaningless, and sometimes, they could hurt.
It was a lesson he'd never taken seriously when 'Mione had explained her feelings every time Malfoy had called her a 'Mudblood,' but now he was learning the moral in record-fast time as he stared directly into Parkinson's anguished face.

Looking down in mortification, he shuffled his feet again. "Look, Parkinson, about what I just said-"

He never saw the blow coming. It was the slap that reverberated around the world, as loud as the one 'Mione had given Malföy in third year, he was sure. Stunned, he took a step back and his eyes flew to the witch's face…

…only to find those fat, welling tears had escaped and were streaming down her cheeks. A deep misery was etched into every line of her face. Somehow, she'd seemed to age a few years in a matter of seconds.

"I hate you, Ronald Weasley!" she shrieked around a sob, then ran past him and didn't look back once.

He turned to follow her path, watching her shaking shoulders as she cried until she'd turned the corner and was out of sight. Only then did he let out the breath he'd been holding.

What the hell had just happened? What had he said specifically to set her off like that? Blinking away the after-effects of Parkinson's blow, he shook his head, rubbed his stinging cheek, and numbly continued on his way to class, feeling disoriented by the events of the last five minutes.

By the time he'd reached Transfiguration, though, he'd convinced himself that the incident in the hallway with the Slytherin Queen—her acting like a complete loon—was probably just a result of PMS. Heck, his sister and 'Mione were always a bit barmy that time of the month, too.

He felt sorry for the poor sod that drew her name on Saturday night, as a woman on her period certainly limited what you could and would want to do with her in private.

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Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, Scotland

Seventh Year's Transfiguration Classroom

Friday, June 12, 1998 (morning)

Tracey had received her Transfiguration final review with Professor McGonagall earlier that morning and now sat, staring across the room at the boy she'd secretly fancied since first year.

Harry Potter…

Something his friend, Neville Longbottom, said made Harry throw his head back and laugh out loud, and Merlin, she loved the way his smile lit up his face!

Without his glasses in his way, now that he’d had his eyesight magically corrected, she could actually see the green of his eyes sparkle when he was happy. It made things inside her glow as well.
"Keep staring at Potter like that and he's going to know you want to play spot the sausage in his trousers," Hestia Carrow murmured with a wicked chuckle.

Tracey blushed and elbowed her friend. "Shhh, not so loud," she admonished.

She’d die if Harry ever found out how much she longed to for him! It was the greatest disappointment of her young life that he hadn’t noticed her at all since first year, not even in their shared classes, but to have him find out because her Housemate was intentionally trying to ‘out’ Tracey’s feelings for him in the last week of school, all so he would finally notice and take pity on her, would be mortifying!

"Seriously, who's going to hear?" Hest looked about, pointing out the obvious that they were the only ones sitting at the back of the class at the moment. Everyone else was situated closer to the front. “Besides, he’d have to actually be aware there was someone back here, which he clearly isn’t.”

Tracey sighed and glanced back over at Harry again. He was now in a discussion with his best mate, Ron Weasley, who had sneaked in late today, looking a little mystified. "It doesn't matter, anyway,” she whispered, feeling her heart ache as she realised how futile her feelings really were for someone as perfect as Gryffindor’s ‘golden boy’. She wasn’t his type; he liked girls who were bold and were covered in courage, traits she distinctly lacked. “It’s just a silly schoolgirl crush.”

But it wasn’t, and Tracey was painfully aware of that fact.

The truth was she was in love with Harry Potter.

Hestia’s arch tone was a tad scathing. "Why, because he said he’d never be caught dead dating a Slytherin?" She sniffed, scornful of that kind of prejudice. "For such a 'nice guy,' Trace, he sounds like a total toffee-nosed prat to me."

"It’s not…” Tracey shook her head, and struggled to put into words the biggest problem she’d noticed at Hogwarts, starting from day one—an issue that had persisted for almost a thousand years, beginning with the Founders. “House enmity is too ingrained into all of us, Hest. It's tradition for the four Houses to be rivals for no reason other than principle and pride. Gryffindors are diametrically opposed to Slytherins, and vice versa, because Godric Gryffindor and Salazar Slytherin were opposites. It's the same with Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs. No one from our House has dated anyone from his House in at least three decades…and all because we’ve been told not to."

Hestia snorted indelicately. "If it’s that impossible, then why bother following him into the Ministry as a career, since it’s obvious to everyone else you’d hate a desk job? You’re a dancer, Trace, not a paper-pusher! You’d be giving it all up for…that."

Hestia pulled a face and pointed towards the front of the class, where Harry was laughing so hard he was turning puce and choking like a fool as Weasley reiterated a tale that had something to do with being slapped across the face.

Tracey bit her lip, watching his genuine, infectious smile provoke her own into life. Harry had always had that effect on her—the ability to gift her with some positive emotion, even if he hadn’t ever realised it. "Because outside of Hogwarts, if we work closely together, maybe he’ll finally notice me,” she murmured, hoping that dream would someday come true, “and then he could see the real me—not a witch sorted into Slytherin House, but a woman in her own right."

Her friend gave up with a frustrated sigh. "Whatever. I still say you weren't sorted into the right House, Trace. You've always sounded too sentimental to be a snake. You should have been sorted a Hufflepuff."
“Yes,” Tracey said, wincing, knowing Hestia wasn’t wrong and wondering for the millionth time what would have changed if she hadn’t made her specific request to the Sorting Hat that first evening. “I suppose you’re right.”

If only…

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**Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, Scotland**

**Dining Hall & Second Floor Women's Bathroom**

**Friday, June 12, 1998 (afternoon)**

Pansy entered the dining hall with head held high, refusing to look over towards the Gryffindor table. She was sure that the filthy, raffish Weasley had told everyone by now about her little crying spell, and that he and his friends were even now snickering behind their hands at her.

Well, she wasn't about to cower under their mockery!

Hiding her pain behind her face, she marched with determination towards her regular spot next to Daphne, keeping her back to the rest of the room.

To her surprise, however, Daphne stood to meet her and escorted her and Tracey both out of the room by faking a need to go to the loo together. They headed towards the second floor girl's bath.

Fortunately, Moaning Myrtle was occupied somewhere else at the moment, for the room was absent of her annoying humming and floating about.

"What's this all about?" she asked her friend, only to be interrupted by the sound of stall doors creaking as Daphne checked every pen to assure there were no other visitors about.

"You wished to discuss in private the outlandish scheme Mister Nott, Mister Zabini, and Mister Malfoy were conferring over at lunch," Daphne reminded her, waving her wand over the room and entrance to assure privacy. "They will arrive in approximately another minute or two for precisely that confrontation."

Great, just what Pansy needed: another altercation, for she was sure that was what this was going to turn into. She just knew what Draco and the others would consider proper 'attire' for tomorrow night's game, and there was no way Pansy was stooping to dressing like a whore.

"What idea?" Tracey asked.

Pansy sighed. "Draco has this ridiculous idea that we're going to play 'street salt' for him and model in our underwear."

"Which sounds like a fine plan to us," Draco announced as he, Blaise, and Theo entered the woman's loo without respect for the conversation or reverence for the location.

Tracey's face went pale. "No. Absolutely not! I am not a wanton woman! I will not dress or act as
one, either."

Blaise tossed the girl a wicked smirk, one that would have most other women down on their knees in a flat second. "But isn't that the point of the game, pet, to pretend to be something you're not just for one night of fun?"

Tracey stared daggers at Zabini, but remained silent on the matter. He had a point, after all, the slick git.

Still, Pansy wouldn't back down from a similar position. It was time to set the limits on the game and to make it clear to Malfoy that this wasn't his show alone. All of them were in it for their own ends. "I'm with Tracey. You won't see me dressed in something that leaves little to the imagination," she said, planting her hands on her hips and facing off against the three males in the room. "I've got my own sense of style and standards, and you do not dictate them to me. None of you do."

Tracey took up the space to Pansy's right and nodded, folding her arms over her chest, showing solidarity. "Agreed."

Daphne cleared her throat and also stood in the line of female authority, to Pansy's left. "I concur. This game may be one of sexual mischievousness and dalliance, but it was concurrently designed for sophisticated diversion, not common tawdriness. You may wish to indulge in such uncouth sport, but I would like to enjoy it as a game of sultry delight...a conclusive initiation, as it were, into realizing adulthood."

Theo purred. "Rowrrrr! I love it when you talk smart, Greengrass," he grinned. "Gets me hard."

Daphne sniffed with disdain. "That is no stupendous accomplishment for a girl, Mister Nott...as you have so abundantly made clear over the last year. Indeed, *Witch Weekly* seems enough to instigate the same affect upon you."

Nott's grin took up the expanse of his handsome face. "That it does! Care to forward me your subscription as an early Christmas gift, love?"

Pansy blew out a harsh breath. "Look, gentlemen, fun aside, I believe you have our answer. None of us will play sex-doll slag for you or the Gryffindors. She glanced at her two female companions, and held up a finger to block Draco's protest just as he'd started to launch his campaign to change their minds. She knew that he could be so persuasive when he put his mind to having things his way, so it was best to cut him off before he got rolling. "However," she compromised, "I, personally, would be willing to wear a fancy dress that is stylish for the game—something French...and melodramatically gothic."

Malfoy raised one golden eyebrow in speculation. "And where would you have picked up something like that, Pans, dearest?"

Pansy shrugged. "I couldn't decide between it and two others for the Halloween dance last October. I've been dying to wear it, honestly. This will give me the excuse."

"Is it at least marginally naughty?" Theo teased, leaning against a nearby stall and folding his arms across his tall, well-defined frame.

Chuckling, Pansy shook her head. "For someone of your tastes? No, Theo. But it will probably suit Blaise's just fine." Everyone knew Blaise was into dark lace and velvet, not leather and chains, like his roommate.

Nott dipped his head in acceptance. "That'll do, babe."
"I don't have a costume," Tracey admitted. "But, I do have a rather striking dress that I'd wanted to wear to the last Yule Ball. I bought it then, but traded out for something else at the last minute. I could wear that! It's elegant though, not naughty."

Daphne nodded her head. "I have a similar dress that I had intended to display at next week's Final Summer Formal, but have since exchanged the garment for a different inspiration. I believe it would be appropriate to display it for this occasion instead."

Draco eagerly rubbed his hands together. "Excellent! We'll just tell the Gryffindors tonight that their women have to dress well, too. That way, we're even on both sides. Problem solved." Believing the matter settled, he turned to leave.

"Nuh-uh-uh," Pansy stopped him. "We're not as even as you make it seem, sweet cakes. What about you men? Can we expect to see you play dress-up as well?"

Next to her, Tracey laughed. "Yes, if we're expected to look sexy, you're expected to look dandy, too."

Theo traded a look with his friends. "Dandy? Does anyone even use that word anymore?"

Zabini threw him a sardonic grin. "I do when talking about you."

Nott gave him the two-fingered salute, which had them all snickering, even the normally placid and reserved Daphne.

"You know I'll look fabulous," Draco boasted with a casual shrug. "Sexy shirt, pressed slacks, polished shoes. I'll even make a concession from my preferred colour of choice for my wardrobe ensemble and be contrary in white, just for the occasion. Sound good to you, love?"

Pansy nodded, and looked at Nott next. He scratched the back of his head, ruffling his chestnut hair. "We're about the same size, so I'll just borrow something from Draco's wardrobe, since all I brought back with me from Easter break was my dress robes for next week's dance." He threw his friend a pleading look. "Good?"

Malfoy rolled his eyes. "Plebe."

"Wanker," Theo shot back.

Blaise cleared his throat behind a polite fist. "I have a more than adequate dress shirt and trousers for the occasion. I won't disappoint, your Majesties."

Pansy puffed up, putting on false airs. "Wonderful. See that you don't." She turned her nose into the air and made a shooing motion with one hand. "Run along now, boys. We'll see you three at dinner."

With light-hearted humour, the trio of wizards bowed to their three Slytherin Norns and left. When the door shut behind Theo's bum, the three women looked at each other and erupted into giggles.

This was definitely the type of therapy that Pansy had needed to get over Ron wanking Weasley's cruel taunting from earlier that morning. Being fawned over by three delicious, wicked men was definitely a boost to one's ego.
Theo met with Professor Sprout for his final exam review immediately after lunch, during Herbology class. They spent ten minutes discussing her recommendations, and then they shook hands and he turned the chair over to Stephen Cornfoot as he resumed his seat next to Draco and Blaise.

Lounging back on his elbows against the empty desk behind him, he considered this afternoon’s impromptu meeting with the girls in the loo again. "Hey," he hedged, getting the attention of his two friends. "What do you think of Daphne?"

Draco’s smirk was positively shark-like.

"I think she'll eat you alive," he predicted.

Theo thought about that.

Yeah, guy was probably right.

Not that he’d mind Greengrass tearing into him, though…

“What say you, Zabini?” he asked, nudging his friend’s chair with his foot.

Blaise’s answer was to shrug in a noncommittal gesture that told Theo nothing.

Something in Theo’s guts sank into his shoes. "You've shagged her?" he dared to ask his friend, feeling an odd and unexpected pang at the thought.

"No."

At that very frank answer, the lump in his chest loosened a bit. Usually, Zabini was tight-lipped about what he did behind closed doors, finding it impolite to brag, so when he actually committed to saying that he didn't do something, you could trust he was telling the truth.

"You want to shag her, though?" he pressed the issue, wanting to be crystal clear where the guy stood concerning Daphne Greengrass. He and Blaise had been awkward around each other since third year, and he didn't want to upset their recovered friendship by pursuing the same witch as his roommate…even if the idea of giving her up was actually a shite deal.

In truth, he’d dug on Greengrass off and on throughout the years, and was just recently back ‘on’ to the idea of trying for something with her finally, despite what had gone down this past Easter hols with her…

_Nope, not going there again_, he thought. That way lay madness, as his shite father was so fond of saying.

Blaise shook his head again, making it clear that he had no feelings whatsoever for the witch in question.

“That’s…good,” he murmured, eyes unwittingly drawn again to the front of the classroom where
Daphne was currently sitting with Parkinson and Davis.

Well, at least that much was settled with his friends. Now Theo could pursue Greengrass without any regrets.

"Who’s she taking to the Summer Formal?" he wondered under his breath.

Unfortunately, Draco had the hearing of a magical beast. "She’s going with Entwhistle," the guy replied, always in-the-know regarding the newest gossip around the castle.

Theo pulled a face. "Ugh, talk about bad taste! Why would she want to go with a tosser like him?"

"Perhaps because that ‘tosser’ is intelligent enough to have a decent conversation without it devolving into sexual innuendo," his friend suggested.

Theo pondered that for a bit. "Hell, I could give her stimulating dialogue after, if she wants," he offered. “I mean, I could spew out an entire discourse on hexes and dark curses, if she’d just let me fondle her jubblies once!"

“Classy, Nott,” Bulstrode grunted at him from across the aisle.

Clearly, she’d overheard his conversation.

Well, if she was going to be rudely eavesdropping…

He threw his Housemate an obnoxious grin, knowing it would brass her off. “I know, right? I’m just that fuckin’ toff!”

Message received loud-and-clear about her needing to mind her own bloody business, the witch rolled her eyes at him and then returned to her conversation with Muriel Rothley.

Neither of his friends said anything more on the subject of his interests and Summer Formals, leaving him to grumble and turn-over what he knew and thought of Daphne Greengrass over the years and how he might convince her to give him a shot, even if they were T-minus one week to graduation.

The truth was Greengrass was a hard nut to crack. Prior to the Easter hols, before he’d lost his virginity, he’d always believed her to be a bit cold and untouchable—like some sort of ice sculpture cut into the likeness of a water nymph…and wholly unlike her two sisters, who were more like Lilin. However, one night not long after returning to Hogwarts from the break, he and she were hanging alone in the Slytherin common room—not a planned meeting by any means. He’d been trying to catch up on the studying he’d put off during the break due to…circumstances…and she’d been sitting across from him, reading silently for pleasure. Movement over the top of his book had caught his eye at some point, and he’d glanced over the edge to find her engrossed in her story…and slowly twirling a long, golden-blonde lock of her hair around and around one of her dainty fingers as she read. Her legs had been tucked up underneath her and she’d been leaning against a couch arm, and she’d wound and unwound that bit of hair over and over again for the next two hours, oblivious to his eyes upon her.

To his amazement, he’d become enthralled with just sitting there and watching her read, noting the way her eyes would soften over some chapters, and then harden during others. Prior to that night, his horny, teenage brain had never given much thought to females beyond their sexuality, but in those moments, he’d found himself enchanted.

Of course, then she’d shifted and looked up, and she’d caught him staring at her.
…And he’d made a comment about her thrupney bits to deflect from his embarrassment.

She’d merely stood up then and looked down her nose at him. “Perhaps someday, if you are a good boy, you might also be awarded the opportunity to do more than salivate over my cleavage, Mister Nott,” she’d told him in that uppity way of hers.

He’d gotten harder than a Beater’s bat at the sexually confident look in her eyes. She’d looked down at his crotch, seen it, and her lips had curled with a small, feminine smirk. He’d watched her walk away then, too knocked for a six to react.

Of course, immediately after that, he’d tried to put some distance between them. After all, it wouldn’t do to go pursuing her, especially after what had happened during Easter, when he’d gone home… She’d never understand, and she certainly wouldn’t want to touch him if she knew the truth of where his dick had been.

But now, as he watched her lean forward and that glorious mane of hair fell to curtain off her face, he was gripped once more with a need he couldn’t put a name to. Lust felt too simple a feeling. Whatever it was, all he could imagine was wrapping his fist around that hair and curling it as she had that night in their common room, only he’d use it to draw her close to him, until those pretty lips of hers were tilted at just the right angle…

“Becoming a drooling idiot over a witch too far above you is a bad idea,” Draco said, chuckling.

“You’d know,” Theo shot back with a grin, kicking Draco’s chair. His friend’s long-standing addiction to the Head Girl hadn’t been made clear to him until the last few days, and then it had been a case of him wanting to get his eyes checked by Pomfrey for having missed something so obvious for so long. Blaise had spent the last two days snickering at him, calling him ‘obtuse’ for not having noticed the obsession. In truth, if Theo had only known earlier, he could have avoided her altogether that one year and saved himself some serious sexual frustration. “I could get you a permanent nappie for that chin of yours,” he offered.

Blaise laughed aloud at that.

Draco scowled at him.

Theo wasn’t concerned. He knew his friend was just sensitive when it came to being ribbed, always had been.

When he turned back to the front of the room, to contemplate the lovely Miss Greengrass once more, he was surprised to find her staring at him this time. She turned away quickly at having been caught, but not before he spied the blush staining her golden cheeks.

Well, well.

It seemed Daphne wasn’t as indifferent to him as she’d pretended. Now wasn’t that something?
Friday, June 12, 1998 (evening)

Ginny pecked at her chicken, spinach and mushroom pie while trying to quell the excitement in her belly. Harry had informed them all that at seven o'clock tonight, Malfoy would approach them to pass out their blank cards for tomorrow night's big game, and Hermione had given them all a rundown back in their common room just before dinner, of what she knew of the game through her research on it. There hadn't been much, her friend had admitted, but at least being armed with some knowledge was better than going in ignorant.

Fidgeting in nervous excitement now for the appropriate hour to arrive, unable to contain her anxious energy levels, Ginny accidentally spilled the entirety of her apple juice on the plate to her immediate right. "Sorry, Neville," she apologized, watching the flaky crust of her friend's meal soak up the too-sweet beverage. "I've gone and ruined it now."

Always so gentle and kind, Neville shook his head. "No, it's fine. I thought it needed a bit of flavour added anyway."

She gave her friend an understanding smile and a small kiss on the cheek. "You really are too good a fellow, you know."

Nev's cheeks exploded with colour and he looked down at his plate, clearly embarrassed, stammering a muttered, unintelligible reply. Ginny couldn't help but be amused. Neville Longbottom was just so cute! And innocent… something she hadn't been in a while. She sighed for her lost virtue.

Reaching her glass into the middle of the table to request a refill, she happened to look up and across the room at that moment… and locked eyes with one clearly-incensed Blaise Zabini, whose dark gaze travelled between her and Neville and back again with obvious disdain.

Astonished, she nearly knocked her drinking cup over again. Harry saved her this time as he reached across and grabbed it before it could tip. "Gin, you okay?" he asked, concerned by her uncharacteristic clumsiness.

Pulling her attention away from the glittering black depths of her bitterest Quidditch rival's stare, she focused on her ex-boyfriend instead. "I'm sorry, what did you say?" she asked, shaken to her very core.

Over the last two years, there had been a lot of animosity between her and Zabini, as was only natural given their positions as Chasers pitted against each other on the Quidditch field, and the fact that they were in two opposing Houses. However, this was the first time she could ever recall him looking at her with naked, untamed anger. Usually, he preferred sneering down his nose at her, or viciously smirking in her direction. What had she done to provoke such a strong emotion in him this time?

"I asked if you're all right?" he inquired again, focusing on her with narrowed-eyed concern. "Are you ill?"

That was the third time in the last two days he'd asked about her health. Secretly, Ginny was suspicious that her ex was seeking any excuse to call her unfit for the game tomorrow night. Harry, she knew, was a little too possessive and overly-protective of the people he'd 'claimed' for his own, and the thought of possibly sharing her or allowing her under the thumb of some unscrupulous Slytherin didn't sit well with him, she knew. She understood, however, where those tendencies
originated - in his lonely childhood – and simply couldn't hold his possessiveness against him as a result.

Forcing a placating smile, she attempted to appear calm and in control of her nerves. "I'm perfectly fine, Harry," she reassured him. "Just a bit of gas."

Next to her, Neville began choking on his food, and had to cover his mouth with his napkin to prevent food particles from spraying the table. Ginny tried hard to cover her smile, but failed miserably when Seamus banged the table with an open palm and belted a hearty guffaw. He raised his glass of Mulled Mead—Madam Rosmerta's non-alcoholic blend, which was allowed at Hogwarts; it was Sea's favourite drink, as he always called it up with his meals—and saluted her.

"Honestly, Gin," Hermione giggled to her left. "Sometimes you say the most shocking things!"

"Got you to laugh, though, didn't it?" Ron asked around a mouthful of food from across the table from them, sitting at Harry's right. He swallowed. "Haven't heard you do that in over a month."

Hermione cleared her throat. "Yes, well, unlike some, I take final exams seriously."

Ron snorted, picking up his glass of pumpkin juice for a sip. "A little too serious, if you ask me."

Lavender scooted down to Ron's right, now that Parvati had excused herself to sit with her sister at Ravenclaw's table. "That's because studying has always been Hermione's sport of choice, Ron. You've got Quidditch, and she's got her revise charts. You've just never understood that."

"What's there to understand?" Gin's brother bantered back, shovelling another pile onto his fork and preparing it for open-mouth entry. "She's a little too obsessed with books, I tell you."

"Says the man who owns every Chudley Cannons branded item on the market," Harry countered with a mocking grin.

They all enjoyed a good one at that as Ron's cheeks turned an interesting shade of magenta.

It was in that moment that Hermione nudged Ginny in the ribs, and indicated with a nod of her chin that she was to look over at the Slytherin table. Peeking around Harry, Ginny dared another glance in the direction of her rival. This time, he indicated with his eyes and a tilt of his head for her to meet him outside in the hallway. She traded a silent message with Hermione, who nodded.

Was this it, then? Was this when Malfoy and the others would meet them with their cards? It was a quarter to seven now.

Her stomach fluttering with pixies, Ginny politely patted her mouth with her napkin, having eaten her fill, and made her excuses about wanting to enjoy a long, relaxing soak in the Prefects' bath before turning-in for the night. Hermione and Lavender offered to join her—as did Seamus, who was flatly turned down.

The three ladies tucked their utensils in proper, and headed out together. When they reached the hallway, an unmistakable, "Psssst," from a small, curtained alcove to one side of the Grand Staircase called their attention. It was Pansy Parkinson. "Draco said to wait for him and the others here," she whispered, replacing the Silencing Charm over the fabric entrance after checking to make sure no one had seen them duck behind the purple cloth. She, Tracey, and Daphne stood against one wall, so Ginny leaned against the opposite side, checking out the competition. 'Mione and Lav huddled at her side doing the same.

For a full minute, there was a strained silence that simply begged to be filled.
"So," Ginny began, wanting to suss out the manoeuvering of genders for this game. "I'm going to ask the really important question." Five pairs of eyes focussed on her as she dramatically paused for effect. "What's everyone wearing tomorrow night?"

Tracey tittered, and then tried to hide her amusement behind her hand in embarrassment.

"Well, it is sort of important, don't you think?" Ginny asked, feigning interest in her nails just then.

The three Slytherins shared their own silent communication with their eyes, and in that instant, she realized how similar she and her friends were to this group of girls who had stood on the opposite side of the fence for so very long.

Pansy shrugged. "We figured we'd get prettied up."

"Actually," Tracey corrected with a wry smile, "the boys asked us to. I'm wearing one of my Yule Ball alternate dresses."

Ginny straightened, unfamiliar with the term the other witch had used. "Alternate dress? You mean, like, you bought a second dress just in case you decided you didn't want to wear your first choice?"

"You do that, too!" Lavender squeaked in pleased surprise. "Thank Merlin! I thought I was the only wishy-washy girl out there who couldn't settle on a dress!"

Daphne bent down to adjust her knee-high socks. "It seems to be a trait we share, as I also will be draped in a secondary choice, although mine was originally intended for the Formal next week."

"Hmmm… well, I suppose I could wear the dress I planned to for next week's dance as well," Hermione considered, chewing her bottom lip in thought. "I can shop for a different one next Wednesday, as classes will be officially over for seventh-years then." She looked up at Ginny. "You'll be done by then as well, right? We could go together. Make a day of it in Diagon Alley! I'm sure Dumbledore would grant permission, so long as we promise to be back by dinner."

Lavender cooed. "Ooooh, sign me up, too!"

The idea of spending good Galleons on several dresses—some of which you might not ever wear—seemed odd to Ginny, but she went with it. "We're talking shopping, lunch, and ice cream, right? Seriously, you had to ask if I wanted in?"

Her best girl friend looked across the space between them, and directed her question to Pansy. "And you?"

Parkinson's stare was even, unfazed, and clearly weighing how much to say. She gave a casual shrug, crossing her arms over her chest at the same time. "I've got a costume I wanted to wear last Halloween. It's a gothic-style dress."

Hearing that, Ginny's heart did a teeny jig. "Well, at least someone with some taste around here," she smirked. "I prefer the Romanticism counter-culture myself, so I'll copy the idea, if you don't mind. I've got just the thing sitting in my trunk, just dying for a chance to air."

Tracey looked at each of them. "It's settled then," she brought them to an accord. "We'll dress to dazzle!"

"How sinful of you all!" Malfoy mock-chastised, stepping through the entrance. "Conspiring behind our backs like this, ladies. Tsk, tsk." Following him was the rest of the gaming group. Everyone hurried in and took up spots against the two walls, just as the girls had earlier.
With a sigh of disgust at Slytherin's Prince, Pansy waved her wand over the entrance again, assuring its privacy. 'Mione followed it up with a spell of her own that Ginny didn't recognize. She turned to the group, noted the variety of questioning gazes and shrugged. "Doesn't hurt to be thorough," her housemate explained. "And, I even added an extra spell that blends the entrance into the wall. Unless you knew this place was here all ready, you wouldn't know it existed at all."

Malfoy's smirk meandered up his cheek. "Like the Room of Requirement. Clever," he complimented. "But then, I'd expect no less from the Head Girl."

The earlier comfortable camaraderie that had begun with the women was erased in an instant with that one comment. The Gryffindors crowded closer together in the already-overcrowded space and faced off against the Slytherins, trading glares. Hermione crossed her arms over her chest and stared her blond arch-nemesis down. "You just can't help being a foul-mouthed git, can you?" she asked, shaking her head in resigned cynicism. "I think it must be a consequence of all that Malfoy in-breeding."

Opening his mouth to retort, it was a surprisingly quick Daphne Greengrass who slapped a hand over Draco's face and stopped him cold. "I do not doubt that the scathingly adroit rejoinder you planned to launch at Miss Granger would generate hours of endless self-gratification, Mister Malfoy, but need I remind you that we have a distinct purpose here tonight, and that belaying said task may, in fact, result in our imminent discovery by a member of the staff sooner, rather than later?"

There was a pause as everyone digested what she'd just said.

"Wow, that was so totally hot," her brother muttered from somewhere off to her right. "She made a scolding sound sexy!"

Ginny felt like sinking into the floor. Only Ron could make the seriousness of the moment inappropriately charged with sexual intimation.

"You said it!" Theodore Nott chimed in from the other side of the aisle. "Smart girls get you hard!"

Ginny actually groaned and slapped her face into her hand, realizing in a second that there was truth to the myth that everyone had a like-minded doppelganger out in the world somewhere. In this case, her older brother was standing not three feet away from his own.

When she turned back to focus on the team across from her, Draco was already charming open a Bag of Holding and pulling out a wooden box that looked like it might have come from the Victorian Era. He plunked it down into Pansy's hands and opened it, extracting a deck of oversized cards. They were about the size of two Muggle playing cards placed top to bottom, and about as wide sitting side by side. Leaning forward, Ginny was able to fully appreciate the beauty of the artistry on the backs: a full-colour image, deeply burnished with bronze and gold foil paints depicting the mythological paradigm of true love, Eros and Psyche.

At the top of an arching canvas stood the moon and the sun on opposite sides, the stars twinkling in between. In the far-off background of the cloud milieu was a fantasy castle with glistening spires that reminded her distinctly of Hogwarts. In the centre, hypnotically pulling one's attention, the lovers embraced – Psyche draped in a shimmering gold swath of satiny fabric, her hair pulled into a half-updo by layers of metal combs and twisted and looped by glistening foil leaves, the long, aureate strands winding down her naked back. Held in her tight, desperate embrace was her Cupid, whose profile was hidden behind Psyche's, his cheek pressed into her temple. Short, phoenix wings made of golden feathers erupted from his back, sensuously curling at the ends. He was completely naked, although his body was mostly hidden as it pressed intimately into his paramour's curves, shielded by her flowing, molten dress. It was an erotic post, yet innocent at the same time.
It was Psyche's face that drew one's attention however, as a miniscule tilting to the image's pouting ruby lips denoted a hidden sorrow that tugged at the heart. Usually, Ginny he wasn't one for ominous signs or scrying for portents, but in that moment, a chill crept up her spine and she had her first taste of doubt about this whole design. Glancing at the faces of everyone else, though, she noted that only two others seemed to share her reservations—Daphne and 'Mione. The others appeared engrossed in watching the proceedings or each other, barely taking an interest in the artwork on the back of the deck.

Malfoy divided the cards up and counted them out. He then looked from one face to the next as he made his presentation. "First, I'm required to go over the rules of the game," he stated. "As the Lead Challenger, that makes me head of Slytherin's team. As the Contender, Potter serves as the head of Gryffindor's. As such, either of us may, at any time before the actual game begins, forfeit the match for our team." He smirked. "But I think we can pretty much state here and now that's not going to happen, right?"

There was a chorus of nods and ascent from both sides of the narrow aisle.

"Good, now that's out of the way," Malfoy continued, "it is part of the convention that I lay down the game play. Even if you know this already, I'm obligated by the rules to reiterate. So, pay attention because I'm not wasting time tomorrow night repeating this crip." He then launched into a full explanation of the purpose of the game, and how it was played, including the purpose of each of the four different colour-coded decks. "Again, the red cards represent the Deeds cards. The blue are the Forfeits. Green is for Interrogations. And the gold card is the Partners deck." He showed an example of each, holding it up and moving it from side to side slowly. "Don't mess it up when you're writing your questions, punishments, and rewards, because nothing can be taken back once it's down on the card."

"What happens if two of us write the same question, or the same punishment or reward?" Ron asked from the back, his greater height affording him a good view even at such a distance.

Draco began passing out the cards—one Partner, two Interrogations, two Deeds, and two Forfeits—to each player as he answered. "The cards are charmed, Weasley. Once you sign your name to the Partner card tonight, the game officially begins for you, and the spell on the deck aligns to all of the players who have signed their card before midnight tonight. If one of us writes something down that's too similar to the others, the cards will simply erase and prompt you to try again. That's why it's important to start right away on filling in the cards, because you don't want someone to trump your ideas." He glanced down at 'Mione as he passed her cards to her. "Remember that."

When everyone had their cards in hand, he took his wand out. "You mark up the cards by touching the tip of your wand to the blank side and thinking what you want to appear." He placed the end of his wand on the Partner card in his hand and before their eyes, his name appeared. "To seal the cards and keep the content you've written on them frozen you simply keep your wand tip on the surface and say, 'Meus mos est vox.'"

A bright, white light surrounded Draco and the card together for a moment as the magical contract was made, fading out in seconds.

"'My will is word,'" Hermione translated the Latin spell, a thoughtful expression on her face as she turned the cards over in her hands. "Interesting. Just like a Wizard's Oath."

Malfoy nodded. "Exactly like a Wizard's Oath, which means, you're promising to obey the rules and stay until the game is concluded, and not to speak of anything that happens in-game with anyone not involved in this set ever."
Removing a honey-coloured lollipop from his mouth, Seamus gave a grunt. "An Oath o' Silence as well, then?" he asked.

Her Housemate's brogue was thicker than usual, which always indicated an elevated level of nervousness in him. Ginny shivered in response, loving the way the syllables rolled off the man's tongue. Even though he was an incredible man-slag, and she'd sampled him once, he was still a very sexy wizard. Sea could easily make a girl wet just by talking.

Another shiver danced down her spine, as a whiplash of anger slid across her magical aura. It felt as if she'd just been burned by fire. She glanced up, unsure of where it was coming from… and was skewered on Zabini's knowing, dark gaze across the way. From the daggers he was staring into the very heart of her, it was clear that he was incensed with her again.

What the hell had she done this time?

Annoyed with his cryptic emotional displays, Ginny simply raised an eyebrow at him and flattened her expression, letting him know in a simple look that she wouldn't let him intimidate her, and she could care less what his problem was. His lips twitched in rising fury and she pointedly turned away, determined to ignore him from then on. Whatever his problem with her was, she refused to allow it to affect her mood.

"Questions?" Draco addressed them again. "Last chance."

"You collectin' these before or at the game?" Ron asked for clarification.

Malfoy tsk'd, clearly believing the answer should be obvious. "At the game. Hold onto them until then, and for Slytherin's sake, don't let anyone else see them – especially teachers. This is a forbidden game on campus, don't forget, and I don't relish expulsion a week away from graduation."

"Who's setting up the Room of Requirement?" Harry asked, once more reaching for his phantom glasses, noting the behaviour and changing it at the last second to run his fingers through his short hair instead.

Draco shrugged. "I'll do it, if you trust me?" He grinned like a shark, all white teeth in that pale, pointed face.

Harry stared hard at him. "No, I think we'll do it together, if you don't mind."

Always so polite, Harry was. It's too bad their chemistry didn't mesh, Ginny thought, because he'd have been the perfect guy for her. He was the romantic, wanting to take his time making love for hours, never rough, always soft and patient. Ginny liked things a little harder, more desperate, though. It was this incompatibility in the bedroom that had driven them apart. Tragic, really.

Malfoy snickered. "Fine by me, Potter. Shall we meet at half past six tomorrow night in front of the room? We'll arrange it as necessary when we get there."

Harry nodded. "Deal." He raised his card, magically signed his name with his wand, and then spoke the charm to commit to this course of action.

Following their teammate's lead, the rest of the Gryffindors and Slytherins did likewise. Once everyone had bound themselves to the game, Malfoy turned towards the fabric door, peeking out, making sure the coast was clear. He turned back once, grinning with glee. "See you tomorrow night, pips. Don't forget your hankies." With that, he was gone, Zabini and Nott following close behind.

Eventually, they all made their exits together, girls going next in groups of three. When they retired
to their House common room, the six Gryffindor teammates looked askance at each other, nodded, and left for their dorms without another word. Ginny followed Hermione and Lavender back to their room. Pavarti was out, probably hanging with her sister for the evening, as the two liked to bunk over in each other's rooms every other weekend, to hang with the boys from that House during that time. Apparently, it was a Ravenclaw weekend for her friend. That worked out just splendidly as far as Ginny was concerned.

Locking and bespelling the door for privacy, Hermione indicated them to all flop down on her bed. "We should work together on our cards, so we don't duplicate any efforts and waste precious time. You heard the Ferret about getting down an idea first. I've got some ideas that I'm praying a Slytherin doesn't take."

Ginny considered it. "I don't mind sharing the fun," she admitted. "In fact, if we do it together, we'll get it done quicker."

Lavender nodded. "Sounds good to me, too." She put her cards down on the red and gold coverlet, and separated them by colour. Picking up a blue Forfeit first, she held it up. "I think we should do punishments first, though, since I'm sure the Slytherins will immediately jump on that."

'Mione chuckled. "If I know Malfoy, that will be the first cards he'll reach for, followed by the Deeds."

Ginny held up her blue card as well. "All right then, what kind of penalties shall we invent to torture our fellow players?"

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**TO BE CONTINUED...**
Long first chapter, I know, but it sets the stage. The remaining chapters won't be quite as long.

Madam Rosmerta's Mulled Mead recipe is an actual drink served at The Three Broomsticks. Since they serve Butterbeer – another Hogsmeade specialty brew, which is slightly alcoholic - at Hogwarts for special functions (it's served at Slughorn's Christmas party in "Half-Blood Prince" novel, for instance), I figured another Mulled Mead would fit right in and be seen as harmless by the staff, since it's non-alcoholic. Here's the recipe (source: ):

**Ingredients:**

1 quart of water  
1 cup of honey  
1/2 teaspoon of nutmeg  
1/4 teaspoon of ginger  
1/2 teaspoon almond extract  

**Directions:**  
Step 1: Add all ingredients to a pan, and bring to a boil on the stove.  
Step 2: As it begins to boil, a skin will form on the surface. Scrape it off, and continue to stir the contents of the pan until the scum ceases to form.  
Step 3: Allow to cool, and enjoy!

Bag of Holding: A bag with an Undetectable Extensions Charm placed upon it. The term is an old roll-playing gaming term.
Partners & The 1st Question

Chapter Summary

Let the games begin...!

Chapter Notes

I recommend the song, "Voulez-Vous" by The Cast of 'Mamma Mia' (cover of ABBA song) to set the tone of the game for you. Give it a listen!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, Scotland

Room of Requirement
In the Room of Requirement, the game's twelve participants sat in the designated common area on the cozy, circular couches provided in advance by both Harry and Malfoy's joint efforts. On the coffee table between them sat three stacks of cards, arranged by color, all face down. Each group pile had been shuffled by both team leaders several times to ensure blending and fairness. A fourth stack was separate from the others; it contained all of the cards with the female players' names.

It was rather fortunate, Hermione thought, that the spell on the cards would know not to pit Ginny with Ron, as they were siblings. She had asked Malfoy to double-check the rules that had came with the set, and he'd confirmed that direct relations couldn't be paired. Thank Godric! At least the game had some moral values.

Each player waited in silence for the castle bell to chime the seven o'clock hour. Most seemed lost in his or her own thoughts, a few looked about, and everyone fidgeted to some degree.

Hermione used the time to take a good, long gander at the others. Every single player had dressed chic and were done up smart, and there was an undercurrent of sexiness to each outfit – from dipping cleavage to snug trousers, from perfume to accessory choices - as if all of them were somehow eager to use this game as an excuse for some naughty experimentation. Even Hermione had to admit that she had dressed provocatively, not wanting to be outdone by Pansy or Lavender – the two women in the room she most envied for their lovely style.

The ladies, as agreed, had all worn dresses.

Directly across from her, Tracey had on a floor-length peacock-print that shimmered iridescent purple, lavender, and indigo blue. Silver embroidery outlined the feather and fan-shapes printed on the dress, and the cross-over 'vee' neck gave a nice hint of cleavage, but not too much to make the dress seem slaggy. Her silver shoes with the jewelled strap, as Hermione could see from how she crossed her legs, accented her pretty arched foot. Her toenails and fingernails were painted purple to match, and her frills consisted of purple marquis-cut amethysts in silver. They tastefully adorned her neck and ears and her right index finger. She looked quite elegant with her long, blonde hair pinned into a French twist, too, and classically applied makeup that highlighted her natural beauty.

To Tracey's right sat Daphne. The woman was a fascinating dyadic of opposites: classic blonde beauty hidden beneath a pair of sensible reading glasses, which she needed for this game and was too practical, it seemed, to remove them and face discomfort for the sake of fashion – a move Hermione heartily applauded. The witch's blonde hair was left down and curled at the ends, her makeup a little darker around the eyes, but was still rather modest. Her dress was a satin scarf style, flowing to her knees. It was a flower-paisley print in tones of light greens and blues, with black outlines. Like Tracey, her neckline plunged, as the dress was a halter, and her smallish breasts were highlighted well as a result. On her feet was a pair of dainty, matching ballet slippers with flowery designs on the toes. Her jewellery was made up of some light blue stone wrapped in silver – rather Celtic in design – adorning her middle ring finger on her left hand, her neck and on her wrist. Overall, she was the picture of a fashionable wood sprite – which was in absolute contrast to her deeply intellectual personality. Hermione found the resulting dichotomy intriguing.

Pansy's Parisian gothic dress was stunning. Made of velvet, silk and lacy-sheer fabrics, it draped down to her knees, a lovely purple-magenta and black ensemble, pierced by bright silver buttons and draping chains. She wore a pair of matching silk heels with black velvet bows. It was her jewellery,
however, that truly captured Hermione's attention: a silver burnished snake ear drape in her left side, a matching silver burnished snake bracelet on her left wrist, and a black velvet collar with silver detail and teardrop black glass beads brought the entire piece together. Her hair was the same as always, softly brushed and shining dark brown, almost black, but unlike her fellow Housemates, Pansy went dramatic on the make-up. Her eyes were smoky, exotic with heavy liner and mascara and sparkling charcoal shadow. Her mouth was lined a very dark colour – near black – and filled in with a matching lipstick. Her pale cheeks had been dusted with blushing powder. She looked almost as if she was dressed for Halloween, but Hermione knew that in the Muggle world, she would have fit right into the Goth scene. Ostensibly, Pansy looked rather stunning.

On her left side of the Gryffindor couch, to Hermione's left, sat Ginny. Like Pansy, she was dressed in a costume, rather than typical dress robes. Of course, Ginny had developed a flair for the thespian style, her leisure clothing reflecting an old-world, piratical theme in general, with flowing shirts and skirts. Tonight's dress and matching jacket was – in a phrase – impressive in its originality, vivid and striking in its execution, and held just a touch of romance for good measure. Made of heavy embroidered material that was iridescent orange and red, the outer jacket looked very much like a Regency Era great coat, with flaring, wide sleeves and ribbons. The piece was tied in the centre by a narrow corset that was synched together with another ribbon. Silver buttons – three on a side – adorned the corset's middle. Under the jacket was a simple, black satin dress with spaghetti straps. The whole thing terminated at mid-thigh. In a bold move, Ginny decided to accent her outfit not with tall boots, but with sexy, mid-thigh stockings that had a narrow strip in the back of each that was done up with ribbon. On her feet, she wore black patent leather five-inch heels. Her accoutrements were meant to pull the piece together – a black satin throat collar with a large iridescent rose, red amber rose-shaped earrings, and a red amber and silver ring. Her hair had been tightly tied up into a ponytail at the top of her head, and left to fall down her back. Like Pansy, her makeup was dramatic – bright orange and red shadow, heavy liner, dark, cherry-coloured lips. She was absolutely remarkable, exuding a fantasy sexiness that definitely enticed all of the men in the room, especially Blaise, it seemed. The man's eyes had lit up with interest as soon as he'd spied her tonight.

To Hermione's right sat Lavender dressed in, remarkably enough, a satin sheath similar to Greengrass' dress. Like her name, the dress was lavender in colour, accented with brown, light blue and light yellow, in an exotic lotus blossom pattern. A brown satin ribbon tied into a bow at the apex of a tasteful 'vee' neckline, adding a flirty feel to the dress. She wore lavender heels, and dark purple amethyst heart earrings. On her right wrist dangled a very dainty silver bracelet with silver heart dangles of varying sizes and styles. On her left hand, a dark amethyst ring set in a silver heart setting sat on her middle finger. Her make-up was as tasteful as Daphne's as well; lavender shadow, brown liner and mascara, light pink lipstick. Quixotic and dreamy were the qualities she exuded.

As for Hermione… she'd fallen in love with her dress the minute she'd seen it in the Muggle store in downtown London's more 'chic-chic' district, and it had cost her a pretty pence, but she'd been careful with her money for years; all those Christmas and birthdays she'd been gifted money had gone right into the bank. She'd splurged on the dress, seeing as how it was her last year in school.

It was a floor-length, silk dress that simply flowed like water when she moved. The top was a halter style – the saleslady had called it 'Rome's Egyptian style' – with very little fabric to it, honestly. It had a thick, bejeweled collar, and was backless to the sway of her spine, so she wouldn't be able to wear a bra with it. It was a multitude of jewel-tone colours, printed almost like tie-dye, with fractal round patterns blooming up here and there, adding a three-dimensional visual texture. Creams, oranges, reds, yellows, purples, aquas, pinks… they blended seamlessly, beautifully to create a montage of colour. On her feet were a pair of gold strappy three-inch heels, and the only jewellery she allowed, so as not to detract from the dress, were a pair of golden dangle hoops with diamond butterflies, and a thin, bangle bracelet that was made of a multitude of crisscrossing wires in an interlocking pattern.
As for her hair, she'd pinned her hair up on the sides, allowing the remainder to curl down her back, and she'd tamed it so it would lay flat, not fuzzy, in shiny, shimmering waves. She'd gone dramatically on the make-up, though, so as not to be drowned out by the dress: dusky pink, bronze, gold shadow, dark brown liner and mascara, shimmering pink blusher, pink-strawberry lips.

The effect, in her opinion, was that she appeared sophisticated, with a touch of dreamy romance.

The men were equally as diverse in their clothing options as the women had been.

Blaise was dressed in a long-sleeved, dark purple silk shirt, a pair of black woolen dress slacks, and black, shiny shoes. He wore no ostentatious ornamentation, but Hermione had scented a cologne on him that hinted of frankincense.

Theo was all casual summer: black polo, white trousers, black shoes, brown belt. He looked comfortable and stylish, as if he were going out on a summer cruise around the harbour with a date. His hair had been combed, and he had shaved his usual five o'clock shadow. He smelled of pears and citrus.

Harry, like Blaise, had gone for practical-attractive: a dark green, long-sleeved cotton dress shirt that made his eyes pop, dark black dress slacks, and black, low-backed leather boots that had been polished. Around his neck was his favourite necklace, a gift from Sirius – a black leather cord with a silver Celtic tri-fecta pendant, which had been bespelled to give him mental clarity at all times, even when drunk off his horse. Hermione would give her right foot for such a charmed item! His cologne was subtle, spicy, like cedar and mint.

Ron had gone as dramatic as his sister, wearing an ensemble that ironically matched Ginny's. Hermione was, in fact, betting that Ginny helped her brother pick out the outfit and convinced him to wear it tonight, just so she wouldn't feel alone in her flashy fashion sense. A smartly dramatic, iridescent orange-red jacket cut in a Regency Era officer's uniform style was adorned with velvet cuffs and edging, with silver buttons up both sides of the divide. Underneath, he wore a black satin dress shirt. His pants were extremely interesting – tight in the inseam and hugging his body down to the ankles, where a zipper was attached to both legs. On his feet, he wore a pair of shiny, black leather shoes that had no obvious laces. His hair was gelled to stand on end, and as usual, he'd worn his diamond earring stud in his left ear; he'd gotten it pierced this year on his birthday, in a fit of rebellion and because he wanted to mimic his big brother, Bill. He'd shaved, too. Overall, he looked quite dapper. And he smelled good, as well – like spring grass and the fresh dew of morning.

Seamus had surprised her, appearing in a more formal, summer wool suit, complete with dress shirt and vest. Of course, he'd worn trainers to "off-set the ponce look," as he'd referred to it. Personally, she thought that the dark grey outfit with the white collared shirt looked rather fetching on him, and gave him an air of maturity that he definitely could use, despite the sneakers. He smelled divine, however, like leather and whiskey.

Malfoy… Whoa. He'd gone with a look that left Hermione quite breathless, honestly, although she refused to admit it by even allowing her eyes to roam too long over him. Dressed in all white - a shocking first - he'd donned a pair of loose, summer-weight, cotton dress slacks, a thin white, cotton dress tank top (he'd left the top buttons open), and partnered the outfit up with a burnished silver and beige leather belt, and white, tie dress shoes. On his wrist, he wore a matching beige bracelet made of leather, and around his neck were strung three cords – one close to his throat, and the other two swinging down the open 'vee' of his shirt, showing off not only the silver dragon pendants he had hung from the ropes, but also an impressive physique that she hadn't known he'd sported. His hair was ruffled to look casually indifferent, much as Harry's had always been prior to him cutting it shorter this past spring. He was comfortably casual and steamily sexy as he sat across from her on the
Slytherin couch, his full lips pouty, winter-grey eyes staring at the ceiling as he leaned his head back into the cushions, showing off a delicious expanse of bared neck.

As she stared at him now, Hermione grew decidedly uncomfortable… and in a way she hadn't expected. Between her thighs, she felt a bit sticky.

Determined not to think about Malfoy in that way, she turned her attention to fiddling with her bracelet instead, twirling it round and round on her wrist, fighting the urge to jiggle her leg.

As the first toll of the bell rang out throughout the castle and surrounding grounds, Draco looked up at Harry and nodded, and Harry turned to Seamus and tapped him on the leg. The men had drawn straws earlier to see who would go first to draw from the *Partners* deck, and in what order.

Seamus stepped up to the set of gold cards and flipped the first one. His gaze traveled to Lavender. "Seems I'll be gettin' me second chance after all, angel," he slowly smiled, his green eyes warming as he crossed over to her and handed her his *Partners* card – the one that had his magical signature on it. He kept hers in the trade.

Lavender looked positively astonished, blushing, and looked down at the floor, taking his card with shaky hands. "Oh," was all she said.

As Seamus returned to his seat, Blaise stood up next and took the top card off the pile next. His grin was positively feral as he silently read the name. Moving across to the Gryffindor side, seating himself beside Ginny on the couch, he passed her his *Partners* card without a word.

Livid splotches of red painted her friend's cheeks. "There is no God," she sighed with resentment. Accepting his card, she leaned back into the cushions of the sofa, frowning, and crossed her arms over her chest in a defensive posture.

Zabini remained silent at her side, smirking in triumph.

Theo went next. His grin was cheery as he read off his name. "Hey, check it, Daph!" He showed her the card he'd pulled. "It's you and me, babe!"

Daphne adjusted the reading glasses on her nose. "So it would seem." She held out a hand for his card. He passed it off to her and sat at her side, too.

Hermione looked at the dwindling supply of cards and felt her heart racing, knowing who was next and terrified of her odds. One in three. There was still a one in three chance that she might end up with either Harry or Ron. Oh, please. Oh, please. Oh, please, she prayed to whatever deity might be listening in the great wide cosmos. She may have started all of this with the intent of making Malfoy pay for being an unbelievable arsehole all these years, but now that the reality had come down - specifically, that she'd had an opportunity to read the *Deeds and Forfeits* of her Housemates in advance and knew what kind of depravity would go on during this game - she was regretting such foolhardy revenge planning. The idea of being the partner to Slytherin's Prince was decidedly dismaying.

Malfoy said nothing for several seconds as he flipped the name card. The tiniest twitch of his lips was all she needed to know her doom had been settled, however. She closed her eyes and swallowed the heavy heart-shaped lump in her throat. Ginny's hand on her knee to her left was the only anchor to her world of sanity in that moment.

A presence stood over her, and in graceful surrender, she held her hand out knowing what was expected of her. To her astonishment, Malfoy did not simply pass his *Partners* card to her. Instead,
he bent one knee before her, and caught her hand up. With a chivalrous flourish that shocked her into meeting his gaze head-on, he pressed a kiss to the back of her knuckles. Pools of lively, heated mercury stared directly into her soul.

"It's been our raison d'ètre from the beginning to cross swords again and again, Granger," he said. "What made you think tonight would be any different?"

Something in the way he'd phrased that… "Did you cheat?" she challenged, yanking her hand away and rubbing the imprint of his lips against her skin away with disgust, feeling real ire grow in her belly. If he had defrauded the game it would automatically disqualify the both of them – something she was praying for just then, as that meant her team would get a win from it, and she wouldn't have to touch him. The cards would make him answer honestly, too, as the spell upon them would ensure his truthfulness now that he'd signed the magical contract and bound his will to the rules.

"No," he told it to her straight, and she felt her heart sink again, "but I tried to. The game wouldn't let me. It prevented my spell. This time" - he held up her name card and passed her his - "it was definitely all Fate, princess." He stood to his full height, which stood only an inch or so shy of Ron and Theo. "Personally, I can't wait to find out all of your secrets, beautiful."

Staring at the card in her hand as he made his way back across the room, Hermione felt hot tears waver before her eyes. She blinked them away, refusing to appear weak. The others had accepted their destinies with some small measure of grace - even Ginny, who had seemed to want to rail about the unfairness of it all at the top of her lungs, but had simply sat back and quietly sulked – so she could do the same. She was a Gryffindor, after all, and that meant she'd take this hit on the chin and get back up.

Harry was next. He blushed when he read the name he chose, a shy expression lighting his features as he glanced over at Tracey Davis. "It seems we're partners tonight," he told her, heat blooming across his face and neck.

Tracey's smile was equally self-conscious. "Oh, well, that's... good," she replied, accepting his name card, her own face as crimson as Harry's.

"At least someone's happy around here," Ron stated, his disappointment obvious. He flashed Pansy her name card – the last in the stack. "I have a feeling this isn't going to be a good night," he told the woman who was staring at him with irate fury.

"No," Pansy replied, her tone ice cold, "it definitely will not be."

Now that the partners were fixed, the two teams resumed their proper seating across from each other, and Malfoy and Harry tossed a Galleon into the air to see which side would draw the first Interrogations question. The Slytherins won the toss.

As Theo was on the furthest edge of the couch on one side, he reached for a green card to start them off.

Malfoy stopped him by holding up his hand. "Last chance," he offered them all. "Anyone want to chicken out, now's the time."

Eyes moved around the room at record pace, gauging who would might decide to forfeit. A few
faces, including her own, Hermione knew, looked fondly towards the room's exit, but no one moved. Hell, no one breathed.

After a wait of a minute, Malfoy nodded.

"Ladies, time to cast the Contraceptive and Disease Charm," he instructed the witches in the room. "No unintended pregnancies tonight. And don't forget to recast the C&DC at the beginning of every action round, too, after the questions are answered. It's not my job to remind you."

Each of the women picked up their wand from the centre table and did as instructed. Madam Pomfrey had been particularly vigilant in assuring that all of the girls in school – from the fourth year on up - knew this particular charm by heart.

When that was done, and the pink glows had faded out, and everyone's wands were returned to the table, Theo turned over the first card. "It's one of my own!" he informed them, leering. "Right, so, here we go..."

"If you had to go down on your partner right now in front of the group because of a card, would you secretly like it, feel indifferent or hate it?"

He turned to his left to Pansy, as the rules required, and the game commenced.

She snorted, tapping her foot on the floor twice in a gesture of sheer irritation. "Stupid question. Hate it, obviously."

"Feeling's mutual, beeotch," Ron snarled, crossing his arms and striking a pose similar to his sister.

Malfoy buzzed him. "No answering out of turn, Weasley." He pointed to Parkinson. "Pans, take a Deeds. No, not the blue deck. The red one." With an imperious motion with his hand, he commanded the group back on task. "Daphne, you're next."

Greengrass pursed her lips together and let her eyes roam over Theo in contemplation. "I would most likely enjoy it," she decreed after only a slight pause.

Theo nearly dropped the green card in his hand. "S-seriously?" he asked, his jaw practically hitting the floor.

Daphne re-adjusted her glasses on the bridge of her nose and nodded. "Yes, I enjoy dominating a man," she admitted, reaching for a Deeds card now that she'd answered the question. "It arouses me to bring him to the heights of erotic pleasure, only to watch him unravel under my touch."

Almost every person in the room performed a face-vault at her proclamation.

"Holy gobstones," Ron breathed out hard. "Why couldn't I have gotten you?"

"Next!" Malfoy required.

Blaise stared across the room at his partner and narrowed his eyes. "Oh, I'd love to make her squirm under my tongue. Then she'd have to live with the fact that a Slytherin made her come harder than she ever had before."

Ginny stared hard at him through narrowed eyes, and turned her nose up at him with disdain, refusing to be cowed by Zabini's venomous glare. "Dream on," she grit. "You'd be lucky to get me wet."
Blaise reached for a red card. "I hope this reward lets me prove you wrong, little lioness," he snarled, putting it face-down on his knee. No one was allowed to read their Deeds or Forfeits until everyone had answered, per the rules.

Ron growled, and Harry had to nudge him to remind the man to tamp down on his natural urges to play the overprotective brother tonight.

Tracey, who was next in line, looked over at Harry, flushed and lowered her eyelashes. "Um… well, I'd… Do I have to answer?"

Malfoy shrugged. "If you want. If not, you'll have to take a Forfeits card, though."

The witch considered that for a moment, turning bright pink as she mulled over the risks. Finally, she seemed to come to a decision, her back straightening, her eyes lifting to her partner's with uncertainty, but a sincere resolve. "I'd... I'd..." She seemed to lose her bravado quite suddenly, her voice ending in a soft whisper, "really like it, I think."

From the corner of her eye, Hermione spied Harry turn an interesting shade of red and adjust the collar of his shirt, as if needing to loosen it. For a second, she wondered if her best male friend had ever had a woman do that to him, as she knew Ginny hadn't.

And now it was Malfoy's turn.

Hermione tried - really, honestly tried - not to look at him when he answered this one, knowing he was going to scoff and laugh at the ludicrousness of this question in regards to touching her 'dirty' self. The answer was so painfully obvious, in fact, that her ego took the pounding with only a small pang. She wasn't vain, per se, but she was a woman who liked to be told she was desirable on occasion. That Malfoy thought her beneath him…

"Like it," he said, staring her in the eye when she glanced up in surprise again. "Very, very much," he finished, his patented naughty smirk sliding up the side of his cheek.

She blinked twice. "But-"

"Next," he cut her off, turning to Seamus, who sat directly across from him on the Gryffindor side. "Your turn."

Her partner reached for a Deeds card with casual indifference, not looking at her again.

Hermione's heart was thudding in her chest so hard she almost passed out. Had Malfoy just said he'd like to eat her out? Really?

"It's one of my favourite things to do," her Irish-lilting friend admitted to his partner with a lopsided grin. "So, of course, I'd love it!"

Lavender, who sat directly next to Finnigan, gaped at him as he reached forward and grabbed a red card. "And that's why? Not because it's me, but because you like doing it?" she scathingly asked.

"No debate," Draco reminded her. "The card doesn't say we discuss the answers, merely that we answer them."

Lavender turned a cross look on him. "How he answers will determine my answer," she stated, quite put out. She turned back to Sea. "Well?"

Reaching out a hand, he gently chucked her under the jaw. "For both reasons, sweet angel," he
explained with a foolhardy grin. "I've been wantin' ta do it ta ya fer years, but ya kept turnin' me
down."

Cutting her eyes to the floor again, Lavender's blush returned. "Oh, well... My turn to answer, right?
Well-" She swallowed, paused, seemed to struggle with herself. "I-I'd... bloody hell, I can't lie! It
won't let me!"

Malfoy chuckled. "No, you can't lie. But again, you can choose a Forfeit card if you want in lieu of
answering."

With a resigned sigh, she reached for the card stack. "He answered it so I will. I'd like it," she
grumbled and grabbed a Deeds card. "Happy?"

"Very," Seamus purred, moving closer to her.

Lavender slapped his hand away as it landed on her knee. "That doesn't mean you can grope me."

"Not yet, anyway," Ron commented at her side and shrugged those massive shoulders of his. "Well,
my answer's obvious: like it."

As soon as the words were out of his mouth, everyone froze in utter surprise – including Ron. He
looked like he was about to suffer from apoplexy right there, his face ghosting white and his mouth
gaping open.

"I meant... I'd love it."

He blinked again, anger fast replacing his confusion, and began swearing.

Across the aisle, Pansy barked a vitriolic laugh. "I'll just bet you would, you pervert," she sniffed in
dry amusement, smoothing the front of her dress.

"No commentary," Harry chastised in the manner of Malfoy, throwing the Slytherin team leader a
"right back at you" look.

"FUCK!" Ron shouted, reaching for a Deeds card. "This game so totally sucks!"

And then it was Hermione's turn, and her heart started pounding again. How did she feel about the
idea of touching Malfoy? Well, naturally, she loathed him, so... "Hate it, because I know he'd use it
against me afterward to hurt me in some cruel way," she spoke before she even had time to think up
a proper response, blinking in surprise that it just popped out of her mouth.

Appalled, she put a hand up over her mouth, her eyes jerking to her partner's face. Slytherin's Prince
stared back at her with a cool blankness that didn't seem natural to any form of mammalian species.
He was so like a snake in that moment – so blank that she couldn't read him – that Hermione felt
very much like the mouse before a hypnotizing cobra.

Everyone in the room had stalled again, glancing between her and Draco, as if they suspected
violence to erupt at any moment. Thirty seconds ticked by, then a minute, and still no one moved.
Finally, Hermione's hand fell to her lap and she reached for a red card, taking her eyes from her
greatest rival's with severe anxiety fluttering through her chest.

It was Ginny's turn. She stared across the aisle at Blaise with an animosity that was unrivaled
between any of the partners. "Hate it," she confessed, "because just like 'Mione, I could never like
touching someone who wanted to hurt me."
Blaise's eyebrows twitched, but aside from that, he didn't say a word. Ginny grabbed a Deeds card from the stack, her wary gaze never leaving her partner's own black stare. Hermione reached out a hand and entwined her fingers with her best friend in a show of supportive strength.

They finally came to Harry. He cleared his throat and looked over at Tracey. "Well, I don't really know you, do I? And I'm not sure I would like doing something that intimate with you if there was no emotional connection. I wouldn't hate the idea either, though, as you are quite attractive. I suppose, until things change – if they change – I'd have to say indifferent for now. But please understand that my answer has to do with my comfort levels, not because I don't find you physically desirable because I do. Quite a lot, in fact. That dress only adds to the appeal - especially the cleavage."

"Whoa, maybe a bit too honest there," Teddy laughed, reaching across the narrow gap between couches to slap the Gryffindor on the shoulder, all chummy.

As Harry reached for a red card, Nott stared over at his partner, Daphne. "Oh, I'd love eating you out, baby, no question! Especially if you reached into that superior vocabulary of yours and started spouting off rare expletives every time you came for me." He leaned in a little close, smiling like a shark. "How many different ways can you say, 'oh, god, yes!' do you think?"

Daphne turned her head and stared him dead on, unperturbed by his nastiness. "You may have the opportunity to find out during this challenge, Mister Nott - but only if you're a very good boy."

Theo's eyes brightened, widened, and his grin leaped to match. He grabbed a Deeds card from the pile, excited to see what he would get.

*Probably hoping for an oral sex requirement now,* Hermione thought. She knew just how eager Theo was for pushing the physical with a girl.

"Everyone's answered, so you may all turn over your cards over and read them. You'll then be required to perform or receive a performance from your partner as the text on the card allows," Malfoy instructed. "If you need privacy, there are six rooms along the far wall – one for each couple," he threw a thumb over his shoulder, where a row of half a dozen closed, identical doors lined the wall. "They're all exactly the same – white on white furniture, walls, and flooring. If you want to change the room's décor in any manner or add or remove any items from the room, simply think of the changes, and they'll happen in seconds. This is the Room of Requirement." He smirked and a wicked look entered his shark-skin coloured eyes. "Or, if you're into voyeuristic theatrics, you could also perform out here for the rest of us to watch - but you both have to agree to that plan, otherwise it's a private room for you."

He turned his card over and read it. His eyebrows hit the roof.

Uh-oh. That didn't bode well, Hermione thought.

Blushing, she turned her card over, too, and read the text across the cream-coloured backdrop:

**DEED: Your partner must give you a sensual back and neck massage. Lips and tongue can be used.**

Bloody hell! It was one of Harry's rewards. Team Gryffindor shared their cards today at lunch, reading them over, so she recognized the handwriting.

"You have got to be kidding me!" Pansy shouted, getting to her feet. "This sounds more like a Forfeit to me, not a Deeds!"
"Tough cookies, sugar," Ron sarcastically replied. "Whatever it is, let me tell you that we're both screwed. My card's equally as repulsive. As if I'd want to touch you!"

"Are either of you forfeiting the game then?" Malfoy asked. His tone was casual, but the undercurrent accusation of 'pussy' was clear.

"No!" the partners-at-war simultaneously chimed, staring at each other with suspicion.

"Then, I suggest you stop bitching and get going," Slytherin's Captain commanded. "The sooner we get this over with, the sooner we can move on." He nodded to Harry. "Time?"

Harry looked at his charmed pocket watch. "Thirty-seven past seven, exactly."

"The rooms will chime at you to tell you to come back out at around twenty-seven past eight. Everyone finish and be in this room no later than ten minutes past the chime or you're automatically out," he ordered. "Oh, and if you both agree that you're done before then, you can come back here and just wait around. I wouldn't touch the cards, though, as they're charmed for some nasty consequences if you try to cheat in any fashion." He stood and made his way towards a private room. "Good luck, people!" he waved over his shoulder.

Hermione stood on shaky legs. "Yes, good luck everyone," she murmured, then followed after her partner into his room of choice.

Chapter End Notes

*Artwork by Marta Dahlig (https://dahlig.deviantart.com) is how I picture the artwork on the back of the card game to look. Thank you, Marta, a million times over for the brilliant inspiration!
1A: Draco & Hermione

Chapter Summary

Draco makes his opening move.

Chapter Notes

User fuzzychxrx recommended the song, "A Little Less Conversation" by Elvis Presley for Draco & Hermione this go around, and I thought it a perfect complement to Draco's thoughts here. So, this chapter is dedicated to fuzzychxrx - congratulations!

Chapter revisions:
Version 1.0 – 2010
Revision 2.0 – 28 December, 2017

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
Draco left the door open behind him, knowing Granger would follow without question. There really was no choice in the matter, unless she forfeited – which he was betting she absolutely wouldn't do in this game.

He was hoping she wouldn't either. He definitely wanted to get as much as he could out of this time together, knowing it would be the only chance he'd ever get the opportunity to touch, taste, or fuck Gryffindor's Princess. She definitely would never let him near her again after the game concluded, loathing him as she did.

Although, she'd actually blushed with undeniable arousal when he'd answered that he'd like to eat her pussy. He'd seen the glimmer of heat in her shocked gaze. And her answer when asked if she'd like to blow him had been negative only in so far as her fears of him using the incident against her later, not because she'd detest the idea of touching him. So, maybe she didn't hate him as much as either of them believed…

He caught a flash of brilliant colour from the corner of his eye as she entered and shut the door behind her. Circe's right tit, but that dress was fetching upon her! He'd love to take it off with his teeth…

She didn't move towards the bed in the centre of the room, where he was currently sprawled. Instead, she was staring up at the too-white ceiling, clearly uneasy with coming closer.

Well, if she wasn't going to take the initiative, he would.

"Since I drew my action card before you," he explained, "the rules say I go first."

"I assumed," she replied in a haughty, defensive tone and crossed her arms, already on guard. "Please don't treat me like I'm an imbecile, Malfoy."

"Have I ever stated, or implied that you were, Granger?" She glared at him, but it was clear she was mulling that fact over, recognizing its truth. He'd never once derided her for being intelligent, merely for how she'd liked to rub that fact into everyone else's face. "I'm merely reiterating the rules," he continued. "As Captain of a team, it's my duty."

She mumbled something under her breath he didn't catch, but by the vindictive gleam in her eye, he was betting it had something to do with gagging him and lighting his hair on fire. Before she actually decided that doing so would be a good idea, he held his Deeds card up and read it aloud:

**DEED: You partner must list out loud at least 10 good things about you.**

There was a moment of silence, and then a deeply expelled breath and a small laugh in relief. "That's it? That's- Oh, thank Merlin!"

Yes, well, Draco wasn't too pleased with his first draw. He'd really wanted something hot right out of the gate for her, but instead was stuck with a share-care card. Who the fuck wrote up such a wanky thing anyway? Obviously it wasn't a Slytherin.

"You can come into the room," he told her, disappointment spoiling his stomach. "I'm not going to touch you this round, it seems."

Taking a moment to gather her courage, Granger stepped forward and leaned against one of the four
large wooden posts that made up the bed frame. Her back was still ramrod straight with engineered bravado, though, and she remained just out of reach. Draco sighed. He hadn't expected this to be an easy win, but really!

"All right, let's get started," he said, conceding to this round being a lame duck. "Tell me how fantastic I am, princess."

She rolled her eyes at the nickname. "Fantastic? Your list of drawbacks far outstrips your advantageous attributes, Malfoy. It would be far easier for me to list your negative personality quirks instead."

He gaped at her.

Gods, she could be such a bitch sometimes! It was one of the reasons he wanted her so badly.

"You know, you've got one hell of a sexy, sassy mouth on you, Granger." He grinned, hoping to peck her off, turning the situation on its ear just to confuse her. "I can't wait to put it to better use later tonight."

Granger arched an eyebrow at him, not rising to the bait. "So, I'm just expected to stack your ridiculously overblown ego, then?" she asked, seeming exasperated by, but resigned to the task. "Fine, whatever. You're clever."

Draco couldn't help the morphing of his grin into a full-blown, toothy smile. "Really? Do tell, pet. Just how sly and intelligent do you think I am?"

His partner gave him a flat stare. "Cunning enough to maneuver me into this game, hoping you'd be able to fix it so we could be together so you could attempt to humiliate me tonight, but not wise enough to research the cards you've been playing with enough to know the spell on them wouldn't allow such a thing. So, you're cagey and devious, Malfoy, but not what one might call ingenious."

Okay, that wasn't at all what he'd been expecting. Clearly, she was going to insult him every time she had to praise him. Fan-fucking-tastic. What a way to spend the next twenty-five minutes!

"Moving on," he grumbled, feeling a bit deflated by the fact that he knew these were her totally honest feelings about him, as the cards wouldn't let her lie. It bit to think she was judging the entirety of his intellect solely upon this one minor, flawed expedition this weekend. Obviously, she was forgetting the other dozen or so schemes he'd concocted over the years that had been stupendously successful at wanking her off. "As compliments go, that one sucked. You're terrible at the game of flattery. Try harder."

She scowled at having been told she was inadequate at something. As he'd expected, that definitely seemed to get under her skin.

Good, he thought, now she'd have to take the game a mite more seriously and would have to dig deep to come up with some way to succeed at the card's requirements. No more flippant backhanded compliments from that sharp tongue of hers.

Feeling confident that he'd maneuvered her into a corner where she'd have no choice but to genuinely appreciate him, Draco gave her some space and lazily lifted his wand, pointing it at the
ceiling. Concentrating on non-verbally changing its color from white to red, then green, then blue, then yellow, and back again to red, he focussed on that task while Granger gathered her thoughts.

Oddly, it seemed as if the magic of the room was struggling to keep up with his commands the faster he cast, because it kept defaulting to white between each colour modification and it seemed to pause a few moments before obeying his will. Were his incessant demands to alter the environment too great on the room's magic, overloading it, or was the room's magic shoving back at him, finding his eccentricity a waste and preferring a minimalist design instead?

Either way, it was a fun challenge and he amused himself with pushing the room's magical limits while his Hermione thought up her next tribute to his greatness.

"All right, I've got another one," she said, breaking the stalemate by taking a seat on the edge of the bed. "You've got the makings of a natural born leader…although you might want to work on learning how to be gracious and respectful to your minions, because you're terrible to them."

He barked a laugh at her audacity.

"Minions? Is that how you see my friends?"

"Crabbe and Goyle worship you," she reminded him. "Yet you mistreat them all the time, insulting them and getting them into trouble. That's not what a friend does."

Now she was treading into territory best left alone.

"You know nothing of Slytherin politics, Granger. My house isn't like your touchy-feely, hearts-and-rainbows one where everyone holds hands and sings songs together. What I have always done to Crabbe and Goyle was so I could protect them. They're too dim-witted and just vindictive enough not to end up on the wrong side of the law someday. I kick them around to keep them in line, but give them a place of importance so they don't feel like common whipping dogs either. The first few years, just the protection of being associated with me, with my name and my father's reputation, also kept them from ending up some seventh-year's bitch in the men's showers late one night. And yes, Granger, that kind of thing happens—more frequently then you probably ever assumed," he replied to her gasp of disbelief. "Don't be so naïve."

He glanced at her with a deep frown, having thought her more sophisticated than this and disappointed to find that she wasn't.

"Basically, I keep my friends safe in a hierarchy they can fit comfortably within, so no one will take advantage of them and so they'll stay out of serious trouble," he reiterated. "In return, they do me favors and accept my authority." He sneered at her now, irate that they'd even had to go here at all. Slytherin's house dynamics were a private affair, and he hated airing their dirty laundry to outsiders. "But then, I don't suppose you'd understand that type of power structure, seeing as how you come from the 'hippy flowers and sunshine' house."

She was silent a moment, contemplating all he'd laid at her feet.

"You know, I never thought of it that way before. It's the law of the jungle in Slytherin, then: to kill or be killed?" She shook her head, her riot of long curls shifting down her back. "How very sad for you all."

Ire crept into his belly, ruining his mood. "Judging my house again? How sanctimonious you are, Granger! But then, it's common for Gryffindors to be so arrogant…and woefully unsophisticated about how the world really works!"
"Cynic," she accused.

"Idealist," he threw back.

They both sighed. This was clearly not something they were going to come to agreement to anytime soon, if ever.

"Next," he growled, hating this game all ready. This wasn't turning out to be nearly as much fun as he'd hoped.

She was silent a bit longer, and he could sense a cautious tension in her. "Well," she began, and from his peripheral vision, he spied her nervous twitching, as if she wasn't comfortable admitting what was going to come out of her mouth next, "another positive trait is that you're...well, a rather handsome specimen."

Draco's battered ego picked itself up off the floor and crawled back up his spine.

Now this they could work with!

"Do go on," he encouraged her. "Enlighten me as to why you feel that way."

Clearing her throat primly behind a hand, he watched her attempt, and spectacularly fail, to remain detached this time. "Well, you do have rather classical features that provide a nice juxtaposition of the best traits in a man: a rounded jaw that is just square enough at the edge, a straight, aristocratic nose, your eyes are set at an equal distance apart and are a lovely shade of silvery-grey, your brows and lashes are a soft dark gold and give you just a tad of roguish shape, and your lips." She paused, pinking now at the cheeks, as if her confession of his physical attractiveness was beginning to affect her, too. "-are a nice shade of rose and never chapped. Your teeth are a sparkling white, and they're straight and even. Your skin is a tad too pale, but for some reason, it doesn't detract, instead highlighting your other colorful attributes. And you're always clean-shaven, showing you care for your appearance very much, which is an appealing habit."

He sat up into a sitting position, encouraged by the fact that she'd taken that much effort to pay attention to his face, especially his lips. "And?" he prompted her to continue, wondering just how far her assessment of his outward characteristics went.

She wiggled in her seat, clearly uncomfortable laying her feelings so bare, but her determination not to lose this challenge was going to force her to continue nonetheless. "Well, your hair is a lovely shade of pale gold-white, a very light champagne colour, and the way you style it makes you appear aloof, and yet impish. The cut perfectly frames your face. Your ears lay just the right distance from your skull, not sticking out, and the lobes are detached and small."

She began fanning a hand in front of her face, as if to cool off her rising temperature. Truthfully, Draco could have used a fan then, too, for he was becoming mighty aroused by the fact that she'd observed him this well. Did the fact that she knew this much about him mean more than her simply assessing an enemy? She was being awfully thorough...

"Your shoulders are clearly well-defined," she continued, even as her face flushed a darker crimson. "I can see how adequately you are muscled in that shirt and how fine you're cut. It's rather eye-catching. You're not too bulky, but lean and sleek, like a good Quidditch Seeker should be."

"That all?" he asked, setting his wand down at his side.

Hermione turned towards him on the bed then, and opened her mouth to castigate him...but the words suddenly died on her lips as he slowly folded his hands across his belly to wait her out. The
way she glanced down at them, it was as if she drawn to them against her will, and in a soft, quixotic voice, she said, "No, not quite. Your hands...they're well-manicured, strong, with long fingers just made to please." She broke off as if the thought she almost gave voice to was too embarrassing to speak aloud. Quickly looking away again, she shifted and turned her back to him once more. "They seem made for playing the piano or composing long drafts for publication, I meant. That sort of thing."

Well, well, he thought, feeling his lips curl with the Devil's wickedness.

Some girls, he knew, judged a man's attractiveness primarily upon his eyes, others by the measurement of his biceps, and still others looked towards the curve of his arse. Granger was a hand and mouth girl, it seemed.

He sat up and scooted closer to his partner, holding his hands out in front of him, where he knew she would see them. He pretended to evaluate them. "Now that's a part of me I've never considered before...but I can see, you're quite right, Granger. I suppose my fingers would be perfect for gripping and smoothing over a hard, stiff object or for stroking and gliding across playable surfaces with intense accuracy. I bet I could definitely make things hum and sing for me with them, too."

To his amusement, Hermione flushed from head to toe, her skin turning scarlet. Her breathing quickened just a tad, too.

"What an interesting observation you've made," he purred in delight, inching closer to her. "Every time I look at my hands from here on out, all I'll remember is how much you think they were made for pleasing."

As if he'd pushed all the right buttons, abruptly Granger scooted off the bed and stood up. She scurried away towards the opposite wall, looking into the floor-to-ceiling length mirror that spanned the whole length of one side of the room, pretending to adjust her earrings and smooth down her dress. The lovely blush covering her skin, however, wasn't something so easily escaped, he thought.

"Yes, well, it's not as if you didn't know the rest, Malfoy," she said in a crisp, no-nonsense tone as she fiddled with her halter-top's tie. "You make it a big deal to strut around this place as if you're an Adonis. Every witch notices."

He stared at her in the mirror, letting a slow smirk wind its way up his face, knowing well how that expression charmed the opposite sex. "As long as I got your attention, Granger, I could care less what any other woman thought."

She went stock-still at that. In the mirror, her eyes blew wide and her lips parted in shock. "What do you mean-?" she demanded.

Cutting her off at the pass, Draco interrupted what would indubitably be an awkward question to answer at this time. She wasn't quite ready to hear his truths about her, he was sure. "That was only three things," he reminded her, using the distraction to get them back on task. "There are still seven testimonies to my amazingness left to go."

She scowled at him in the mirror. "Egotistical prat."

"Straight-laced bint," he countered with no heat, enjoying the banter.

Seeming to have bought into his diversion, and most likely relieved to allow that sleeping dragon to lie anyway, she returned to the game with a simple shrug of her shoulders. "Right, let's just get this over with." Utilizing the magic in the room, she designed a cozy chair into existence across from
where he sat on the bed and then wound her way over to it and sat down. The new furniture piece matched the white-on-white décor of the room, he absently noticed. Sitting back in it and crossing her legs, Hermione lounged like a queen on a throne, a colourful and classy monarch silently demanding to be worshiped.

_I will_, he thought.

"Will what?" she asked, her brows lowering in confusion.

Shit, had he spoke aloud?

"Will...give you some ideas if you need them," he offered, feinting once more. "I have plenty of thoughts about how fantastic I am."

She rolled her eyes, falling for the deception. "I'm sure you do, but I don't require the help, thanks." Her gaze rested upon him once more, measuring and turning over ideas until finally, she offered up something relatively safe. "You're rich. I suppose some people might call that a credit to a person's worth."

What an interesting way to phrase such a thing.

"You don't?" he asked, genuinely curious.

She shook her head. "You didn't earn the money. You inherited it."

"And you can't respect that?"

"No, not really. I believe in earning your way in the world."

Looking at her askance, he considered having this particular conversation with her at this particular moment. Should he? It might stir up a hornet's nest.

Or it could make her see him in a different light.

Weighing the pros versus the cons of letting her in on his future plans, he decided on taking the gamble and hoping the chips would fall in his favour as a result. "What if you found out that I intended on taking that inheritance and putting it towards worthy endeavours?"

Scoffing, she chuckled. "Like building up the family fortune?"

"That would be a by-product, yes, but my plans would benefit the community as well. It would provide jobs and educational opportunities—yes, Granger, what I plan _will_ help educate people," he reiterated in response to her skeptical glance. "I have a three-tiered strategy already worked out. I plan to expand the family business. We're currently invested in light commodities trading. First, with Father and the Ministry's help, I want to open trade with the Asian markets for healing potions ingredients in their raw, plant forms. I want to import them here. That will take several years of negotiation work, as the Eastern wizards are notoriously protectionist. Then, I'll offer the plants to Hogwarts, Beauxbatons, and Durmstrang to care-take. They can use them in their greenhouse curriculum, and in return, they'll sell me their finalized harvests. The money I give them in trade should help them to pay the professors more than the pittance they're getting now, and maybe even help them come up with some stimulating programs for the students. Merlin knows they could shake this place up a bit with an interesting guest speaker once in a while."

He shrugged, as he wasn't interested in fixing the educational curriculum, per se. That he'd leave that to the Board of Governors. His interest was in cultivating the plants.
"For the third part of the plan, I'll take the finished products and sell them to apothecaries around the world. I plan to corner the market on potion ingredient distribution. I'll have a pile of Galleons to sleep on, and a staff of hundreds by the time I retire and turn the company over to my own son." He glanced at her and grinned. "Oh, and if you dare steal my idea and try to beat me to the market, I'll spank you hard."

Literally, she sat and stared at him in open-mouthed astonishment.

"Attempting to catch lacewing flies now?" he joked, indicating her unhinged jaw. "I could use a crop of them, too. Notoriously difficult to get fresh, I hear."

Clamping her teeth together so hard he could hear the snap across the room, he watched in gleeful delight as Hermione Granger struggled over the concept that Draco Malfoy was more exceptionally creative than even she had anticipated. "But… How…" she stammered, obviously searching for the proper words to praise his ingeniousness. "That is to say…"

He waited with bated breath for the moment she finally admitted aloud that he, her supposed 'bitterest rival', was more discerningly calculating than even she'd given him credit for.

"How… ruthlessly inspired of you, Malfoy," she stated.

For a fraction of a second, he took offense to her words. Then he realized what a great compliment she'd actually just given him and felt his lips twitch with amusement.

"I knew you'd come to appreciate my slipperiness soon enough, Granger! Only a matter of time."

She stared at him with begrudging respect, but wisely held her tongue.

Draco's heart swelled in his chest. Was this the first time she'd ever looked at him so? He was sure it was, and the thought made him almost giddy. He'd done the impossible and made Hermione finally see the real him, the man behind the throne!

The gamble had paid off this time.

It was going to be difficult to keep the miracles rolling, however. So far, upfront honesty had been the only thing to bridge the gap between them, but as a Slytherin and a Malfoy, trumpeting out the truth at every turn was going to be problematic. He hadn't been raised to be so artless; revealing his cards was a tactic, not a routine, as it was with her and her Gryffindor friends.

Maybe, though, he would have to adapt. The game would, without doubt, force from him tonight some rather uncomfortable truths anyway; it was doing so right now to Granger, and he wasn't arrogant enough to believe he'd be immune to the same magic simply because he's brought the deck into play. If he volunteered information without a fuss, though, it might go a long way to engaging her trust.

He'd have to take it situation by situation, see what happened and roll the dice, as he had earlier. There might be cause for him to open his mouth and reveal his heart, and then there might be times he'd have to keep his secrets.

This game would be won in knowing which to do at the right time.

"Seven more to go," he said, rolling them back on track.

Stubborn as a Kelpie, she shook her head. "That last compliment counts as one of your ten, so we're down to six."

Fine, he could let that one slide. It had been a spectacular commendation, after all.

As she thought up the remainder of the list, she idly tapped one painted fingernail against the chair arm. It was then that Draco noticed her nail polish tended to change with her moods and that the colours matched those bright designs on her dress. Right now, it was a pensive green the same shade as his house colours.

Now, if that wasn't a sign!

"You play Quidditch rather well, and are exceptionally good at potions," she said, counting down by ticking off the list on her fingers. "When you laugh with true sincerity it sounds nice, you have impeccable table manners, are well organized, and you smell rather pleasant on a regular basis." She counted them off once more and then nodded, satisfied at having completed the task. "There, we're done."

All of her compliments were rather touching, honestly, but one in particular grabbed his attention.

"It's French. Custom."

She blinked. "What is?"

"You said I smell rather pleasant. It's my cologne. It comes from Paris, and is tailored so that everyone smells whatever they most desire from me," he explained, hopping off the bed and approaching her. She looked ready to bolt by the time he'd bent down in front of her and leaned over the chair, putting his neck near her nose. "What do you smell?"

Her hot breath panting against his neck sent electric tingles down his spine.

This was more like it!

"Go on, sniff," he encouraged, leaning his lips towards the shell of her ear, forcing his tone and demeanor into calm control, despite the fact his heart was beginning to race just by standing this close to her. "Tell me what you smell."

Pretending indifference, she made a rather rude harrumph, not even bothering to inhale. "I don't have to sniff to know I'd smell wet, musky ferret fur."

He tsk'd. "Seriously, Granger. Give it a go." He turned and smirked at her in challenge. "Or are you too chicken to be so close? Afraid my handsomeness will overwhelm you?"

"Pah!" she sniffed with scorn. "Not likely."

To prove that she was not afraid, she leaned forward and sniffed once.

She went stone still.

Another smaller sniff.

A beat later, she had her nose pressed against the lee of his throat and was taking deep, drawing breaths in and sighing in pleasure on the exhale. When she moaned in longing, Draco thought he'd never heard a more desirable sound, and his body reacted by going hard and tight. "What do you smell, my princess?" he coaxed, placing his mouth next to her ear, caressing the delicate skin with his soft lips. "Tell me," he whispered, in a dark, enticing tone.

She began to pant, and her hands crept of their own accord to grip his bared shoulders. With a light
pressure, she dug her nails into his skin.

His heart began to pound hard in his chest.

"Sandalwood, cinder ash, wine, and…red roses."

Slowly, Draco lowered to one knee before her. She quickly uncrossed her legs and tightened her hold on him, as if afraid he’d let her go, drift away, and take the beguiling scent with him. Hardly! Even without her hands on him, he’d be right here before her, as captivated by the moment and the opportunity it presented.

As he dropped down before her, her face stayed pressed to his throat and she kept inhaling, addicted to the scent and helpless but to crave it. "Close your eyes," he bid, as he took hold of her arms and pressed her back into the chair. Trembling against him, she held onto him as if afraid to let go. He nuzzled her back, enjoying the light fragrance of her hair and the way the sleek curls tickled his skin, and her touch…god, who knew her hands would be that soft! "Tell me, what do you imagine from the scent?"

"I…I see a dark room, black satin sheets and silvery moonlight spilling through an open window upon them," she whispered the secret fantasy. "There are embers in a dying fire nearby, and red wine in a glass on a table. Red rose petals are strewn all about the room and on the bed."

Ghosting his lips up the side of her throat, he sighed, pleased by her imagination. "Beautiful. That's your ideal of love-making, Granger. How you see it…with me."

"Hmm?" she asked, slowly coming back into herself, pulling away from his collar. Her grip on his arms eased up. "Love-making? With you?"

He let go, not pushing for more physical intimacy at just that moment. It wouldn't do to frighten her off. Still, he did want to set a sultry tone that would linger with her thoughts after this round was over. "The scent is meant to evoke your passion and trigger your unconscious desires for me," he explained in a soft murmur. "Black satin sheets and silver moonlight…you want me to dominate you, but you want it done seductively, not rough. A warm fire and wine…you want things between us to burn slowly and smolder before we lose all control and overindulge in each other."

Leaning back in her chair and letting him go, he watched her face drain of colour and the glassy look in her eyes fade away. The light of rationality returned, and with it came her horror. "It's a trick, some sort of pheromone response," she said, denying the attraction she obviously felt for him.

"In a way, you're right. The cologne is very rare as it's made from Veela tears. It's designed to show you what you most desire. But there's a downside to the attraction because of its key ingredient," he explained, leaning back and climbing to his feet to stand over her, feeling the throbbing ache in his groin as he did so. She'd spy his obvious erection any moment now… Backing towards the bed, he held her shimmering, dark gaze as he took a seat once more upon the edge of the firm mattress. "It also shows your greatest hope, which for many people will never be fulfilled and so will only lead them to despair. In your case, you saw red rose petals everywhere. It means you want romantic love, but you believe such a thing is impossible coming from someone like me."

"I…I don't-"

"You do. You don't trust me…which is why the fire was dying and why everything was hidden in the dark, under black sheets and the cover of night."

She crossed her arms, getting her back up once again now that they were on familiar ground.
"How can I trust you?" she asked, defensively. "After everything you've said and done?"

"Isn't that what this game is designed to teach us all?" he countered. "It forces us to wonder if it's possible for rivals to see each other as anything else."

"And if it can't?"

"Well, if you go into it with that attitude…"

They stared at each other in silence, considering what had been revealed over the last ten minutes and which now lay like an uncomfortable weight between them.

Personally, Draco was feeling positive about the revelation. So she didn't trust him; it wasn't as if he hadn't already known that much. That some part of her desired him, though, had been the great mystery upon which his entire scheme tonight had hinged. Now he knew that she did, and that meant he could take this seduction forward.

She wanted him!

That bizarre, inexplicable knot in his chest—the one that had always been there, ever since the day they'd met; the one that had contained both his burning hatred and his desperate desire for this witch before him—tightened at the thought that she wanted him to make love to her.

…Alright, so what she felt for him was a repressed longing, so much so that even she hadn't been aware of it until now. Still, it was there. If she'd been repulsed by him physically, there wouldn't have been a chance for them, but this…this he could work with. All he had to do was play that angle, use physical intimacy as a way to earn her trust, and perhaps that would be the key to getting her to open her heart to him as well.

Challenge accepted.

Granger cleared her throat behind a hand. "Regardless, I'm done with my list, which means your turn is over."

"So it is." He tossed her an antagonistic grin. "Your turn, beautiful."

She cleared her throat again, and her cheeks pinked. Whatever it was she had received as a gift, obviously she wasn't comfortable with it.

"Don't go yellow on me now, princess," he teased, knowing the insult would get her back up. "What's the card say?"

She turned a venomous look at him, then brought her card up and read it aloud. When she was done, she threw it down on the floor in disgust. Draco nearly jumped up and crowed his good luck on the spot. He was going to give her a massage.

This was going to be stunning!

He toed-off his shoes and motioned for her to come up onto the bed, patting the spot next to him.

Hermione's eyes strayed to his pants, and he knew she'd finally spied his very happy erection, which he'd been sporting since the whole sniffing him thing. She gave a wary shake of her head.

"No. Absolutely no. I'm not lying down next to you on that bed."

"I didn't ask you to lie down. I indicated I wanted you to come and sit next to me," he told her. "I
can't give you a proper shoulder massage in that chair, as it's against the wall. And anyway, this is supposed to be your reward for answering the question, so you know I won't harm you. In fact, I'll be forced to make it good for you."

She harrumphed, and then gave in to his logic with a regal sniff that put her nose in the air, making it clear she was not acceding to his wishes so much as to the requirements of the game. Then, with as much dignity as she could muster, Granger stood and made her way over to the bed, sitting on the end furthest from him.

Apparently, she wasn't going to make any concession an easy thing tonight, reward or not…and required or not.

He crawled over to her position and crowded in against her back, positioning them so his legs were spread wide to either side of her body. She hissed and jerked away when their bodies touched and his stiffy pressed up against her spine.

"Anything the matter?" he asked, knowing full well what had offended her. Sometimes, tweaking her nose was worth the verbal beating. "I haven't actually put my hands on you yet."

"Your hands aren't the problem," she growled at him over her shoulder. "Keep that thing away from me."

Clucking his tongue at her again got her back up. "Can I help it if just being this close to you affects me?"

"Well, try harder for it not to affect you," she insisted.

He laughed.

Oh, sometimes Granger was hilarious without intending to be!

"I'll do my best, but I'm a healthy, young man of eighteen," he informed her in a droll tone. "You might as well be asking Eros not to want Psyche."

She crossed her arms and huffed in disbelief. "You only turned eighteen a few days ago," she pointed out, "and as for Eros...you're a far cry from being the god of eroticism and seduction."

"So, you didn't fantasize about us entwined in black satin sheets, surrounded by silver moonlight, then?"

She had nothing to say to that.

"Come on, Granger, by now you must be aware that the game won't let me harm you. It won't even let us lie." When it was clear she still didn't believe him, he decided to try a different tact: appealing to vanity. "You can't honestly expect me not to be attracted to you. You're singularly stunning, and not just because of the dress."

She slanted a wary look his way. "Put a pillow between us and I'll consider it."

With a sigh, he reached behind him on the bed and pulled one of the smaller pillows forward. "Will this do?"

Inspecting it before giving it the nod of approval, she turned back around. "Alright then, get to it. And don't use a heavy hand."
Grumbling under his breath that he'd love to spank her with a heavy hand instead, he moved back into position behind her, pillow tucked firmly between his crotch and her spine. It was a tad awkward, but he worked with it.

As his hands worked her bare shoulders, he grunted.

"What?" she asked, immediately on the defense.

"You carry a lot of tension."

She relaxed, slightly. "Everyone suffers some stress."

"Not like this," he argued and put a bit more pressure into loosening her up. She groaned in response, and suddenly he was thankful for the pillow being in the way. "You're entirely too wound up. This won't be pleasurable for you if you don't relax."

Her back straightened again immediately.

"And why would you care about me taking pleasure from this experience?"

It was a good thing her back was to him, because Draco was sure he'd get another earth-shattering slap from his partner simply for the eye roll that followed her question. Once in third year had been enough, thanks ever so. "Granger, if there's nothing I can say to convince you that I'm not going to hurt you, then perhaps you'll accept this indisputable fact about my motives instead-" He leaned forward and set his mouth near her dainty ear. "Massages are sensual, and it's no secret I'm a sybarite."

She actually snorted at that.

"A libertine is more like it."

Honestly, the woman could exhaust the Whomping Willow with her stubbornness!

"Harsh words from such a lovely mouth. I'll have you know I'm hardly the philandering type."

She gave a disbelieving laugh.

"Keep telling yourself that, Malfoy, but your reputation precedes you."

Rather than get into that discussion, which would lead to a losing place no matter which way he turned, he continued to knead her shoulders instead. "You're like massaging a rock." He put his thumbs into it and she groaned in response. "It's because you're tense again."

"I'm always edgy around snakes," she countered and gave another small mewing sound as he found a knot and worked it out. "I'm sure it has something to do with being a warm-blooded mammal."

"Then explain the cold shoulder you're giving me, because it's freezing back here!"

To his surprise, she laughed at that, and it wasn't a sharp sound, but one of unexpected mirth.

"Ah, so I can say something right." Was that the first time she'd actually laughed at one of his jokes? "Admit it, I'm not all bad."

She turned her head and glanced at him out of the corner of her eye with suspicion, but to his relief, her lips were turned up in amusement rather than flat-lined and angry.
"You're bad...and you know it."

He rolled with it, deciding to view her mockery as an opening... Reducing the pressure of his hands, he began running his fingers over her arms in a light, teasing pattern. She shivered as he caressed over her bare skin. "Let's play another game-"

"We already are."

True, but beside the point.

He tickled the bend of her elbow with a single, gentle stroke. She jerked, but didn't pull away completely, which made him feel bolder. Leaning forward again, he whispered in her ear, "I dare you to close your eyes and imagine that, instead of being in this room, we're in your favourite hiding place." When she tossed an incredulous look at him over her shoulder, he sighed and tried again, this time without the charm. "It'll help you unwind and allow me to perform this card. You do want to get this round over with sooner, rather than later, I assume?"

Sniffing, she reluctantly did as he requested and shut her eyes.

He waited a few seconds, giving her a chance to envision the location he knew she'd imagine.

"Have you got the library firmly in mind yet?"

Granger grumbled something under her breath about bouncing ferrets and muzzles. He chuckled, appreciating her nastier inclinations. His beauty could be a real beast when she put her mind to it.

"For your information," she primly told him, "I'm envisioning being on a beach."

"A beach, really?" he asked, sincerely curious. Perhaps that explained the tan she'd once come back to school wearing after one particular summer break. "Where, and are you dressed in one of those sexy Muggle bikinis?"

She reached back and slapped the outside of his thigh in censure. "I'd ask how you know about those, but I probably wouldn't appreciate the answer." She was right, of course, so Draco wisely kept his mouth shut on the matter. "The 'where' is in Greece, on the island of Mykonos," she told him, "and as for what I've worn there...you'll never know."

The woman was a horrible tease.

"You realize that now I'm going to be imagining all sorts of scenarios involving you and what you're possibly not wearing while sunbathing," he said.

"Oh, I'm sure."

When she paused, as if finding that idea either disconcerting or arousing—he wasn't sure which, honestly—he gave her a small nudge by running the backs of his knuckles down her exposed spine, admiring the sexy cut of her dress and silently thanking the designer. "So...on a beach overlooking the Aegean Sea. You've got the image in your head, then?" Granger nodded. "Tell me about it."

She seemed to struggle with that request for moment, before deciding it harmless enough.

"Alright, but don't laugh."

"I won't," he promised.

With a resigned nod, she shared her childhood memories with him.
"Well, we've only gone there the one time, during the summer before third year, but-" She sighed in longing. "I remember every detail: the sunlight glittering off the waves, the white sand so warm under my toes, the cry of the gulls overhead. It was...breathtaking."

Taking that as his cue to continue performing her card before the time ran out, Draco placed his hands with light pressure back onto her shoulders and began gingerly kneading them again. This time, Hermione was more relaxed, and as he lulled her with a soothing massage, she talked of bright blue and white butterflies that fluttered above pockets of red poppies and yellow wildflowers that dotted the small hills and peppered the dunes, of the scent of brine carried upon a gentle wind, and of the sweet piping of the swallows that called the faces of the cliffs their home. She compared the waves to sapphires and their tops to strings of pearls, and spoke with a kind of reverence for how the sea lulled at times, and danced at others.

"Sounds idyllic," he said as she finished her tale. She was now leaning against him, her back to his chest, boneless. "Magical, even."

"It is." As she let her body relax further into him, she chuckled. "Although it pains me to admit it, you're really very good at giving a girl a massage. I haven't been able to unwind in, well, a long time."

"That's because you play too little and work too hard," he agreed.

"I can't help it," she breathed a frustrated sigh. "There's always so much to do, and it's hardwired into me to get it all done!"

"Good thing it's the weekend. You can loosen up a little," he tried to soothe her. "Just forget the world outside for now. Lean back and enjoy this."

With a reluctant sigh, she surrendered herself to the massage… which was precisely what Draco had been waiting for. He gently placed his lips over the curve of her neck and shoulder, leaving small, barely-there kisses as he went. Well, her card did say that he could use his mouth, too, and so he intended on taking full advantage of that offer. With a quick swipe, he touched his tongue to her warm skin. She was powdered with honey dust, a delicious treat he hadn't expected, and which explained how her skin sparkled under the light. Underneath it though, she tasted as if she'd just stepped out of the ocean.

The flavour had his chest going tight and sent his cock straining for its freedom.

Mine.

If anything could have confirmed for him the truth of what his heart and body had been telling him for years, that right there had done it.

"What are you doing?" she asked, going a bit stiff again under his hands.

"Lips and tongue are allowed," he whispered in her ear and then gave it a sensual nip that had her nipples going tight. Their outline was clearly visible through her silken dress. Still, she started to pull away. "I won't do more than this, though. Just this," he promised, hoping to keep her there without restraining her. She'd fight that, he knew, and the struggle could ruin everything they'd built over the last thirty minutes. "Should I stop?"

Slowly, she sat up, pulling out of his embrace. "Yes, I think that's enough for now." Despite her words, there was clear confusion in her tone. "You performed my card...quite well."

Draco put his hands up for her to see that he meant her no harm and would make no fuss.
"As you wish," he offered, letting her go.

Disappointed though he may have been, he was also heartened by the fact that, for a few moments there, they had just been Draco and Hermione, not rivals from Slytherin and Gryffindor, and she had shared a bit of her life with him. They still had many rounds left before the game ended, as well, and he could only hope that, at some point tonight or tomorrow, she'd trust him enough to let things happen between them without a card forcing her compliance.

Because, sure as hell, he wanted Hermione Granger to give all of herself over to him, and at her own free will.

Not just her body, but her heart as well.

Chapter End Notes

Here are their outfits:
1B: Harry & Tracey

Chapter Summary

Harry's unexpected, pleasant surprise.

Chapter Notes

User flybynight088 recommended the song, "Making Memories of Us" by Keith Urban for Harry & Tracey this go around, and I thought it a perfect complement to Harry's thoughts here. So, this chapter is dedicated to flybynight088 - congratulations!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

HARRY & TRACEY

Harry politely opened the door for Tracey into their private room, scooting in behind her to close the door with a gentle push of the lock. The room was decked out exactly as the others: white furniture, walls and flooring, ceiling lights, and fully capable of being altered in a moment by either party should they ask the Room of Requirement to do so.

Tracey looked about, blushing. "Wow, it's...really...white."

Harry considered it and nodded. "I'll fix it if you'll let me?"

They glanced at each other and she nodded, looking shyly down at the floor almost immediately.
With a thoughtful request, the room altered. The white shag carpet became a plush dark green, the walls a very light grey, and the furniture blended to match. He also requested a fireplace against the back wall instead of a bed and set a magical flame to it. The final piece was a comfy, fabric two-seater sofa in front of the fire that was black, designed so they could get to know each other better. He'd tried for Slytherin colors, hoping to put her more at ease.

He lowered the light in the room so that it was a more intimate atmosphere.

"Better?"

His partner looked about with a smile and relaxed visibly. "Much, thank you."

He indicated with a polite arm that she should sit on the couch ahead of him, choosing her seat as she wished, as was proper for a man to do. He then took his place beside her. "You drew first," he reminded her lightly, trying to keep things as stress-free as possible between them, given the awkward situation. "But, before we begin, maybe we should introduce ourselves properly?" He smiled at her gently. "I mean, I know you from around classes, but we've never actually spoken, I believe."

Davis hesitantly held out a hand to shake, her pretty lips turning up into an honest smile. "Tracey Marie Davis."

Harry smiled brightly and shook her small, dainty hand. "Harry James Potter."

They let go immediately at the same time and looked away, apparently both bashful about such things.

"So, um… would you like to read your card first?" he offered again.

Tracey blushed. "Oh, yes, of course."

She held it up and read it aloud:

**DEED: Your partner must give you a sensual foot and leg massage with a nice scented oil of your choice.**

He almost adjusted his non-existent glasses again, reminded himself with a mental slap to knock it off, and instead scratched the side of his face. "Well, as Deeds go – and I don't know about you, but I did get a chance to read all of my Housemates cards in advance – that one is rather pleasant to start off, I think," he chirped, trying to make it easier on both of them.

The pretty blonde girl nodded. "Yes, I think we could both enjoy this."

They sat for another minute, neither moving. Behind Harry's chest, his heart started beating a little faster.

"Right, so, what oil scent do you want to try?" he asked, unbuttoning the cuffs of his shirt, rolling up the sleeves and kneeling down by her side, waiting.

She considered it, biting her lip. "Um… honestly? I've never done this before – get a massage, I mean - so I wouldn't know," she admitted. "You choose."

Harry's eyebrows lowered in confusion. Had no one ever given her a massage before? Tragic! It had been one of his favorite things to do with Marietta Edgecombe while they'd been dating. "Well, you're in for a treat, then," he explained, cracking his knuckles and twirling his wrists to stretch them
out. "I happen to be a massage expert." He glanced up at her through his dark lashes. "Do you like the smell of peppermint? It has a refreshing, cooling effect for the feet and legs."

Tracey nodded without a second's thought. "Sounds nice. I'll trust you, Harry."

His stomach flipped at her words and at the sincere look of faith in her hazel-colored eyes. Merlin, she was really pretty, wasn't she? "Okay," he stammered, then summoned a bottle of peppermint oil into his hands. Indicating her dress, he nodded at her. "May I?"

She acquiesced easily, and Harry respectfully lifted the hem to above her knees... and nearly got blown away with the exquisite beauty of her bare calves, ankles and feet. Secretly, Harry had a thing for touching a girl here, finding these spots sensually erotic on a woman. With delicate care, he removed her strapping sandal heels from her feet one at a time. Her toenails, he noted, were very well cared for and she'd given herself a pedicure with matching purple nail polish before coming to tonight's game.

A girl who cared for her feet was such a total turn-on for him.

Glancing up at her, he indicated that she should lie back into the cushions of the sofa and enjoy what he was about to do. Following instructions, she watched him not out of suspicion, but out of genuine curiosity about the process of a foot massage.

With another silent thought, Harry conjured a towel to lay over his lap and piped in some soothing Enya to play in the background, thinking of his favorite artist's 'Watermark' CD, feeling awkward with the silence that would, he knew, ensue as soon as he started rubbing her feet. Tracey seemed surprised by the music and tensed up.

"Relax," he soothed her. "Just a bit of Muggle music to make the atmosphere peaceful, so you can enjoy."

"Oh," Tracey replied and immediately did as he bade.

Rubbing the oil between his palms and then rubbing them together to heat them up, Harry began smoothing the slick fluid over her foot, inhaling the sharp minty bouquet on the air with a sigh of contentment. Peppermint had a nice odor on both the breath and the body. Applying the proper pressure to the bottom of her right foot, he moved his thumbs over the top, smoothing the muscles there first. Moving with tender attention, he then rubbed the pad at the base of her toes, where he was sure there was pain from the height of her heels. Tracey inhaled and then exhaled deeply in pleasure, and her muscles just seemed to let go at that point as she fluidly melted into the furniture.

"Good?" he asked, continuing on down to the arch of her foot, applying just the proper pressure as he rubbed in outwardly-curving circles with his thumbs.

She nodded. "Oh, yes," she harmonized in sincere enjoyment, and as he moved to her heel, rubbing it in a circular motion, she moaned and leaned back into the couch, closing her eyes fully, willing herself into his capable hands. "That feels wonderful."

Warmth suffused his chest at her words and the expression upon her features.

He hadn't felt such a thing for another person since Ginny. It was a queer, nervous feeling he was experiencing just then, but at the same time, it filled him with hopeful anticipation. Perhaps this game was going to present him with an opportunity here...

"Good," he whispered, then continued, working on her individual toes next, then her ankle, then calf. As he moved the towel to his shoulder and rested her leg on it, so he could get to the back of her
knee, her dress accidentally moved, giving him a glimpse of her soft, rounded thighs. Her legs were strong – not a runner's musculature, but definitely indicative of some sort of athletic activity aside from climbing the stairs of Hogwarts. "Are you a dancer?" he chanced a guess.

Tracey's eyes flew open. "How did you know?"

He continued to massage her knee. "Your build. You're tall, thin and have great legs."

He blushed at his own candidness, but thankfully his partner did not reply. Concentrating on continuing the massage, he moved back down her calf, reversing his path from earlier, assuring he'd gotten every last knot out before letting her go. When he'd finished with the right leg, he took up its twin and repeated the process, not speaking, letting Tracey enjoy the experience, absorbing himself in the act as well.

She had absolutely gorgeous legs and feet, and he was so turned on by the touching and the occasional peeking at her thighs that by the time he'd gotten up to Davis' knee, his sack was beginning to ache from the tightness of his pants. He chanced a look back up at her, hoping she hadn't noticed.

Head lolling back against the cushions, eyes closed and a small smile gracing her lips... she'd fallen asleep!

The old ego taking a nice stroll around the room at the thought that he'd relaxed his partner so thoroughly that she'd sacked out, Harry took that stolen moment to really look at this girl more closely. She was really quite a beauty. Why hadn't he noticed her before?

Well, that wasn't quite fair. He knew the reasons: over the last four years, he'd had a crush on 'Mione, then Cho, then Marietta, then 'Mione again, then Ginny, and finally Julie Parkes, whom he'd broken up with a little over a month ago after a two week fling that meant nothing but a good shag opportunity for both of them. Besides, Tracey was a Slytherin – a House he'd vowed never to date anyone from, simply on principle alone. Had he missed his chance with this girl as a result of such prejudice?

He was getting way ahead of himself. He didn't even know her yet! Yeah, she was pretty, and apparently liked the color purple, and she was shy and somewhat trusting, but that wasn't enough for him to really know if he wanted to make a play for her. He had to get to know her better. He hoped they didn't get any really kinky sex stuff before he felt comfortable with the idea tonight. Performance anxiety was a killer for a boner.

He'd finished up her left foot by then, and put both legs back on the floor, glancing up. She was still asleep. Placing the towel on the floor and sitting up on the sofa next to her, leaning back on the couch, he took her hand gently in his. "Tracey," he murmured, trying to wake her without scaring her. "Tracey, wake up." She sighed but didn't awaken, merely shifted so that her head moved to his shoulder and leaned upon it. In another second, she had snuggled up to him.

Harry was caught off guard, unsure as to what to do. He looked down at the girl-woman in his arms and tried waking her again. She merely burrowed her nose into his chest.

So trusting, he thought again, feeling that warmth in his chest expand. It was adorable… but for the sake of the game, they had to do his card before time ran out or else he would accidentally forfeit and they'd both be knocked out. It was too early for such a thing. Besides, he was kind of enjoying their time together and the idea of performing his card now was rather interesting to him.

"Tracey, wake up," he jarred her lightly. "Come on. You have to get up now, pretty girl."
She stirred and looked up at him, sleepy, multi-colored eyes so honest and sincere. Their gazes locked. "Harry?"

His heart gave a painful leap in that moment, squeezing tightly. Oh, man... Swallowing back the tide of irrational feeling that flooded his senses (especially between his legs), he righted Tracey, helping her come fully awake. "If I don't perform my card, I'll be knocked out of the game," he reminded her. "There isn't a lot of time left. I've lost about ten minutes already."

"Card?" she asked, and then dawning realization alighted her features and she sat up abruptly. "Oh, your card! The game! I'm so sorry for falling asleep like that! It's just that N.E.W.T.s were so exhausting last week, and I never really recovered fully from all of the parties they've been throwing in the dorms and all. And the massage was so wonderful..." She looked down, realized that her knees were still exposed, and righted her dress immediately, blushing again. "So, your card. Yes, right. We need to act it out."

Harry noted that her hands were trembling slightly, and he put one of his over the both of hers in her lap. "Don't worry. It's really a harmless one." He read it for her:

**DEED: Your partner must dance with you – however you want.**

"Oh!" Tracey brightened, her smile finding its way back home. "Well, that sounds lovely!"

He stood and held a hand out to her. "Rather fortunate that you're a dancer," he joked as she slid her warm, small hand into his and helped her to her feet. "Because I'm awful at it. You lead."

She laughed and it was an enchanting sound. "I'm barefoot," she reminded him. "What if you step on my feet?"

"Hmmm..." he considered the problem, and promptly hopped her up onto the tops of his shoes, wrapping one arm about her waist and the other taking her hand, as he had learned for the Yule Ball years before. Snuggled in close to him, her body pressing against his, they were almost of an equal height, he slightly taller still. "I guess I'll have to do my best to guide us then. Just don't laugh."

He thought of some songs he wouldn't mind dancing to with her like this and came up with a couple of his favorites. The first one piped into the room to the soft jazzy accompaniment of a piano, a muted trumpet, and a soft cymbal, performed by one of his favorite Muggle singers.

**Unforgettable… that's what you are.**

**Unforgettable… though near or far.**

**Like a song of love that clings to me,**

**How the thought of you does things to me.**

**Never before has someone been more…**

**Unforgettable… in every way.**

**And forever more… that's how you’ll stay.**

**That's why darling it's incredible,**

**That someone so unforgettable,**

**Thinks that I am unforgettable, too.**

"I know this song," she admitted. "It's one of my mother's favorites. She's a Muggle-born witch, you know. She used to dance with my father to that song in our living room when I was younger."
"Nat King Cole is one of my favorites, too," he admitted softly, staring into her charming eyes as he sashayed them back and forth. "I used to hear my Aunt Petunia sneak these songs on the player when she thought no one was home to hear. I've always imagined my parents dancing to this song. Funny, huh?"

She nodded once. "Funny."

"It's not my favorite song from him though. This one is." He thought of the song he wanted as soon as the last notes of "Unforgettable" faded away, and then the fully orchestrated version of "When I Fall In Love" filled the room.

**When I fall in love,**  
*It will be forever,*  
*Or I'll never fall in love.*

**In a restless world like this is**  
*Love is ended before it's begun.*  
*And too many moonlight kisses*  
*Seem to cool in the warmth of the sun.*

**When I give my heart,**  
*It'll be completely,*  
*Or I'll never give my heart.*

**And the moment I can feel that**  
*You feel that way, too…*  
*Is when I'll fall in love with you.*

Behind his chest, his heart thumped wildly, and for a moment, he felt himself falling, too… directly into Tracey Davis' honest, green-blue-brown combination eyes.

Oh, man… Not good!

She was on the other team! She was supposed to be his rival for this game…

Thankfully, a light chiming sound rang out in the air, telling them that their time was up (a Malfoy idea when they'd been setting up the Room of Requirement earlier; it was timed to count out exactly fifty minutes from the moment a couple entered a private room).

"Time to go," he stated, reluctantly releasing her.

"Yeah," she agreed, seemingly just as loath to end the dance.

Lowering her eyes, she climbed off his feet. The loss of her warmth from his person was enough to make him shiver. He swallowed and turned away, trying to compose his rioting emotions as she bent to replace her heels, politely allowing her to support and balance herself with one hand on his arm.

Moving to the door side by side, he reacted on gut instinct and stopped her from reaching for the knob. "Listen, Tracey," he tried for honest. "No matter what else tonight brings, I want you to know that I liked this. Just this, what we did here this first round. It was… perfect."

Rosy-cheeked, she looked over at him and nodded. "Yes, it was a… perfect first date, I suppose you could say," she smiled tremulously.
Stepping into her, he reached up and smoothed a loose blonde hair off her forehead, tucking it back behind her ear. "I'll try… not to hurt you," he promised her. "No matter what my card says, I won't… do anything you don't want. You set the tone and pace."

She looked at him a minute more, and then slowly leaned forward and kissed him gently on the cheek. It was butterfly soft and made fireworks go off in his chest. "Thank you," she accepted graciously, then smiled playfully. "I just realized something. This is the first time I've been escorted to the door by a date." With a sigh of happiness, she turned the knob and stepped away.

Harry's heart flipped over in his chest, and he knew right there that he was in serious trouble.

Chapter End Notes

Here's their outfits:
Chapter Summary

Perhaps there was something to Ron's answer to the first question after all...

Chapter Notes

User El-El-El recommended the song, "Crashed" by Daughtry for Ron & Pansy this go around, and I thought it a perfect complement to Ron's thoughts here. So, this chapter is dedicated to El-El-El - congratulations!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

As soon as they entered the room, Pansy scoffed. "Oh, hell no," she stated rather emphatically and with a thought, changed the entire room. Gone was the square bed. In its place, a simple rug lay on the floor. No pillows, no comfort. "No one will be enjoying this," she told him rather flatly.

Gritting his jaw at her imperious tone of voice and her grating attitude, Ron narrowed his eyes. "Fine by me, baby doll. It's not like I wanted any of this anyway."

"Forfeit then," she challenged with a malicious smirk.
"You forfeit!" he countered back, clenching his fists at his side, reminding himself how much bigger he was than her, and that if he smacked her on the snoot—as he was aching to do—he would hurt her. Ron didn't like hurting girls. It was his number one rule: no hitting a girl, ever. He'd never done it, even in Quidditch (it's why he'd picked the position of Keeper – because the contact with other players was limited physically, and the majority of his time was spent on blocking Quaffles lobbed at the goals or Bludgers aimed at his head).

"Never!" Parkinson hissed at him, her fists equally clenched. "You'd just love to see me quit, I'm sure, but you can choke on it, Weasley. I will never give in to the likes of someone like you!"

Smirking, Ron stepped closer. "We'll see about that." He flipped his card up and taunted her by not showing her the Deed on the other side, letting her imagination run wild. "So, shall we get to it? We haven't got all night, you know."

Fuming mad, Pansy stomped over to the little scrap of fabric she'd put on the floor and crossed her arms. "I drew first, but I'd rather not touch you yet. Have to work my way up. You go."

"Why? So you can get the last laugh on me? Forget it, Parkinson. You go first," he challenged.

Smirking just as viciously at him as he had at her, she read off her card:

**DEED: You get to go down on your partner. Have fun!**

Ron blanched. She was going to bite his dick off. That shark-like grin with those little, sharp teeth promised it.

**OH, FUCKING HELL!**

Unless… He looked across at Slytherin's Bitch Queen and was inspired. If he didn't make his card unpleasant for her, perhaps she'd be less inclined to make her card unpleasant for him. Besides, he thought, as he read his card again, maybe he could even knock her off her pedestal as 'Mione had suggested earlier this week…

"Parkinson? Perfect. I'd love to see her squirm for one of you, too. How galling would it be to her pride for any one of you three to touch her 'precious pureblood limbs,' much less make her squirm under your mouths and hands?"

Yeah, good plan, that. He could really work her up with his card, pretend it wasn't so bad and he liked it even. Maybe charm her in the doing. Then, she'd be more willing to go easy on him. Or maybe even run off scared (despite her vow of two seconds ago not to be outdone by him).

It was a workable plan. A potentially fun plan. A very Slytherin-like plan.

HA! He'd use Parkinson's own way of playing against her. He'd beat her using her own tactics!

"Forget it. I'll go first," he insisted, and read his card aloud to her:

**DEED: Lick the beverage or food of your choice off your partner's body.**

As he'd expected, his partner balked, but after a minute of letting her pace back and forth, swearing, he finally put his foot down. "Either forfeit or take the dress off," he said in the evenest voice he could muster. "It's too pretty to ruin."

She stopped on a dime and looked up at him like he'd gone daft.
"Or, I could just get chocolate sauce all over it," he offered instead. "If you don't mind, that is."

Snarling, she reached around and pulled down the zipper of her dress. It was an awfully loud, rather ominous sound in the quiet, bare room, and sweat broke out on his upper lip unexpectedly. With a shrug of her shoulders, the straps fell and then the dress was pooling at her feet.

*Circe's holy tits!*

Her strapless bra and lacy black panties with the garters that attached to lacy, sheer black thigh-highs covered her so that no hint of nipple or bush was visible, but the rest of her mouth-watering body was fully exposed to his gaze, and for the first time, Ron had an opportunity to see what really had lain under Parkinson's robes. Large C-cup breasts, a long torso that was peachy-golden, flat tummy with a tiny bump at the bottom to give it a nice rounding out, hips that were wide enough to want to grab onto as you thrust away, and long, toned legs. He even thought her belly button pretty.

"Take a picture, you lecher," she scowled. "It'll last longer." With that, she lay down on the floor, resigned, staring up at the ceiling with jaw tightly snapped shut.

If she wasn't such a shrew, he might actually think Pansy Parkinson quite a beauty. Too bad she was a raving harpy with a foul mouth, though.

Removing his jacket and summoning a chair to lay it over (he wasn't going to throw it on the floor, carpet or no carpet), he then thought up what single food item he'd most like to lick off that smooth, untouchable skin of hers. The perfect idea came to him, and into his hand popped a bowl of fluffy dairy product – his favourite. Parkinson snorted.


Scooping up some with two fingers, he put it to her lips and smirked. "Not just any whipping cream, sweet cakes." He smeared it all over her darkly-tinted mouth. "*Strawberry* heavy whipping cream." She sputtered in reaction, and as soon as her lips parted, he thrust a finger in. "Try some."

She bit him and growled, but not hard enough to hurt, just to warn him off. A half-second later, her eyes widened and she let him go. He removed his fingers and licked his lips, knowing she'd had a taste of the lightly sweet, fruity cream.

As if cued by his action, she mimicked him, and swept the cream off her mouth with a flick of her pink tongue, then hummed in surprise. "Not bad, I suppose," she grudgingly approved. "At least it won't be too sticky."

Suddenly realizing how much fun this actually could be, Ron dipped his fingers back into the bowl and, scooping up a goodly amount of the dessert accompaniment, began smearing it across her belly button. Slytherin's Queen jumped and gasped, then clenched her teeth, trying to pretend disinterest.

Oh, he was going to wipe that indifference away, all right. He was going to make her squirm like a worm on a hook, just as 'Mione had predicted.

Putting the bowl at his side, he leaned over and began lapping the cream off of her body. Within three small strokes of his tongue, he had to reach for more to replenish what he'd taken, and her body shuddered, tightening up. Goosebumps prickled her skin all over now. He took his time licking the second batch off, and then the third, which he smeared up her belly and sternum to the point where the bra cut him off.

His neck was starting to hurt because of the angle. Straddling her body instead, looming over her, he licked and sucked the cream off that tasty, quivering skin of hers. When he looked up, he threw her a
seductive smirk. "Yum," he said in a deep rumble and made a show of licking his lips again.

For her part, Pansy was trying not to look affected, but a blush was staining both cheeks and up her throat now, and her dark eyes were a little too wide. Her breathing had also picked up some. He thought, looking down on her, that she was rather lovely this way. Pushing her boundaries was definitely turning out to be a lot more enjoyable than he'd expected.

Smearing cream across her collar, breastbone, and throat, he slowly laved and sucked his way up her skin. She turned her head when he got too close to her lips. "Thanks," he cheerfully offered. "Better access."

Closing her eyes, Parkinson was clearly trying to pretend that this whole humiliating thing was just going to go away. Oh, no, you little snake, he thought, *I plan to lick strawberry off your 'strawberry creams'...and there's still your card to do after this. We're not done by a long-shot, baby doll.*

He daubed more over her pulse point and nibbled, and finally got a reaction worth remembering: she gasped, and then bit her lip, squeezing her eyes shut.

"Feel good?" he whispered in her ear with a sinful snicker.

"Hardly. I'm trying not to vomit all over myself," she snapped back, her tone bitter.

"Hmmm…really?" he asked, licking again, "because you taste kicking delicious to me."

She growled again.

Merlin, that was a cute sound!

"Pervert!" she snarled.

Ron chuckled, smearing cream over her cheek and jaw, sucking and licking his way closer to her mouth. She tried very hard to refuse him, but this was his card, and he wasn't going to let her deny him anything he wanted. Cupping her jaw and turning her head, he had to remind her again that she had to submit or forfeit – which earned him the blackest, most hateful look he'd ever received.

"If you dare put your mouth over mine—" she began, but he cut her off by covering her lips with sugary goodness. Staring her in the eye, he leaned in for the kill. Parkinson actually whimpered, her expression changing from one of hatred to fear in an instant. "Don't!"

"You're going to suck my cock in less than fifteen minutes and you're worried about a kiss?" he asked, a bit incredulous. It was only a kiss. What was the big deal?

Her face flushed, turned white, and then the anger was back. "I hate you, Ronald Weasley," she spat.

Licking his lips, he grinned. "Back at you, Parkinson," he mocked. "Not too novel a sentiment on your side, though. Heard it before – a million times, in fact. Can't come up with another way to say you loathe my guts, hmm?"

He moved off then, not removing the cream from her mouth, scooting back down her body and pulling her bra down with a yank to both sides. She hissed in astonishment and threw her hands over her exposed breasts to cover up. "Nuh-uh, baby doll. Anywhere I want to lick, I get to. Card says so," he cruelly reminded her, taking delight from her discomfort. "Since you're going down on me in a few, I figured it might be fun to sample you as well."

Gently, he pried her hands off her chest and took a good, long look. Bloody hell, her tits were
beautiful, too! Dark purple areolas, perfectly shaped, big nipples. They were breasts made for
snacking.

He smeared cream all over them and dipped his head downwards. When his lips came into contact
with a taut bud, he twined his tongue around it, bringing it to full prominence. Parkinson cried out,
but stifled the pleasure-filled gasp with the back of her hand. She covered her mouth to keep her
reactions as quiet as possible, trying to deny that what he was doing to her was actually enjoyable.

He licked, circled, and flicked her nipples one at a time, making them hard, excited points, and when
that wasn't enough for him, he wrapped his lips around each one and sucked—hard. Beneath him,
his partner shuddered, squirmed, and moaned with arousal. The sound shot straight into his pants,
making his prick as solid as an iron bar and causing his bollocks to tighten with need. He reacted by
sucking harder and gripping a nipple between his teeth, gently tugging on it as he pulled back.

Another series of deep moans were dragged from his partner's throat as he dipped to the other nipple
for an instant replay, and her hands were suddenly gripping the sides of his thighs, her sharp, painted
fingernails digging into him. Her back arched, thrusting her breasts forward, giving him permission
to keep going.

Man, this was seriously turning him on! Like, to the point where he wanted to shag Parkinson until
she got rug burns on that pretty arse of hers, not caring that they couldn't stand each other. It was
time to take back a bit of control over the situation before he lost his mind and became the seduced,
rather than the seducer.

Trailing cream up her throat, he followed the path with his tongue and lips. "Are you sure you don't
want me to kiss you?" he teased as he hovered over the shell of her ear. "Or maybe… you want me
to put my lips somewhere else?" His fingers trailed down her hip to the crease of her knickers as he
sucked on her throat. "What do you think, Parkinson? Shall I make you come before you make me?"

"You're a Gryffindor," she accused him, her whole body shaking with fury and unwanted desire, her
nails digging harder into his thighs. "You're not supposed to be this cruel."

He snickered. "I take that as a 'yes,' then."

With that, he slipped down her body, tonguing her as he went, careful to put cream in his path so he
wouldn't violate the card's requirements. When he got to her knickers, he released the garters and
slipped the whole set down her hips. Parkinson wasn't going to make it easy for him, though. She
refused to lift her bum, so he had to pull her knicks down harder than he'd wanted, stripping them
from her ankles after a bit of a wrestle, leaving her stockings and heels in place as he spread her
thighs apart.

Merlin's balls, was there any place on Pansy Parkinson that wasn't physical perfection?

Dark, neatly trimmed curls were damp with her arousal, and she had a tiny beauty mole on her left
front hip that just begged for kissing. He dragged the bowl of whipped delight closer to him and
dipped his fingers in. Slowly and with a light touch, he brought them between her lower lips,
separating the flesh, coating it with sugary goodness.

Slytherin's Queen cried out and released him to bite the back of her hand again, but she made no
other protest.

If she really hated this, why didn't she just quit? "Will you forfeit?" he asked softly, running his
cream-coated fingernails over her clit. "I'll stop now if you want. Just say it."
She glanced down her body at him, her chest heaving up and down in quick succession, and slowly bent her knees, opening herself up to him. "If you stop now, Weasley, I'll bite your dick off for sure when it's my turn, and to hell with the rules," she promised him.

He tore his gaze from her pussy and looked up into her face…and finally saw what she'd been holding back: lust for him, heady and strong in her sparkling, dark eyes. Pansy Parkinson wanted him.

His brain switched off, and the game suddenly didn't matter anymore. Damn the consequences, he really wanted her back.

Dropping his gaze to focus on her pleasure, he teased the entrance to her quim, rubbing cream all over it and the soft, fleshy lips surrounding it, and used his free hand to encourage her to drop her knees to the sides so she would be wide open for him. She complied without resistance.

He nearly lost his sanity then as he stared straight into the heart of the perfect pussy: swollen lips, a button-shaped, engorged clit, dark rosy skin, and a glistening core.

All for him.

A slave to his own lust now, Ron pressed forward, letting his mouth have at her for the first time. He swiped up the middle with a tongue thick with saliva and pressed a deep, thorough kiss to her centre. "Bloody hell," he swore as he pulled back, licking his lips to capture the salty-lemony-strawberry essence that glossed them. "Shite, you taste so good," he murmured, liking the flavour. He licked her again, pressing his nose into her and inhaling at the same time. "Fuuuuck. That's… oh, man. So good." Throwing her calves over his shoulders, he lifted her hips off the floor, angling his face closer. "Want more," he growled and set his mouth to the task of devouring her.

Pansy absolutely wailed in pleasure as he latched onto her clit and gave it a good draw. She thrust her pelvis at him in a rocking motion, rubbing her pussy all over his chin and lips. "Yes! Don't stop! Oh, gods, don't you dare stop!" she begged.

Her legs tightened around his neck and she bucked against him with strength, nearly squeezing him to death between her thighs. Ron didn't mind in the least, though; it was actually a serious turn-on for him knowing he could so completely unhinge the Ice Queen of the Hogwarts Dungeon. He continued his ruthless exploration as she quivered all around him, lapping over every inch of her cunnie, sucking her tender flesh into his mouth, and thrusting his tongue deep into her channel.

Gods, she tasted of perfection as well. And her scent…

Her fingernails scrabbled across the carpet, seeking purchase as he tilted her world upside down and within moments, he made her come so hard that she actually screamed to the ceiling and arched her back until her hips locked straight out. He drank her warm, shuddering orgasm up, muffling his moans into her flesh as he swallowed her delicious essence.

"Let me… at you!" she pleaded, reaching for him as her orgasm released her and she relaxed at last in his grip again. "Damn you, Weasley, I want you! Let me down!"

He raised his head from his feast and lowered her bottom to the floor, scrabbling up her body until only inches separated their mouths. They stared at each other, fast breaths mingling, hearts pounding in a compatible rhythm, dawning realization taking them both away in that moment.

In a flash, she was on him, thrusting her fingers into his hair and pulling him down on top of her, claiming his lips for their first kiss. It was as wild and out of control as they were in that moment, as
they equally moaned and gasped around pulls of skin, reveling in the madness of their lust.

Wrapping her legs around his waist, and with a strength he didn't think she had, Pansy rolled them to her left and suddenly Ron was underneath her.

"Your turn," she panted.

Flipping around so that her quim was back in his face, she unbuttoned and unzipped his trousers, freeing his aching, hard cock from his pants and taking him up in a tight, feminine fist. Fuck, her grip felt good! Watching between their bodies, he caught the whole show as she lowered her mouth onto him, stretching her darkly-rouged lips around his head and sinking low, taking him down her throat in one glorious motion.

Ron lost the last of his marbles at that. He reached for the bowl of cream, smeared it all over her exposed skin, grabbed onto her hips, and lowered her onto his face once more.

They moved in perfect tandem, and Merlin, the witch knew what to do! Parkinson gave him the best blow of his life, her mouth plummeting down to the hilt with each quick downward stroke, creating hard suction that bordered just this side of pain with each upstroke, just as Ron liked. He wasn't a big man, he knew, but he was a decently sized bloke at six inches. Still, she took the whole length of him into the moist cavern of her mouth, licking and sucking at his prick like he was some kind of Honeyduke's lolly. And every time she moaned, it vibrated straight up his shaft, making his sac clench.

For his part, Ron gave as good as he got, utilizing every trick in the book, even running the tip of his tongue over her clit, signing out his name as if to prove to himself that he'd possessed at least this much of her.

Very quickly, they were both on the edge, ready to explode together.

"Parkinson, I'm gonna come!" he warned her. "Pull off if you don't want—"

She sank down low on him again and tickled his base with the bottom of her tongue as she pulled back up. That did it. His knees folded up of their own accord, his back arched off the floor and he roared his pleasure as he released. Pansy took down every drop of him, swallowing convulsively, moaning right along with him. Clearly, she liked his taste, too.

Panting as he released the last of his spurting seed into her warm, wet cavity, he belatedly realized she hadn't found her own fulfillment yet. That just didn't seem quite right to him, especially given what she'd just done to him, so pressing his tongue into her entrance, he fucked her with it again, and played with her clit with his fingers. With a few swipes, he had her moaning, squirming, and tightening up on him as before. "Come on, baby doll," he mumbled, coaxing her, wanting fervently to pleasure her a second time. "Give yourself to me."

Apparently, that was the magic phrase, because Pansy climaxed again, shouting and bowing her back like a cat in heat. Her blissful cry was loud and she was completely uninhibited in that moment… and Ron found that he really dug that. He held her hips still as he greedily drank her up, and when she was finally done convulsing, he placed kisses over her soaked lips, her inflamed clit, and her sopping entrance before letting her go.

As soon as his hands released her, Pansy crawled off of him and to the side, turned away from him. She rolled up into a little ball and started crying.

The sound of her sincere anguish slashed at Ron's heart. What had happened? What had gone
wrong? That just shared a mind-blowing experience. They'd both orgasmed really hard and enjoyed it, right? So, what was up with the boo-hooing?

Staring over at his partner's curved, naked spine, sanity returned, bringing with it sickening dread. This was Pansy Parkinson, one of his bitterest rivals, and she'd just allowed him to make her climax twice – she'd begged for it, in fact. And she'd sucked him off and swallowed his come, too, gulping him down with an eagerness that matched his. Fuck, but they'd completely lost their fecking minds there for a few minutes, becoming animals, pawing and biting at each other in desperation! She was probably feeling really embarrassed and very vulnerable right about then as a result. He knew he the hell was!

Sitting up, Ron tucked his tired, flaccid member back into his pants and zipped up his trousers, crawling over to the weeping witch's side, unsure as to what to do now. She had her arms wrapped about her middle, her lids were squeezed tightly shut, and she was sobbing as hard as she had been the morning he'd run into her in the hallway on his way to Transfiguration. He thought she looked very small and defeated.

A wave of shame swept over him, killing the satisfied buzz he'd had going after coming.

Shite, he'd hurt her. Not physically, but in a much more powerful, terrible manner: he'd toyed with her emotions by using sex as a weapon. Although it had been his intention to teach her a lesson tonight in just such a manner, seeing her like this now… well, it hurt him, too. Facing the consequences of his revenge, Ron knew in that instant that he'd done the wrong thing. A queer need to take responsibility, to comfort the crying woman erupted in his conscience and forced him to act.

Taking a risk, he snuggled up behind Pansy in a spooning position on the floor, and wrapped both arms around her, pulling her slight form against him to both comfort and provide warmth. She didn't resist but simply cried harder. "I'm sorry that I hurt you," he whispered in her ear, his voice catching slightly as he felt remorse weigh heavily upon his chest. "Merlin, I don't understand any of what just happened, Parkinson, but… gods, you're so fucking beautiful, every bit of you. Did you know?" He pressed a chaste kiss to her throat. "I know you hate me, but… fuck, I loved what we just did! You were abso-bloody-lutely wonderful. I've never come so hard in my life. That was the best I've ever felt. I… I thought you liked it, too. I'm sorry if you didn't."

He held her in silence after that as her crying eventually tapered off. Finally, lying limp in his arms, she sniffed away the last of her sorrow.

"The best? Really?" she asked in a tentative whisper. "Are you lying?"

Ron huffed. "Hell, woman, I could die happy after that. You taste like the sweetest dessert I've ever had and you suck cock better than any fantasy I could dream up. What wasn't there to love about it?"

Parkinson chuckled. "You want to know something funny, Weasley? I've never come so hard in my life either. And twice! I've never done that. I'd be lucky to get it once most of the time."

His ego gave a rousing cheer in his head. At least he'd done something right.

Parkinson turned in his arms and poked him in the chest, giving him an arch look. "But you're not allowed to tell a soul I said that, or I'll hex off your brass ones."

He lifted his hands from around her waist and put them up between them as if to ward off potential evil. "Yes, ma'am," he automatically replied, having been taught from a young age not to argue with an authoritative woman, if possible.
After that, they lay on the floor, not touching anymore, just looking at each other, measuring up the other's intentions, considering future options.

Would he want to repeat what they'd just done? Hell, yes! If the oral stuff was that good, what would the fucking be like?

The irony of that thought struck him when the chime rang to tell them their time was over and they got up to dress. As he helped her look presentable once more, even going so far as to helping her re-zip her dress and assuring the front chains of the costume hung properly, he realized that his earlier answer to the Interrogations card from the first round had been the truth: he had liked going down on his partner.

No, not just 'liked'. He'd loved it.

Now, wasn't that the hell of it?

Chapter End Notes

Here's their outfits:
Theo meets his kink-perfect match.

User gingerhairedgirl567 recommended the song, "So I Need You" by 3 Doors Down for Theo & Daphne this go around, and I thought it a perfect complement to Theo's thoughts here. So, this chapter is dedicated to gingerhairedgirl567 - congratulations!

THEO & DAPHNE

Theo immediately kicked his shoes off as soon as he'd entered his private suite behind Daphne, and hopped into the middle of the bed, testing out its springiness. Ah, just the right amount – not too firm, not too soft. Just like he liked his women. He could live with the colour; it didn't really matter to him.

"So," he looked at her slyly from under his lashes, giving her the look he knew made women melt. "You get to go first, since you drew your card before me." He grinned with anticipation. "What do I have to do? Bathe you in warm oil? Lick heavy cream off your belly? What?"

Daphne smiled amusedly at him as, whipping out her card, she read off her naughty reward:

**DEED: You partner must kneel before you and perform any three tasks you want, responding with 'Yes, Your Highness,' to your commands.**
Theo's jaw fell and then he let out a whoop of pure excitement. "Woo-hoo! YES!" Rubbing his hands together in anticipation, he looked up at her eagerly. "So, dominate me, my Queen! Make me do your bidding!"

Daphne looked hard at him. "Mister Nott, you are supposed to kneel at my feet when you offer yourself up."

His guts twisting into hot molten lava at just the commanding tone in her voice, Theo hurried to do as she bid, throwing himself at her feet, looking up at her with desperate fever. "Command me," he begged, wanting to see this woman's kink in full force.

Tilting her head, his Housemate coolly appraised him behind those fucking hot glasses of hers and then began walking a circle around him. "Before we commence, Mister Nott, there are a few matters we need to address, so we may reach an accord." Unexpectedly, he felt her slippered foot pressed against his right shoulder blade. His body reacted instantly, hardening, flushing with blood. "Here are my three tasks, as it were. First, you will do my bidding exactly, as and when I dictate it throughout the entirety of this round. I expect you to obey me for the full twenty-five-minute duration, throughout which, you will do as my card requires you to do and answer every single one of my demands with 'Yes, Your Majesty' - not 'Your Highness,' but 'Your Majesty.' Do you agree?"

Oh, bloody hell, this was going to be so awesome! "Yes, fuck yes," he enthusiastically agreed.

Her foot slid over his shoulder, and now she was pressed against him, her naked calf hanging over his torso to slide against his chest. "Second, you will never speak of anything we do in our private chambers outside of the boundaries of the game even after this card has played itself out, and especially not with any of the others confined to gameplay. Do you agree?"

Swallowing thickly, cupping his steel hard erection, he nodded. "Absolutely. I agree."

Fingernails ran through his hair, massaging his skull erotically, making him moan in pleasure. "Third, when this game ends, you will not pursue me."

He paused.

But what if he liked what they did and he wanted to see her again later?

Fingers tugged his hair somewhat painfully, while at the same time Daphne wiggled off her ballet slipper and rubbed her toes into his crotch, moving his hand aside. "Do you agree, Mister Nott? If not, I will be inclined to play this game exactly as the cards require and no more than that."

He closed his eyes, loving the feel of her rough treatment and her tough voice. At this point, he'd promise her anything if he could just tear into her. "Sure."

"Excellent," his partner purred, removing her leg from his person entirely and stepping back. "Then, we may begin."

The lights in the room suddenly dimmed several notches, and Theo's anticipation kicked up to the point where he was now shaking.

"You will remove every stitch of clothing," his goddess commanded. "Now, Theo."

"Yes, Your Majesty," he breathed in joy and stood, hurriedly kicking his clothes from his body. As he did, Daphne came around to the front of him, and rather casually removed her glasses and her shoes. When he was fully nude in front of her, Theo waited, trembling, fists clenched at his sides as she took him in from head to toe with a sweeping glance, her eyes lingering on the erect length that
jutted against his belly.

"There is a sloping chair behind you," she informed. "You will sit in the curve, facing the higher end."

"Yes, Your Majesty." He turned to find the bed had been replaced—apparently, at Daphne’s thought—with one of those Tantra Chairs that he’d seen advertised in *PlayWiz*.

Oh, wow! She was definitely into kink, as he’d secretly assumed!

He did as she wanted, waiting and aching with need. Daphne surprised him by seating herself against his back on the smaller hump of the chair. Her dress had worked its way up her thighs as she straddled the furniture, baring the smooth flesh of her legs to his hot gaze as they came around him. Her calves and thighs were silken, lightly tanned, and toned from all of the stairs they had to climb around the castle.

Gliding her hands all over him, starting at his arms, then his shoulders, his back, and down to his waist, then around to his abs and pecs, his partner felt up every inch of his hot skin with her cool, caressing fingers. "Exceptional, Theo," she breathed against his ear, making him twitch in palpable desire. "Luscious, in fact. You take excellent care of your physique. I appreciate that very much in a man." Her fingernails lightly scraped over the tops of his thighs, and as she bent forward, he could feel her hardened nips behind the satin of her dress pressing against his back.

"Don't stop," he demanded, wishing she'd grab a hold of his todger and start wanking away. Instead, her hands stilled and she bit his earlobe hard in punishment, pulling his head back and to the side.

"I give the orders here," she reminded him firmly with a growl. "Understand, Theo?"

He gulped loudly, and nodded his head, loving her aggressiveness. "Y-yes, Your Majesty. I'm sorry, Your Majesty."

Her arms wrapped around him, one hand pressing against his heart, the other about his waist. "Because you contravened the rules, Theo, this round will be all about *my* pleasure, instead of yours, as I'd wanted to do for you. You have sacrificed that opportunity with such impetuousness." Her nails dug in, leaving rounded half-moon indentations in his skin, making him hiss from the unexpected sharp pain. "I am your Mistress, and you will do as I command – as you agreed. Do you understand?"

Whimpering like a whipped puppy, he heedlessly blurted another apology, his only driving thought to get her to relent so he could come soon. "Forgive me, Your Majesty! Yes, I understand. I won't do it again!"

Pulling away from him, Daphne stood and walked around to the front of him and straddled the chair, looking down at him with disappointment. "The sincerity and eagerness of your response pleases me, Theo. Therefore, I will provide you with a single opportunity to earn my forgiveness – although this round will continue to remain for my pleasure only. However…" She narrowed her eyes in severe warning. "If you fail to do exactly as I want for the remaining time we have in here, this game will end for both of us. I will simply forfeit… and you will never have me. Do you understand, Mister Nott?"

Theo's panicked response was a detonation of ballistic cold fire in his chest. He'd never had a woman dominate him before, but it had always remained his deepest, most sacred and secret fantasy. He now understood that Daphne could grant him this closeted fetish that he so desperately wanted, and for that reason, he needed to please her. "Yes, Your Majesty! I agree. I'm so sorry! Please, *please*
forgive me." His fingernails bit into the palms of his hands as he clenched his fists in a masochistic fit meant to cause himself some pain for having been so stupid and risking this opportunity with his impatience.

Daphne stared at him with those enigmatic, deeply compelling eyes and Theo felt like a surrendering pet under her gaze. "Set your hands upon my knees."

He immediately leaped to do her bidding. "Yes, Your Majesty!"

"Slowly, run your hands up my legs, moving my dress up as you go," she murmured the command, and his stomach clenched as his cock jumped in anticipation. Where would this lead? Would she ask him to lick her pussy in retribution? Man, he would be so lucky!

"Yes, Your Majesty," he whispered, and holding her gaze, he did as she bade, scrunching the silky, shiny dress up past her thighs, over her hips and bunching it at her waist. She wore a pair of V-String iridescent blue-green satin mesh panties with lace trim that he could just barely see through… and noted that she was completely shaved. "Oh, hell," he breathed in awe, wanting to bury his nose right in and start licking.

"Theo, look at me," his Queen commanded.

"Yes, Your Majesty," he responded automatically, gazing into her beautiful, bright eyes once more. She stared at him, then reached out a hand and traced his cheek, strangely gentle. "Do you want to worship me properly, Theo?" she asked in a low, sultry voice. He lost his ability to speak coherently and could only nod. "Then stand up." He followed her instruction, now looming over her in greater height.

"Yes, Your Majesty," he breathed in what was automatically becoming his favorite phrase of the century.

"Remove my dress," she bid, watching him with a grey-blue enigmatic, unwavering stare. "Slowly."

With his hands already at her waist, he moved the satiny fabric inch by inch up the remainder of her deliciously curved body. Theo's mouth ran dry as he took a good, long gander at the perfection before him. Daphne's belly was flat, her hips flared, her breasts… oh, bloody hell, her breasts! They were perfectly ample, just the right size for his tastes, spilling from the top of a matching lacy-satin iridescent green-blue bra. Tugging the dress over her head and arms, he let the fabric slip to the side through his fingers, unheeded.

"Now, tell me, Theo, what your card requires you to perform," she indicated the laminated piece of cardboard lying atop his clothes pile nearby. "Can you recall it from memory?"

He nodded eagerly, and recited the instructions:

**DEED: Lick and touch your partner's naked chest.**

Daphne hummed and gave him a sinful smile that made his penis twitch once again, then reached behind her and with a practiced ease, slipped the fastenings on her bra and removed it, allowing it to fall to the side on top of the dress. Theo's mouth ran dry as his breath caught and his heart leaped against the underside of his ribs painfully; her breasts truly were exquisitely shaped, with tiny nipples that were a light pinkish-brown in color. Such gorgeous nipples, he thought as his mouth watered at the fantasy of taking them in his mouth right away. It was only with great restraint and a reminder to himself that he didn't want her to get angry with his impatience again and walk away now that he just managed to keep his fingers (and his lips) to himself.
"Sit back down," she required of him, and immediately he obeyed, with a reflexive, "Yes, Your Majesty," erupting from his lips without thought. Sinuously sliding down with him, his partner straddled his lap, and then pushed him slowly into a reclining position over the smaller hump in the funky chair. "Lay back."

When he'd settled so that his spine matched the flow of the chair's design comfortably, Daphne gripped his hands gently and guided them towards her chest to cup her mounds. "You're going to give me pleasure now, Theo. I want you to start off here." Settling herself more firmly over his erection, letting the width of him rest in the middle of her folds, which were slightly damp behind the fabric of her knickers, she gave him a wicked smile and proceeded to teach him. "Were you at all cognizant of the fact that a woman's breasts are an important feature of her feminine image, Theo?" she asked in a softly compelling voice, keeping his hands still and in place, letting him feel the warm, cushiony flesh.

He shook his head. Honestly, he hadn't given the matter much thought. Tits were tits – something to be sucked or held onto while you fucked. "No, Your Majesty."

The smirk on her face widened perceptively. "Oh, yes, quite. We of the feminine persuasion are always consciously aware of their weight upon our chests, of every abrupt temperature change that affects them, of the sensitive reactions elicited by differing elements stroking against them, be it lace or satin or cotton… or oils… or skin. We also gauge them against other women's, reassuring ourselves of their beauty, comparing them in much the same way a man does his penis." He swallowed heavily as she shifted her hips to glide her core up and then back down his stiff cock. "They are a beautiful extension of a woman, Theo, faithfully responsive to pleasing stimuli, much as your most cherished possession." On the final two words, she slid over him again, just once, making his need flare. She then went still against him.

"Lightly caress my nipples," she commanded. "I want you to learn my body so you can please me properly."

More turned on than he'd ever thought possible, Theo did as his goddess asked, letting his index fingers swipe over the tiny buds, and watched in amazement the actual process of them swelling in response. He was amazed to see them change color, flushing with blood as they became engorged. Why had he never noticed such a small, but awesomely arousing detail before?

Daphne hummed in approval, enjoying his attention, and his eyes shot to her face to watch her reaction. Lust crawled languidly through her ocean-blue depths, her pupils expanding as her body felt the stirrings of need. Her smirk had transformed into a small, pleased smile that decorated her prettily painted lips with an expression he'd only seen once – the afternoon she'd sat across from him on the common room couches, relaxed and enjoying herself. That look was what he'd been waiting for… and this time it was directed at him, at something he was doing to her, and not some book.

"What do they feel like?" she inquired. "Tell me every sensation that caressing my body in this manner is educing from your senses, Theo."

Theo licked his lips and dropped his gaze back to what his hands were doing. "Your skin is so soft… buttery soft," he sighed in pleasure, cupping her breasts and pushing up a bit, squeezing lightly. "And malleable. There's firmness underneath, but it moves about under my fingers."

"Show me what you've learned, Theo," she arched into his hands. "Worship my breasts properly, just as your card allows."

With very light caresses to start, he traced the edges of her breasts one at a time, learning the soft span of flesh with intimate detail. She had a single, light freckle on the top of her left mound, and
another underneath her right. He found those beauty marks to be fascinating, not ruining the perfection, but adding to its uniqueness. Her left side was slightly larger than her right, and a tad heavier. Snaking a fingertip over her areola, he circled it many times, just tracing, softly learning Daphne’s shape. It was such a sensual thing to do to study the contours of a woman, he was discovering. "Beautiful," he whispered, enraptured by the motion of flesh under his fingers. "I want to run my tongue all over these."

To his surprise, goosebumps decorated her skin and she lightly shivered. He looked up at her in astonishment, and Daphne graced him with a slow, sensual smile. "I give you permission to use your mouth now. Start with your lips only, and then add your tongue, and then your teeth at last. Change the temperature by breathing hot, then blowing cold alternatively. Watch how your attention affects me."

Giddy as a virgin, he leaned in and ran his mouth over the entirety of her breast, following the curves, breathing and blowing upon her skin randomly, enjoying the tiny shivers that raced her spine as he played. Adding his tongue to the mix, circling her nipple, but not touching it, teasing until Daphne decreed he take the tiny bud into his mouth, had been so gratifying! He sucked her breasts, one at a time, alternating pressure as she directed. By the time he'd moved on to the use of his teeth, her nipples were dark from his love bites, delightfully bruised and he was sure, aching in a way that made Daphne quite pleased.

Her voice thrumming with pleasure, Daphne calmly continued with the lesson, rubbing her lower body against his cock in a slow, continuous rhythm now. "A woman's body is a place for your veneration, Theo. While you are touching her or deeply buried inside of her, she must become the centre of your adoration and devotion. You achieve this not just with words, Theo, but with every sincere effort you make to bring her pleasure."

He adored the challenge in her eyes. "Yes, Your Majesty," he seductively purred and turned back to his task, loving the feel of her satiny knickers sliding across his length. He nipped at her, bit harder, pulled back as she requested of him, repeated, changing tempos. Then he bit the tender flesh around her areola, leaving a nice imprint behind on her left lower curve. As he worked, Daphne encouraged him with soft words, and when he'd finally put it all together – laving, stroking, pinching, forcing air of varying temperatures across the sensitive skin, and biting hard enough on the nipple itself to leave another mark, Daphne came for him. It was magic, this gentle bringing, making him truly aware of his partner in a way he had never been before.

She was wholly beautiful as her head tilted towards the sky, her lips parted, her back arched, and her breasts and throat and cheeks rushed with blood. As she yielded to her petite orgasm with a soft moaning sigh, her fingernails gripped his biceps tightly and pressed in sharply, and she shook in his arms allowing herself to finally slip a margin of that tight control she always maintained. She was all feminine grace and strength and vulnerability wrapped up in his arms in that moment.

"Daphne," he breathed her name in awe, really seeing her for the first time.

When she came back into herself, his partner’s dark eyelashes fluttered open and their gazes connected once more. As they silently watched each other, he awaited her next command, enjoying this game of pleasing her immensely. Sexual contact had never been like this for him, and this experience tonight was decidedly heady. Theo craved more. His eyes dropped to her lips as she licked them. Gods, he wanted to kiss her!

"What will you have of me now, my Queen?" he whispered, letting his attention travel the length of her long, peachy-gold throat, down to where his fingers were still lightly caressing her nipples. "Shall I continue?"
Her chest expanded as she took a deeper breath, and then she put some space between them and reached down to grip his penis. She stroked upwards from the base of him with a tight grip, and Theo hissed, tensing up, enjoying the skimming of his most sensitive self. "Oh, yeah!" he cried out with delirious desire as she swiped her thumb over his wet crown, circling his tip with her fingers, rubbing softly. "Your Majesty, please… bring me, too. I beg you!"

Sadistically, her fingers let him go immediately, and he groaned in mounting frustration, looking up at her for intention as she straddled his lap, watching him so calmly, her restraint iron-clad once more. For just a second, he felt a hot stab of anger at her playing with him; he'd given her pleasure, after all, and it was only fair that she did likewise for him, right?

"My pleasure only this round, remember?" she reminded him wickedly, even as the lights from the ceiling above reflected gauzy glints of gold all about her, haloing her in an angelic bath of heavenly illumination. "Patience, Theo. Your turn will undoubtedly come at the next opportunity and I have no doubt you'll make me pay for my selfishness ten-fold."

His eyes brightened. Yes, in the next round, anything could happen! He might get a really nasty card to try out on her, and then she'd be under his whim…

But did he really want that?

He was rather enjoying being Daphne's submissive. He was not only learning about the more sensual side of sex, but he was fulfilling a fantasy... and honestly, there was something compelling about being with this witch. She drew him in with her formal speech, and her smart talk, and her sexual allure. He'd never felt so utterly charmed by a woman before. "I'll turn over my action to you next round if you will it, my Queen," he heard the words escape his mouth before he'd put much thought into them.

One dark eyebrow rose in curiosity, and her warm hand cupped his cheek, stroking back and forth against his smooth, freshly shaved skin with renewed interest. "You would do that? Why, Theo?"

As he stared up at her from his willing, exposed position at her feet—at her soft, shining pale blue eyes and sweetly parted light wine-colored lips, and her lovely cascade of champagne-colored hair—a sudden feeling overcame him, gripping his heart tightly. Unnamed, unknown, it was powerful enough to induce a clenching of his naked abdomen, to propel his stomach to drop, to leave him feeling strangely defenseless. "I…don't…want this to stop, Daphne," he admitted with anxious inspiration. "I like what we're doing."

His Queen watched him carefully, her fingertips tracing over his full lips, apparently considering his offer. "I accept your gift, Theo," she finally agreed, and he felt relief bloom throughout his body, relaxing his muscles again. "Next round we will continue as we are, and perhaps, if the cards are in your favour, I will even pleasure you."

Closing his eyes, he leaned his forehead against her thighs, letting his hands rest on the sides of her long legs, thanking her silently for her beneficent deliverance.

As they redressed in silence a few minutes later, and while her back was to him, Theo considered all he'd learned about Daphne Greengrass over the last hour. Her movements were precise, she appeared unruffled by getting half-naked with a man she hardly knew, and yet his impression was that this was not something she did regularly with men, so she was no common doxy. Did she feel anything for him at all, aside from some wacked out BDSM needs, though? Or was this all simply a game to her? How many men had she done this sort of thing with anyway?

What had she said yesterday? Something important…
"I would like to enjoy it as a game of sultry delight – a conclusive initiation, as it were, into realizing adulthood."

Maybe he wasn't special to her at all. Maybe he was just one last fling before graduation, as she'd sort of intimated that she wanted. Hell, she hadn't even wanted a kiss from him when he'd tried to give her one not three minutes ago in thanks for what she'd done with him this round; she'd stepped away and shook her head, telling him there would be no kissing between them unless a card required it.

"When this game ends, you will not pursue me."

She'd made him swear to that requirement in the beginning of all of this…which meant she didn't have any intention of getting emotionally tangled up with Theo.

When they were ready, and as he reached for the handle to exit the room, allowing Greengrass to go before him, he felt a sinking sensation in his guts. What if he didn't want to let her go at the end? He'd seriously liked doing this with her. What if he wanted to pursue her, to explore more of this forbidden side that he'd secretly yearned for? How screwed was he going to be then?

Somehow everything had gotten turned on its head. He'd joined this game so he could fuck a girl – anyone, didn't matter to him (although he'd been kind of hoping for Daphne when he'd reached for the Partners card). Now, he was finding himself wanting a specific girl, and hopefully, not just for this one night. Only she didn't seem to want him in the same way, as was so obviously evident when she walked past him and sat back down on the couch, as cool and calmly collected as ever.

Fucking hell, what had he gotten himself into?

Chapter End Notes

Here's their outfits:
1E: Blaise & Ginny

Chapter Summary

Blaise is about to discover that wrestling with a Weasley will always result in being tangled up in the end.

Chapter Notes

I thought the song, "Remember When It Rained" by Josh Groban was perfect for Blaise & Ginny this go around, specifically for Blaise's thoughts.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Ginny was fuming mad that she'd been stuck with Blaise as a partner – he could see it in the set of her shoulders and in the fire in her eyes. He inwardly chuckled, enjoying her discomfort. He did find it strangely fortuitous that he'd drawn her for his game companion, considering Drake hadn't been able to cheat to arrange it for him. It must have been Fate, he supposed, just as Malfoy had explained the odd coincidence to Granger. Apparently, he'd been meant to have this time with the Weasley girl, and so he intended on making the most of it.
They squared-off on either side of the white bed, with its white blankets and pillows, in their floor-to-ceiling white room, her staring at him with distinct loathing, while he stood in parallel opposition, infinitely pleased with the idea of being her 'date' for the duration. They'd been silent for the past five minutes, neither willing to back down.

"For Godric's sake," his redheaded fascination finally growled. "Are you going to go first or shall I? 'Cause I've got places to be and better people to see."

"So forfeit," he challenged, smirking at her.

Ginny scoffed. "Not a chance."

"Fine. Since I drew my card first, I'll go," he decided, and read the card out loud to her…

**DEED: Spank and/or rub sensually your partner's naked bum over your lap.**

His partner gasped and turned white as a ghost.

A sneaky suspicion overtook him. "It's one of yours, isn't it?"

Glumly, she nodded. "I don't suppose you'd consider not doing it?"

Even before the fifth word was out of her mouth, Blaise heartlessly dashed her hopes against the rocks, shaking his head. "I'm not quitting this game until I'm satisfied, Weasley, and that won't happen until after you're under me, screaming my name to the rooftops as I fuck you six ways from Sunday."

"You unmitigated bastard!" she hissed in fury. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes spit fire. At her side, her fists were clenched, and her chest heaved with violence. "I'll fight you tooth and nail! I won't make this easy for you!"

Leering, Blaise gazed into her dark sienna depths with lustful anticipation, feeling his blood ignite in his triumph. He thought up what he wanted to fulfill this requirement, and next to him appeared a white cozy chair with no arms. He took a seat in it, adopting a lazy, exalted posture. "You might want to ditch the jacket at the same time as your knickers." When she didn't immediately move, he let his witch stew for thirty extra seconds. "Every minute you delay I'm taking out of your time, you know. And as the first to go, if I don't get in my twenty-five minutes, that means you've forfeited the game."

With a sneer of unadulterated hatred, Ginevra Weasley stripped off her jacket, untying the ribbon and whipping it through the eyelets with quick, nimble fingers. Shucking the coat from her shoulders, she caught it and folded it, placing it on the bed with care. Angry though she was with him, clearly she wasn't going to ruin her outfit for his sake.

When he caught a look at what little she was wearing under the jacket, Blaise's heart leapt into his throat. It was a simple slip dress that narrowed at the waist, showing off her curves. It had a plunging sweetheart neckline that allowed the barest amount of succulent cleavage to show. Lacy spaghetti straps held it in place. Wearing just that and the thigh-high stockings and the heels… "Beautiful, my little lioness," he breathed in awe. "Flirty, sexy." He smiled, throwing her his best sultry smile. "I like it very much."

She sniffed with disdain. "I didn't wear it for you. I was honestly hoping for Seamus."

Whatever warmth Blaise had managed to siphon out of their minimal discussion so far was leached away with that one comment. In its place settled the ugly, bile-laden acid of jealousy.
Finnigan. Of all the males she could have named…

Fuckin' fairy.

"Tick, tock, Weasley. Get that arse over here so I can spank it good."

Ginny gave him a flat stare. "You fink. Torturing me with my own slagging card! What kind of man are you anyway?"

He narrowed his eyes, his ire increasing. "The kind that's going to give it to you like you deserve, woman. Now take your knickers down and lay across my lap before I call foul."

Her cheeks were bright crimson with mortification as she reached up under her dress and took off a pair of black, satin-lace panties, putting them on the bed next to her jacket. It then required two more deep breaths and apparently a whole lot of Gryffindor courage for her to walk over to him and bend over his lap. Hanging with her head down, she waited for his first blow to land, awkwardly tense.

Gently, Blaise lifted the hem of her dress, exposing her bare bum to his hot stare.

"My, what a sweet arse you have, Ginevra," he murmured, thoroughly entranced. Rubbing all along the curves of her buttocks in slow circles, he began his torment of his heart's greatest obsession. His fingers danced across her waist, smoothing down her hip to cup the soft mounds of her backside. "Such pretty, creamy skin…soft and curvy," he said as he continued caressing her, unable to deny his need to touch every inch of her skin. Dipping into the sway at her spine's end, he circled the tiny mole she had just above her right cheek. "Your uniforms do your bum no justice, my little lioness. I'd have never known how delicious this side of you was if not for this game."

"Just get it over with," she growled, her nails clenching into the plush, white shag rug beneath their feet.

"Eager to be punished?" he wondered aloud, continuing to torture her with tender contact. "Tell me, has anyone ever sexually spanked you before, Ginevra?"

She barked a laugh. "Loads of men have. Plenty of times. You'd be no different."

An expert on ferreting out untruths amongst his Housemates, Blaise heard the obvious lie in her voice, said out of a need to falsify bravado in the face of her shame. "Tsk, tsk. Lies aren't a Gryffindor trait, kitten."

"No, they're the province of you slimy Slytherins," she goaded him.

"Perhaps," he acknowledged, running a single digit up the middle of her cheeks, barely touching the tiny entrance to her rear. He purposefully stroked the spot with expert attention, wanting to prolong his getting to know her in this manner. "Has anyone ever fucked you here?" he asked, tickling the small hole.

His partner sharply inhaled and held her breath, and her back cheeks tightened up. "Don't," she choked, clearly uncomfortable with him touching her there. "You can spank me and rub me outside, but don't–"

She faltered, losing her nerve.

"Don't what, Ginevra?" he asked, sincerely curious now. She sounded and acted as if she were terrified, which was wholly uncharacteristic for his brave lioness.
He left his finger temporarily resting in place, trapped by her tensed muscles as it was, not quite ready to leave off until he was given a good enough reason. This was his reward, after all, and he wanted to touch every bit of her during this game if possible, even places she would consider 'forbidden.' He gently prodded her teeny, furrowed opening, wiggling against the creased skin, allowing the tip of his finger to very carefully poke—not enough to break through, but enough to cause her breathing to become distressed.

"What don't you want me to do?" he posed the question in a different way, curious as to why this act intensely bothered her.

He actually heard her swallow, the gulping noise loud and heavy in the hushed room. Clearly, whatever she was thinking, it was not just embarrassing to voice, but quite painful, too.

"Don't go inside there. You can do anything else you want to me, Zabini, and I won't flinch, but buggering me--"

"Is your limit," he guessed. "It will make you quit this game, won't it?"

A critical pause followed for a beat, then two before she replied. "Yes, it's the only thing that will."

He removed his finger from her grip and began stroking her rounded flesh again. "What if I made such a thing very pleasurable for you, my lioness?"

She firmly shook her head, her long, fiery hair flopping about on the carpet. "There is no way that could ever feel good. So, just don't go there. Please."

He hummed, dropping the matter for now, knowing eventually that they'd talk about it. He was determined to know the reason such a thing had horrified her so. Who had touched her there and caused her enough pain to actually scare her?

A cold, leaden weight settled in his chest at the imagined thought of her screaming and crying as some unknown man violently penetrated her little rosette, tearing into her.

If that was the case, he'd personally hunt the man down later.

"Are you ready now, my lovely kitten?" he asked in a deceptively calm voice, still sensually touching her, exciting her nerves all along his intended area of purchase. He was going to make that pretty, pale skin bloom and scarlet.

"I won't stoop to begging you not to do your card, Zabini. Just get on with it."

"Fair enough."

His strike was well-measured, but solid and unapologetic. And loud.

The contact of his hard hand on her soft, sensitive flesh had to have stung, he knew, but for her part, Ginny did not scream. She did not make a single noise, in fact.

Had anyone ever spanked her, he wondered again. She hadn't answered truthfully a moment ago, but he bet he could get her to tell him now. "I'll ask you again, my lioness: has anyone ever done this to you before? Be truthful this time or I'll add five extra spanks on the end just for trying to deceive me."

"If anyone should know about deceit, you double-dealing serpent--"
He cut off what he was sure to be a scathing insult with another resounding slap. "Answer the question, Ginevra," he commanded. "It's a simple request."

She shook her head again, stubborn to the core. "I don't have to do anything of the sort, you Slytherin bastard! The card doesn't require me to divulge my private interests to you. It doesn't require me to interact with you at all, in fact, except to allow you to humiliate me like this. So I think I'll just keep my mouth shut and let you spend the rest of your days wondering whether or not I let men do this to me in the privacy of my bedchambers."

He spanked her again, a little harder this time for provoking his jealousy once more. "Language, young lady," he scolded. "I've let you get away with calling me a bastard twice tonight. No more."

"I hate you," she spat with venom. "I loathe the very ground you walk on, you slimy, reptilian--"

Smack!

"You're too wild for your own good, Weasley," he caressed her pinking bottom. "I think I'll rein in that mouth and temper of yours during this game. That'll be one of my goals."

"Bite me, you sleezy whore corpse."

Whap.

Blaise shook his head, amused with her audacity. "Keep it up, kitten. I love watching your pretty arse blush for me." He stroked her erotically in between slaps now, just to add some spice to the mix.

"You're a total arsehat, Zabini, you know that?"

Whack.

"I think it's time we got a little more serious, Ginevra, as apparently, my message isn't getting across." He stepped up his strikes, putting a little more force into them, not enough to bruise or injure, but enough to nicely rouge her bum. As his palm came down again upon her skin, he explained, "That's for all the years you looked down your nose at me, woman."

Ginny gasped in outrage. "Why you hypocritical arse-monger! I didn't look down my nose at you until you did at me!"

Her bottom, he figured, must be nettling her by now, but still she didn't beg him to stop as another stinging slap rang through the high ceilinged room. "And that's for all the times you slammed me in Quidditch," he told her.

"You slammed me right back! Don't you dare deny it!" she snarled at him in righteous fury.

Her whole body quivered now with barely-repressed rage.

He gave her another satisfactory blow for her willful insolence. "And that's for all the names you've called me over the years to your friends when you didn't think I was listening."

She hissed then, sounding just like a viper about to strike. "You eavesdrop on my conversations? What the hell, Zabini? Got nothing better to do than to stalk me, you sick fuckwallop?"

He spanked her again. "Profanities from such a lovely mouth should be outlawed," he mocked, loving her outraged scream.

He then gave her three more slaps in succession, each one as passionate as the last. Finally, her bum
was a nice crimson in color, and Blaise felt quite vindicated for all of her slights over the last two years.

Now it was time to end her torment and give her some pleasure…

Returning to rubbing gentle hands over the warmed, quivering flesh, he soothed the pain he had caused away with an erotic massage. As his touch softened, Ginevra immediately stopped squirming and instead lay limply across his lap, unresisting. "And this, my dear lioness, is because you have never backed down from me, and because you have never let me beat you into submission. Not even now, as you lie across me, hating me with every fibre of your being, as I stroke your beautiful, ruby-coloured bum."

With a sigh of contentment, he bent his tall frame down and laid his cheek against her buttocks, softly nuzzling against her hot flesh.

"What are you doing?" she asked, suddenly panicked, going rigid again. "You're only allowed to rub."

Turning his head, he ran his lips over her cherry skin. "I am rubbing, Ginevra. The card doesn't say what body parts I'm confined to using for this task, though." He ran his bottom lip over the curve of her spine. "You should have been more specific when you wrote it down, my fiery kitten. You left it open to interpretation, so I'm interpreting it to mean rubbing you with my lips and tongue right now."

"Oh, hell no!" she shrieked, indignant. "Let me up this instant! Isn't your turn over yet?"

Blaise chuckled. "Not yet. I still have fourteen minutes. So, for the next thirteen and so many seconds, I intend upon properly rubbing you. Just lie there and enjoy."

"I don't want to enjoy anything you do to me, you twisted narcissist!" she yelled.

Licking along her spinal column, Blaise used his fingers to once more stroke along the bottom curves of her arse, creeping closer to the centre divide. He teased, retreated, and returned over and over again, inching closer to his ultimate goal. "Ah, but I want you to, my lioness. And since this is my reward…"

"I am so going to make you pay for this!"

He let his lips and tongue trail down to the split of her backside. "What you fail to understand, Ginevra, is that I'll let you do anything to me, so long as I get to fuck you tonight—preferably several times and in different positions. Nothing else matters for the next twenty-four hours." With that, he traced every inch of her bum, placed wet, sucking kisses all along the tender skin, dipping down as far as he could go to lick, tasting a bit of her salty quim in the deal. He even separated her back cheeks at one point and tickled her rear opening with his tongue, just over the outside. He started with light flicks around the small, puckered hole, making her squirm, and then boldly laved her centre, coating her with his saliva.

In his arms, his lioness quavered, and her breathing grew ragged as he pushed her comfort levels, retreating only when he felt her ready to call it her limit.

When he'd covered every bit of her, and rubbed away the pain, he noticed that Weasley remained strangely silent and had gone deathly still, her trembling ceased all together. In fact… He leaned his head back down between her legs and inhaled.

My, my, but she was very aroused.
Gently moving one leg outward, he opened her up a bit and looked. There, glistening at her pretty, small entrance lay the proof of her excitement. Blaise hummed with appreciation, even as his cock came wide awake in his pants. "You're wet and ready for me, my beautiful lioness." Against his thumb, he could feel her pulse through her femoral artery pounding like mad. "Would you like me to keep exploring?"

"N-no, let me up!" she stammered, scrabbling to lift her chest off his legs.

"Are you sure?" he asked in his most seductive voice. "No one has to know what we do here. I'm good at keeping secrets." He lazily stroked the inside of her thigh, inching towards the beautiful, bare cunt that beckoned him closer. "And I promise to make you feel good. No more pain, only intense pleasure."

She shook her head and pushed against his knees again, trying to raise herself up. "I'm not required to endure anything more than what you've already done to me."

Endure?

She'd actually gotten off on what he'd done to her!

"Let me up, Zabini," she demanded again. "You've had your fun humiliating me."

She got her feet under her and started to rise, but he put a hand on her spine to stop her. "Not just yet." Before she could protest, he bent again and kissed her on both cheeks. Then, he sat back and let her go.

Ginevra turned stony eyes on him, her face as flushed as her bottom had been earlier. Without another word, she turned and walked back to the bed to grab her knickers and slipped them back on. She put her arms through her jacket, but left it undone for now, then gingerly sat on the bed, picked up her card, and read it aloud.

**DEED: You get to ask your partner any five questions you want about them and they must answer wholly and truthfully.**

Sitting back in the chair, Blaise crossed his legs and stared down his partner. "Ask away. I have nothing to hide, Ginevra."

*Nothing you're likely to guess, anyway.*

Cool, whisky-brown eyes glittered with icy hatred for him. "Question one: what's your True Wizarding Name?"

Blaise felt the colour drain from his cheeks.

He'd been wrong – there was something he had to hide from her, and this would be it. This was one of his two big secrets that could be used to utterly destroy him.

A wizard's or witch's True Name was something only they and their parents knew. No one else was privy to this most sacred of secrets, not even the Ministry. Usually, not even spouses had disclosure, in case of divorce. A TWN was first bound to a magical, non-Squib child (well, half-bloods and pure-bloods; he wasn't sure what Muggle-borns did, as they didn't have magical parents to bind them to the name) at the age of five, and then reaffirmed and rebound to the child when they began their magical training at the age of eleven, before they went off to school for the first time. It was the most closely guarded secret of a witch or wizard's lives, as it was the gateway to their magical ability. It's how He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named managed to control his Death Eaters in the Dark War, twenty-
eight years prior; the madman's loyal followers had given their Master their True Wizarding Names when they swore fealty to his cause. As a result, he'd been able to slide through their minds at any time he'd wanted, day or night, and he'd had the power to summon them to his side using the magic of the Dark Mark he'd branded on them.

If he gave Ginny his TWN, she could abuse him with it for the rest of his life, forcing him to do things against his will, much like the Imperius Curse. If he didn't give her the name, he had to forfeit the game right here and now.

How badly did he want her again?

Was it worth this price?

Leaning his head back against the chair's cushion, he stared up at the ceiling and ran his hands over his face. For a Gryffindor, she'd just neatly maneuvered him into a very Slytherin ruse…which was totally hot and one more reason why he had to have her.

Fuck, fuck, FUCK! He was so screwed!

Reveling in his mental torment, Ginevra smiled at him with a flat, serpentine gaze. "Tick, tock," she mimicked his earlier sentiment.

Gritting his teeth, he growled out his own demand, wanting at least some power in this negotiation. "I want an Oath from you not to tell anyone else my TWN, and not to use it against me."

Weasley firmly shook her head. "I'll compromise and agree to the first, but the second, no. It's my guarantee that you can't ever hurt me again." She innocently held her hands out to the side as if to say, 'What are you going to do?' and shrugged, all the while grinning like a man-eating shark. "Take it or leave it, Zabini. Tell me the name or quit the game. Your choice."

He stared hard at her. Was this really worth it? Was she?

The answer to that question was obvious and required no serious consideration: everything inside of him called out to have Ginevra Weasley.

For the last two years, he'd stood back and seethed in helpless frustration watching her dally with other boys, barely restraining his need to do violence upon the competition. The day after she'd given away her virginity to Potter, he'd almost committed murder, in fact, having felt the shift in her sexual aura and instinctively known what it had meant. That day, something deep inside him had despairied and raged at the lost opportunity to own that important piece of her. Now his desperation had reached a peak. He was a man on the edge, and he had to have her, and this game gave him the only legitimate excuse. If he quit now, he was certain she wouldn't let him anywhere near her ever again, especially after that spanking, and then he'd end up becoming the monster he feared he might be for too many years so he could just take what he wanted. If things went that far, he'd hate himself forever.

No, there was no choice but to go on.

"Fucking, buggering hell!"

"You said it," his partner cheerfully agreed. "So, I guess this means you'll be dropping out of the game now? Too bad. A shag is hardly worth the risk, though, huh?" He heard her stand up and make her way to the door. "I'll just tell the others and make your excuses. Ta-ta, Zabini!"

He heard her turn the knob and panicked. "Shut the fucking door! We're not done here," he snarled
and stood up, pacing back and forth, feeling a muscle in his eye twitch in irritation. "Fine, I'll give you your answer."

It took her a good twenty seconds to move, as if she were too shocked to comprehend what he was about to do, and then she quietly closed the door and came to sit back on the edge of the mattress, waiting.

He put his hands over his face again, refusing to look at her, unable to believe he was about to make what would be, he was quite sure, the biggest mistake of his life. "Take the Oath first," he stipulated. "Right now. Swear on your power as a witch that you will never, under any circumstance, reveal my True Wizarding Name to another for as long as your soul walks the Earth, whether in life or as a ghost."

His partner raised an eyebrow at that. "Extreme, but fine." She held her hand up over her heart. "I, Ginevra Molly Weasley, do hereby swear upon my power as a witch and a practitioner of magic that I will never, under any circumstance, reveal Blaise Zabini's True Wizarding Name to another soul for as long as my soul walks the Earth, whether in life or as a ghost."

There was no glow, or fireworks, or sound of a ringing bell, but the Oath she had just undertaken would certainly now bind her powers to it as firmly as if she had signed a magical contract before the entire Wizengamot. It was the best he could ask for, since an Unbreakable Oath wasn't an option, as they'd need to include a third party to bind them, and then they'd have to explain all of this mess to that person...which Blaise had absolutely no intention of ever doing.

His fists clenched and unclenched at his sides. "MERDA!" he swore in Italian, then turned and pointed an emphatic finger at the little redhead sitting on the mattress and claimed her right then and there as his own. "Tonight, I'm going to fuck you hard for this, Weasley—all over this sodding room! I'm going to own you, body and soul! And after this bloody game is over, I'm coming after you for more, I swear it! You're mine!"

Ginevra waved him on. "Sure, sure. Whatever. Spill it or forfeit already. We're wasting time."

Gritting his teeth, Blaise ran a hand one more time over his closely-shaved head, shut his eyes and took a deep breath. "My given name is Blaise Alessandro Zabini." He turned and looked his woman dead in the eye. "My True Wizarding Name is Blasius Cyne Sovrano Zabini. It means 'Fiery Royal Ruler.'"

To his surprise, his lioness did not laugh. Instead, she looked rather shocked that he'd actually done it.

In truth, he was, too. He was feeling a little ill over the whole thing, in fact.

Weasley opened her mouth, and Blaise knew—just knew—what she was going to say. "Don't you dare," he warned, giving her a stern frown.

Blinking with faux innocence, looking entirely too scrumptious for his sanity at the moment, she absolutely dared.

"It's a very nice name, Blasius."

At the tingle along his spine at the speaking of just one of his three magical names, Blaise started swearing his head off. He paced back and forth, feeling utterly defenseless.

What had he done? Had he finally gone insane?
"Tsk, tsk, Zabini. Language," his auburn-headed minx mocked, smirking. "Now we're even. You made me vulnerable, and I've made you vulnerable. We both have secrets about the other we're never going to tell anyone else. I think that's more than fair."

She would, as the situation appealed to her Gryffindor sensibilities.

It rubbed his Slytherin ones all wrong, though.

He swore some more, again in Italian so she wouldn't understand him.

"Are you quite done?" she inquired. "We should move on, because this round's almost over and I still have four more questions to ask you."

Blaise stopped cold, turned to her and gaped. How could she continue on after having so fantastically manipulated him? Didn't she realize that now she could just use his name and order him to quit, and he'd have no choice but to obey? Fuck, was she really that naïve that she had no idea of the power she now held over his will?

Weasley had the audacity to shrug, clearly not understanding the look he threw her way. Either that or she was intentionally ignoring the two-thousand-pound elephant in the room in favour of torturing him further.

"Question two: what's your favourite colour?"

Blaise narrowed his eyes and assessed her. She wasn't curious about something as simple as his list of favourite things. No, she recognized what she'd just put him through and was going easy on him now. Her bloody Gryffindor compassion had kicked in…which meant she had no intention of exploiting his TWN, as a less-then-scrupulous Slytherin might were the situation reversed. Knowing that didn't help to alleviate his anxiety much, for he also understood that although she seemed rather benign now, she would abuse his name if the conditions were right. His little kitten had sharp claws when provoked.

"Purple." He indicated his shirt with a tug. "Next."

"Give me the run down on your family. Question three: how many Zabinis are you?"

Sighing, he slumped back down into the cosy chair, having paced himself out and resigned himself to his fate. "There are seven children. I have five sisters and one brother, and I'm dead in the middle of them all. The eldest, my brother, is twenty-three. The youngest is ten. My mum's a Black Widow, and my dad barely escaped her web. We're pure-bloods, the lot. Next."

"You have an older brother, hmm?" She seemed piqued by that little fact. "Does he look like you?"

Blaise shook his head. "None of my siblings come from the same father, so technically we're all half-brother and sisters. My dad was from Morocco. The rest of my siblings are as white as you."

"Well, well, well," she breathed, tapping a finger against those pretty lips of hers in consideration. "You might have to introduce me to big brother someday. Maybe he'll prove to be much more considerate of a girl's needs."

Inside his chest, Blaise's heart locked down, squeezing tight. The thought of his lioness sidling up to Lorenzo, who was all charm and charisma personified, positively infuriated him.

"Are you growling?" his partner asked with incredulity.
"What's your next bloody question?" he demanded between gritted teeth. "I want out of here pronto. I need air."

She looked at him askance. "Question four: do you hate me?"

"No."

It was the truth. He didn't hate her. Not at all.

What he hated was that she despised **him**.

Clicking her tongue on the roof of her mouth, Weasley pondered that, and her last question. "Hmmm… Let's see… Question five: what's your favourite memory from Hogwarts? In other words, what one thing will you remember for the rest of your life when you leave here next weekend?"

Blaise's heart slammed under his ribs; he was physically shaking in fury now. He pursed his lips and angrily stared at her, not wanting to reveal any more hidden parts of his soul, but knowing he had no choice. The spell on the cards was going to force this one since he'd chosen to answer the first question and not forfeit.

And hell, it wasn't like she'd just stripped him of his last defense in getting out of him his True Wizarding Name. What more could she do to him now that she'd totally unmanned him?

"You," he softly stated, livid inside that he was obligated to say this out loud. "On your broom this last game, when Potter caught the Snitch and won the Cup for your House. The rain had just stopped and the sun had peeked out through the clouds, and the light was glinting like fire off that crimson hair of yours as it blew about in the wind. Your eyes were bright and shining with happiness and your smile was so **fucking** beautiful that it hurt to look at it." He stared at the white shag rug beneath his feet, wishing he had the magic to command his feelings to die out as assuredly as his pride was doing right then. "All I could think in that moment was how you were like that Tonge painting of the redhead angel dancing in the air, temporarily keeping the storm at bay." He closed his eyes, awash with rioting emotion. "You hovered at my side when the game was called, then turned to me and said--"

"'It was fun, Zabini,'" she whispered in remembrance across the space between them. "I'll miss you."

His head jerked up, their eyes met, and in her lovely dark gaze were wavering tears.

"It's you I'll never be able to forget," he admitted, fighting the catch in his throat. "You'll haunt me to the end of my life, Ginevra."

Emotionally naked, exposed as a fraud, Blaise knew in those seconds that there was nowhere left for him to hide. None of his Slytherin training was going to save him from this fall.

With his heart bloodied and raw, he stood up and stormed from the room in irrational self-hatred, slamming the door behind him.

"Hey, mate, anything wrong?" Theo asked him as he retook his previous seat on Slytherin's side of the sofa in the main room.

*Everything's wrong,* Blaise wanted to scream. *It's over with now. She knows!*

"Nothing," he replied instead, turning away his friend's concern.
Laying his head back on the cushions of the couch, he pressed the heels of his palms into his eyes and cursed himself a fool, seriously considering quitting the game.

Chapter End Notes

Here's their outfits:
1F: Seamus & Lavender

Chapter Summary

Seamus is going to need the luck of the Irish to break through his partner's iron-clad stubbornness.

Chapter Notes

My husband recommended the song, "Be There" by U2 for Seamus & Lavender this go around, and I thought it a perfect complement to Theo's thoughts here. So, this chapter is dedicated to my hubby man - congratulations!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

SEAMUS & LAVENDER
Seamus allowed his partner to pick out the room she wanted from those remaining. They got to a door just before Harry and Tracey, and Ron and Pansy, and so weren't the last ones in, even though Lavender was clearly dragging her feet. The room's décor, however, left much to be desired, as it was too bloody white, so with a thought, he changed it to something they might both be more comfortable with: the Gryffindor common room.

His ex-girlfriend looked about, shocked as the room changed every aspect of itself to suit his wishes. "That is one thing about the Room of Requirement I will never get used to," she admitted, shaking her head.

"Ye've been here a'fore then?" Seamus asked, taking off his jacket and jumper, tossing them both over the familiar russet-red couch, and then lounging back into the corner of the sofa. The magically-lit hearth directly across from him gave off no heat; it was merely ambiance, as the lighting had dropped to the common room's usual somewhat dim levels.

Lavender took the cozy chair directly next to the sofa, facing him. "Once," she admitted. "On a date."

"Wit' one o' me mates?" he asked, smiling, working on fighting his Irish lilt, trying to sound more British. It had been his goal for the past year to 'clean up' his accent so that people could better understand him. His brogue was always thickest right after returning to school from a holiday break or when he was a tad nervous – like now.

Lavender looked at him askance and cleared her throat. "Aren't we on a time limit to perform these things?" she asked, holding up her card. "Not that I'm particularly rushing to do them, but…"

Seamus' good humor deflated. "I thought ta make this easier for ya, angel. Ta get used ta me," he explained. "My card, ya see… it's a wee bit… frisky."

His partner's lids flared wide and she paled. "How frisky?"

He read the card aloud to her:

DEED: Your partner has to kiss your neck, ears, face, and lips as you instruct them.

When he glanced back over at his witch, she was frowning. In fact, she looked almost a tad rebellious, as if she were contemplating forfeiting. Truthfully, he'd been looking forward to this reward, as it seemed a nice place for them to start over, but as he watched her hands clench in her lap and her gaze fall to the floor in consternation, he knew she honestly didn't want to be there with him or touching him like that again. The idea was sobering.

"Do ya want ta talk some more?" he asked, wanting to make this easier for her. "I don't mind easin' inta this with some conversation."

It took her another minute of contemplation before she hesitantly shook her head. "No, that wouldn't help."

With a sigh, she stood, dropped her card on the chair she vacated and crossed to him. "Um, how do you want to do this? Maybe you should stand up and-"

Seamus decided that it was time to throw her off; she was thinking too much about this and getting herself worked up. Leaning forward, he grabbed both her hands and yanked, cutting off her thought and dropping her directly into his lap. She stumbled into position over him, her knees falling exactly where he'd hoped: to either side of his legs.
"This is where ya'll want ta be," he teased, smiling.

Shocked, Lavender just sat there, her face inches from his, eyes wide and mouth parted in surprise. Anger, however, quickly replaced her momentary astonishment. She sat back on his thighs and scowled, and he knew from the way her hands shot to her waist – a stance his Mam had perfected when squaring off with him - that a scolding was coming. He thought it the cutest expression he'd ever seen on her.

"Other women may fall for that, Finnigan, but I won't let you push me around," she declared, glaring at him. "That means no pawing me. The card doesn't say you get to touch this time. I could call what you just did a foul."

His jaw dropped. She wouldn't! Not over something that insignificant. "Was only a wee bit o' teasing, love. I meant no harm." He put his hands up between them in innocent protest. "Ya have me promise not ta touch ya again during yer turn, all right?" He promptly shoved both hands down the sides of the couch cushions and trapped them there, trying to look thoroughly chastised and apologetic.

Lavender gave him a wary, measured stare, and nodded, accepting his contrite admission of wrongdoing. Her gaze then wandered, rather unconsciously he thought, to his lips. "So, um… I have to kiss you."

He gave her a wicked smile. "As I want ya ta," he reminded her. "It's me reward, after all." He licked his lips, thinking of a good starting point, watching his partner's cheeks redden with heat and her eyes glaze over with passion. Oh, yeah, she was already feeling it, wasn't she? The effect of his blood's magic was quick to pull at his female partners, he knew. "I'd like ya ta start at me neck," he tilted his head to the right. "Kiss all up and down now, leavin' no bit untouched."

Lavender looked positively distraught, but with a sigh, bent her lips to his throat and pressed down. Her kisses were fast and chaste as she rushed to finish. He wouldn't be having any of that!

"Slower. Take yer time," he coaxed into her ear, which was right next to his lips. "Relax. Enjoy me. I canna touch ya, remember?"

He felt her throat convulse around a nervous swallow against him as she did as he bade, letting her mouth slow in its contact, let it linger a bit over each spot it touched.

"That's it, love. Take control o' me, ya?" he encouraged, already aroused by her scent and just the idea of her touching him again in any capacity. He'd waited two years to get back here with this witch, and hadn't realized until just then how much he'd missed her in this way. Somehow, Lavender had a hold on him that no other witch had been able to match. He wondered if it didn't have something to do with his mother's heritage... "Use yer tongue and give me wet kisses. Ahhh, yes! Like that, sweet angel." He shivered when her kisses melded into soft, moist things that lathered across his throat, right over his quickly beating pulse. "Leave me a love bite, will ya? Right there."

Lavender did as he wanted, sucking hard on a particular spot that shot fire straight down through his spine and into his trousers. "Yes, leave yer mark on me," he begged, loving the idea.

After long seconds of concentrated sucking on the one spot, she lifted her mouth away and sat back, turning his head a bit to examine her work.

"Did ya like doing that ta me, angel?" he asked, watching her from the corner of his vision as her fingertips traced around the spot she'd just bruised. "Tell me the truth. Did ya?"
Reluctantly, she nodded.

"Then kiss me some more, love. Use yer teeth this time, if ya will. Not sharp. Nice and light."

Bending back into the crook of his neck, his partner complied, and the scrape of those even, white teeth against the hot skin of his neck made Seamus groan and all of the blood in his body gather between his legs. He coaxed Lavender on by continuing to direct her ministrations on his throat, requiring her to give equal attention to his other side, where she sucked and left another love bite.

Her hands, by this time, were gripping his shoulders, and the crescents of her nails were digging in as she got into the dominant position she'd taken over him. She wiggled on his lap, and he knew she must be feeling his so-obvious erection. "I like this, Lavender," he whispered, nuzzling the shell of her ear with his nose. "I like this a lot, sweet lass. Yer mouth was made fer kissin', I've always thought."

"Just kissing?" she paused, her breath a hot pant against his throat.

He shook his head. "Kissin' and lovin' and laughin'. Everything about ya, angel, was made fer happiness. It pulls me ta ya, dontcha know?" He ran his lips ever-so-light down her throat, not quite violating the rules. "But I want more right now. Will ya kiss me jaw and chin next? Soft kisses, slow. Let me feel that sweet mouth o' yers all o'er me."

A slight pause, a small shudder, and then her lips were caressing across his face as he'd asked, working towards his lips. It felt like butterfly wings tickling his face – soft, teasing, elusive. His hands clenched into fists as she pressed a light touch against the corner of his mouth. So close, just a bit more…

Circling around to the other side, Lavender did as he wanted and no more. Seamus could feel the trembling in her body and knew she was scared of what they were doing. He'd been watching her on and off for a very long time, waiting for another chance to come along, but he also recognized that she'd been purposefully avoiding him all that time – which meant she was still uncomfortable about what had happened between them two years ago in that empty dorm room. He intended on making up for that during this game, but in order to do that, he needed to get past her defensive walls. That meant pushing her a little further.

"Kiss me lips, sweet angel," he pleaded in a gentle whisper. "Let me taste ya again, proper."

His partner's breathing kicked up a notch, and her shaking increased.

"Lavender," he purred across her skin. "Let me make up for the past. I'll make it good for ya. Just kiss me and ye'll see."

Her chest hitched as she slid her cheek along his until their noses touched and they stared into each other's eyes. "You hurt me, Sea," she told him in all earnestness. "I don't trust you."

There was pain in those lovely eyes of hers, and Seamus felt the heavy weight of guilt for having put it there. He didn't like hurting women; it always left him unsettled in his belly. Women were made for loving, in his opinion. "I wanted ta make it right, angel," he explained. "But ya wouldn't let me say sorry! I've been waitin' for another go, but ya never let me near."

"I don't want to kiss you," she told him, turning her head and closing her eyes. "I don't want to do any of this with you."

His pride took the blow, and he felt real anger simmer in his chest. "I'm sorry, a'right! I know I was rough when takin' yer cherry years ago, and I've regretted the hurt since. I've tried ta make it up ta ya,
but you still won't let me! How many times does a fella have ta say 'I'm sorry'?

Her gaze was dark and angry when it swung back his way. "Like that would make up for how used
you made me feel! It was my first time, Sea, and you didn't even try to give me any pleasure! You
just took what you wanted, and then you left me there, by myself in the dark, to clean up the mess."

He had to sit on his hands now, knowing that if he didn't he would reach out and violate his earlier
promise and touch her without her permission. "I didn't know what ta do," he admitted, feeling his
face flush with embarrassment at having to admit his prior lack of skill. "I'd only done it one meself
before ya. It's not somethin' yer perfect at right o' way, ya know? And ya went all stiff on me when I
tried ta hold ya after. I figured ya didn't want me touchin' ya anymore and needed privacy, so I left.
Ya think that was a good feelin' for me?" He growled, angry at the continued slights he'd endured for
two years for one night that had gone mistakenly wrong. "I wanted ta try again. I wanted ya fer me
girl, but ya rejected me o'er and o'er. There's only so much a man can take, ya know, before he gets
the hint."

Lavender scowled. "Yeah, what was that, a week before you moved into Parvati's bed?"

Seamus grit his teeth. "Ya made it clear that ya hated me. I tried ta ferget ya fast after that, like takin'
off a bandage. It hurts less if ya do it quick and get on."

His partner sniffed. "Yeah, well, you succeeded. You forgot me a lot after that – with just about any
girl you could whore your way into bed with." She looked down at the collar of his shirt, her
expression bitter. "Are we done yet with your card? I'd like to get off your lap now."

"No, I want me kiss," he growled. It would be a bad idea to take their first kiss in two years while
angry, but he wasn't passing up this chance. Something in him wouldn't let him walk away without
at least a taste... "I want ya ta snog me senseless, Lavender. I want yer tongue and lips o' mine, and I
want it ta taste like ya really want me. And since this is me reward, yer gonna give it ta me. Now."

She looked ready to smack him and walk out, but then she narrowed her eyes and leaned in,
hovering over his lips. "I could always forfeit the game," she warned him. "I could walk out right
now and call it quits. Then you couldn't force me to do this."

Seamus captured her gaze, desperate to hold onto her for even just a little while longer. "Then I
won't command ya, but I'll ask it: will ya please kiss me? Kiss me fer all yer worth and make me pay
for hurtin' ya back then. I'll take yer hatred so long as I get ta taste ya again, even if it's ta be the last
time."

Her eyes widened as he spoke, and fear bloomed in the indigo depths.

Nudging his chin a bit, he aligned their mouths better, dropping his lids to half-mast to stare at her
with lustful need. "Kiss me," he whispered the plea. "Give us a second chance, sweet lass. Let me do
it right this time."

Lavender seemed frozen with indecision for at least a good minute, and then she stared him dead in
the eye. "No second chances. It'll just be a kiss. It means nothing." With that, she dropped her mouth
onto his.

It was a heart-stealing, soul-searing kiss, filled with anger and lust, and it burned Seamus to the core.
He groaned under his partner's rough handling, loving her enthusiasm, especially when she bit his
bottom lip in retribution, then softened a bit, as if feeling a tad guilty for causing hurt. It was telling,
this first kiss: Lavender was furious with him, oh definitely, but she also clearly wanted him.
Knowing that was enough for him to want to stay on, too, to try to make good on his wish to turn
this chance – this possible last chance for them – into a good memory for them both.

The open-mouthed, wet kiss grew in intensity when he slipped his tongue between her lips and stroked hers with velvety gentleness. They both moaned in response, and the sound made him shiver with anticipation. No matter her protests, Lavender was on-board for this.

Seamus poured every ounce of skill he had into that snog, twining his tongue about hers, lapping at her lightly, teasingly, and seductively. His partner's hands traveled up to cup his jaw, then smoothed through his hair, gripping on tight as the kiss deepened, as the anger ebbed away to become something more profoundly stirring, genuine, and greedy.

A second after she moaned with pleasure, Lavender was off of him, having jumped to her feet, wobbling unsteadily as she tried to regain her balance on heels after having moved so fast. Her eyes were wide, her face was flooded with heat, and her breathing was decidedly fast. "It was just a kiss, and no big deal," she spoke with conviction.

Seamus thoroughly assessed her in a sweeping glance as he removed his hands from between the sofa's gaps. "Who're ya tryin' ta convince, angel?" he replied without fear of reprisal, getting to his feet and looming over her. He stepped forward and she stepped back. They continued the dance until she fell back into the cozy chair she had previously occupied. Trapping her effectively by putting both hands on the arms and leaning over her, he pressed his advantage. He smiled in counter to her scowl, knowing well the signs of true arousal in a woman and recognizing them in her just then.

"'No big deal' woulda made ya unaffected, and right now, I think yer verra affected. Just like me."

Turning her head again, she sniffed in mocking disdain. "It would have felt the same with anyone, so don't think you're special, Finnigan."

He crouched down at her knees, still careful not to touch her, conscientious of his earlier vow. "Ya don't snog Ron like that," he stated with arrogant self-assurance, having spoken with Weasley on occasion about his relationship with Lavender over the last few months. Living in the same dorm room with the guy had allowed Seamus the opportunity to keep up on the comings and goings of Miss Brown this past year. "Otherwise, it wouldna been casual a'tween ya two all these months. And that kiss, Lavender… there wasn't a thing casual about it, and ya know it, love."

Her back teeth were probably hurting her by now with all of the jaw clenching she was doing. "We're done with your card, right?"

Seamus could have pressed it; they hadn't spent the whole twenty-five minutes on his task. He decided, however, that all things would come to those with patience, and winning this battle of wills with Lavender – getting her to admit that she still felt something for him, as he now was willing to admit such reciprocal feelings – was going to take many more rounds, a lot more fighting, and some crafty ways of apologizing to her. He was looking forward to all of it, and had no intention of pushing if it meant antagonizing her right out of the game altogether.

"I'll concede ta me card being finished since ya asked it o' me," he agreed. "Which means it's yer turn ta command me, sweet angel. So, what demands do ya have?"

She reached under her bum for the card she'd tossed onto the cushion earlier, and then read it aloud to him:

**DEED: Your partner must wash your feet and hands, and then suck your fingers and toes – all of them.**

Seamus' eyebrows hit the roof… as did his smile. This sounded like fun!
Lavender, on the other hand, was glowering. "Why me?" she growled and threw the card down in disgust. She slumped deep into the chair's cushioned back and crossed her arms in annoyance.

Seamus chuckled, and with a mere thought, summoned a small basin of warm water and a wash rag. "Shall ya remove yer shoes fer me, or shall I do it fer ya?" he asked, beaming with happiness.

A snarl broke his partner's throat, making him snicker, and he leaned back as Lavender removed her shoes, roughly unbuttoning the straps and kicking them away.

Dipping the soft wash rag into the basin of water, Seamus wrung it out then brought it to Lavender's right hand first, then her left, washing each finger, the pads of each hand and her wrists as well, giving them a small massage in the doing. He concentrated on every stroke, making sure to give her proper attention, hoping to make up for all of the mistreatment she felt she'd suffered under him prior. When he'd finished, he patted her hands dry with a conjured towel.

He turned to her feet next with the same care, even dipping her lovely, purple-painted toes in the basin now, letting the warm water lap over her skin as he rubbed her in light circles. He massaged as he went, doing to her what he thought he'd want to be done to him. He'd never actually given a foot massage before to any girl, so this was a first. From the relaxing of her muscles and the lack of a protest from her lips, however, he took that to mean he was doing an adequate job of it. He then patted her feet dry with the same gentleness he'd shown her hands.

Lifting her right foot first, placing it on his left shoulder, he bent his head and began kissing her ankles, moving in slow, wet, deliberate action towards her toes. He licked her arch in a slow rasp, which earned him a small cry of distress from his lady. Against his thumb, he could feel her pulse speed up in the artery that ran down into her foot. The lust was stirring in her veins, but like the stubborn witch she was, she adamantly was trying to deny it. The thought made him smile.

Circling up the pad of her big toe, he wrapped his lips around it and brought it into his moist mouth, playfully running his tongue over it. As he pulled back with suction, he looked up into Lavender's face, caught her eye, and didn't look away.

His partner looked like a pixie in mating heat – dilated pupils, rapid breathing, crimson cheeks, lips parted with growing hunger. He licked her second toe, never pulling his gaze from hers, rolling her flesh around with his tongue, and pretending for the moment that he was doing this between her legs, to her tiny, little bead instead. With each toe, he worked her over physically as well as psychologically, hoping to crack through that emotional fence she'd put up between them.

When he'd run the gamut of the foot, he returned to her ankle, placed a kiss on the sensitive part right under the bone, and guided her leg back down.

The fun wasn't over yet, though. He repeated the process with her left foot, paying extra attention to suckling and licking over spots that made her body shiver or her muscles jolt. She shivered when he tickled between her toes with his tongue, and when he nibbled just above her ankle joint.

When he'd finished, he lowered her foot and sat up on his knees, reaching for her right hand.

"Did ya enjoy that, me love?" he asked, nuzzling her limp hand with his nose and cheek. "I know I did. Ya taste wonderful."

Lavender didn't reply. She swallowed and looked away again instead, clearly trying to control her reactions.

Seamus broke right through that tight discipline of hers, however, when he drew her index finger
into his mouth and sucked it slow. Her eyelids fluttered shut, she began shaking from head to toe, and the pulse in her wrist flew out of control under his fingertips. He tongued the skin between her fingers with skill.

"Are ya imaginin' where else I could be tonguin' ya, sweet angel?"

He sucked in her middle finger next, releasing it with slow, purposeful reluctance.

"How about on the skin o' that golden neck o' yers? Right over yer pulse?"

He then bathed her ring finger in his saliva.

"Flickin' your lobe and nippin' it with me teeth…"

Lapping at her pinky, he drew the seduction out, bringing his body – and her hand – right near her face, continuing to enjoy her flavour as he tried to entice her further.

"Would ya like me tongue ta lap at those beautiful breasts o' yers?"

He tickled her inside wrist with his tongue, mimicking the motions he hoped to make around her areola at some point during the game.

"I'd love ta take me time lickin' yer nipples 'til they were achin' from the attention."

As he spoke, he reached for her left hand and brought it to his mouth, allowing the right to fall back onto the chair arm. He repeated his lips' trailing, dampening quest all over again.

"Shall I tell ye that I've dreamed of lickin' that little hole in yer belly…"

Suckles.

"Or inside yer thighs…"

Suckles.

"Or behind yer knees…"

Suckles.

"And especially between yer cunnie."

Nibble, lick, suckle.

"I've wanted ta taste yer honey, love. Ta lap between those long legs o' yers until ya were moanin' fer more. Ta suck yer clit until yer spine arched wit' the pleasure."

He leaned mere inches from her mouth, drawing her index finger back into his mouth, running his expert tongue over it.

"I've wanted ta enter ya again, Lavender, slowly and wit' thoughts ta only yer desire. I've wanted ta bring ya gently, ta hear ya cry out fer me finally, ta watch yer face as ya let go and gave yerself ta me."

A soft chiming alerted them that their time was up, but Seamus wasn't quite finished yet. There was one more thing to say…
He cupped her cheek and fanned his fingers out over the soft, glowing skin, locking his eyes onto hers. "I wanted ta make ye me girl once, sweet angel. I know now that I never stopped wantin' that all this time. I want ya ta think about that during this game, and at the end, I want ya ta give me yer answer. Will ya be mine, or no?"

She opened her mouth, but he pressed a finger to her lips to silence her.

"At the end. Not before. Give me time ta court ya right."

With that, Seamus stood and tugged on Lavender's hand to help her up. Quickly, she removed her fingers from his grasp and moved past him to collect her shoes. Without a word, she left the room, holding her shoes in one hand, her back ramrod straight. She acted as if she were pulling up the remnants of her dignity and pride, and cloaking herself in them for protection - attempting to keep him out at the same time.

Seamus wasn't disheartened by her lack of a warm response to his proposal, for in her eyes he'd seen her desire, and it had mirrored his. It was a good start.

Whistling a small jig, he took up his jacket and jumper, shoved his hands in his trouser pockets and left the doppelganger Gryffindor common room in place, wanting it to remain for the next action round as well.

Chapter End Notes

Here's their outfits:
The 2nd Question

Chapter Summary

The first round has ended, and the second round begins with another interesting question that puts the group to the test...

Chapter Notes

CONTEST WINNER THIS CHAPTER: User AngiesDreams recommended the song, "The Power of Love" by Huey Lewis & The News for everyone this go around, and I thought it a perfect complement to everyone's thoughts here. So, this chapter is dedicated to AngiesDreams - congratulations!

PLEASE REVIEW!

*Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, Scotland*

*Room of Requirement*

*Saturday, June 13, 1998 (8:30pm)*

As the game required of all players, Draco sat on the end of the couch in the same spot he had vacated earlier, and tried not to be too obvious about staring at Granger, who sat next to a very pale, frowning She-Weasel. The two women were gripping hands tightly and neither had said a word since they'd come out of their private rooms a few minutes earlier. In fact, no one had spoken; it had been strangely silent between all of them, as if whatever had happened behind those six closed doors in the last hour had somehow changed them all.

Except for him. Nothing he'd done in the privacy of the room he'd occupied with his partner had left a lasting stain upon his conscience. In fact, he was looking forward to doing a lot more this round. Clearly, though, Hermione wasn't, as she wouldn't even look his direction. Maybe he'd pushed it too fast by moving in fast on the physical stuff?

"Does anyone need the loo?" Saint Potter finally spoke, his voice soft in the hushed room, taking the lead this round, as he and Draco had previously decided upon. When a silent chorus of shaking heads met that question, the Gryffindor captain nodded. "From what I understand, the action cards from last round have all been reshuffled magically into their correct deck now, and last round's question card has erased itself, having been completed." He looked to Slytherin's Team Captain for confirmation, and once he'd received it, he continued. "Then, Parkinson, it's your turn to draw a green card," the chirpy Gryffindor dictated.
"If you had to participate in an orgy with anyone in this group tonight, who would you pick as your partners? Name 3-5 people."

Everyone focused on Daphne, who was immediately to Pansy's left. The woman adjusted her glasses as coolly as possible and looked around, pausing momentarily on Theo. She then reached for a Forfeits card.

Her partner leapt to his feet. "What? You mean you wouldn't want me at least?"

Greengrass said nothing, merely looked at him as evenly as possible. "I believe the rules state rather specifically that I am not required to answer a question unless I wish to. I choose not to this round, with no reflection on anyone here."

"Yeah, and you can't interrogate her on her lack of response either, Nott," Potter added. "Those are the rules."

Draco regarded Theo as his face flushed red with anger. Apparently, whatever had happened between he and Daphne during the previous round had affected him enough to feel he now had some sort of rights over his partner. Greengrass was disabusing him of that notion right quick, however, returning his stare without flinching.

"Theo, sit," he cautioned his friend. "If Daph doesn't want to admit or deny anything in front of the group, she doesn't have to."

After a final moment of glaring, his best friend slumped back down onto the couch, still steaming. He turned his head away from the proceedings, looking off at the far wall, clearly trying to cool his head. The play moved on to Blaise.

He looked equally as shaken as Theo was, although his gaze was purposefully directed on the She-Weasel, who refused to look up at him. "You know my answer," he stated somewhat bitterly to the little redheaded woman across from him. He spoke to her alone, tuning out the rest of them, his face a mask of granite detachment barely holding in place, spilling unhappiness out at the corners as he fought to contain his emotions. "Even though I know you'd love to knock my block off right now, I'd still pick you as my first choice. I couldn't care less who the other people would be. Guy or girl, it doesn't matter. Everyone in this group is interesting enough, I suppose."

Draco wasn't really surprised by this revelation about his friend's sexual orientation. He'd always assumed Blaise to be the "take sex as you can find it" type. The man was so closed-mouthed about his partnerships however that it was impossible to have ever previously been able to say definitively one way or the other. Now it was out there for everyone to know finally that Blaise was bi-sexual.

There were a few askance looks (especially from Gryffindor's side, and he noted that Theo shifted in a curiously uncomfortable fashion). The Weaslette, however, did not meet his gaze. She did not respond at all, in fact. She merely swallowed hard, looking positively miserable and ill.

There were an awkward few minutes after Blaise's pronouncement where no one spoke or dared breathe too loud, as if everyone could feel the palpable discomfort and pain electrifying the air around them, centering on the cyclone of emotions that was Blaise Zabini and Ginevra Weasley.
Uncomfortable himself with the queer silence, Draco finally nudged Tracey, wanting her to take her turn next to move past the moment and get them back on track.

The woman jumped and then blushed. "Oh, um, Blaise has to take a Deeds card, right, and then it's my turn?" Next to her, Zabini reached forward and took a red card from the stack. When he'd done that, Tracey cleared her throat behind a polite hand. "Right. Well... um..." She swallowed convulsively a few times. "I don't think I'd enjoy the experience at all of being with multiple partners, and I'm not very comfortable with the idea of naming any people to do such a thing I wouldn't like anyway, so does that mean I have to take a Forfeits card?" She looked over at Potter, who glanced at him. They both nodded at the same time, in agreement over the ruling of this one.

"Sorry," Harry apologized sincerely to his partner. "You're choosing not to answer technically, so that means you take a blue card." Cheeks flushing, Tracey nodded, and reached for a Forfeits card.

Draco shrugged. "Those are the rules, Davis." He turned his attention to Hermione then, as it was his turn, and gave her the slickest smirk he could conjure, watching her face pale as she realized he planned to answer. "I'd pick Granger, Davis, and Greengrass." He'd answered flippantly, making light of the matter and grinning like a cad, which he knew irritated his partner.

She turned her nose up at him, annoyance flickering across her features.

Reaching for a Deeds card, Draco chuckled under his breath. "Your turn, Finnigan."

Seamus laughed loudly and lustily, and it was a strange sound in the still-charged room. He leaned back into the couch and swung an arm up and over the back of the cushions. "Well, since it's my own card, I suppose I have to answer." He turned a lascivious grin on Brown, who sat at his left. "I'm sure my partner would rather kick me arse than give me half a chance, but I'd want her. As for the others..." He looked about the group, measuring up each woman. "I suppose I'd have to say Hermione and Ginny."

Ginny grinned and rolled her eyes at her Housemate, but Granger looked up and over at the handsome Irish, blushing a brilliant red. Her mouth opened in shock, as if she was just cued into an idea she had never before considered.

Draco restrained the growl that rose up in his throat by gritting his teeth. Of all the men at the game tonight, it was Finnigan who he felt was the greatest threat for stealing a woman's attentions. The guy was rumoured to have a humongous dick that had never failed to satisfy. That he'd dare consider Granger... Cock-sucking bastard.

Lavender barked a cynical laugh. "Figures." She indicated her partner should take a red card from the stack. Before he'd sat back, she snatched up a blue card, holding it tightly to her chest. "I refuse to answer," she sulked indignantly. "There are too many big egos running around this room already."

Her partner took no offence, laughing at her stubbornness. He stretched his legs out in front of him, supremely confident that he'd known what Brown's answer would have been anyway, and clearly enjoying her determination not to name him.

Brown elbowed the man hard enough to make him lose his breath and bend at the waist, clutching his abs for such an arrogant show.

"Good girl," Draco sadistically thought, feeling vindicated.

The Weaselbee was next. He cleared his throat, glanced at Pans out of the corner of his eye, and turned an interesting shade of red. "Pansy. No one else." He turned to the blonde at his side quickly.
"No offense, Lav, but…"

Lavender shook her head and patted the guy's hand with a casual affection. "Friends, Ron. That's all it was for me, too."

The wizard nodded his head in agreement, then his bashful gaze wandered back to his Slytherin partner's across the aisle from him and he cleared his throat. "Then… I'd only want Pansy."

Draco couldn't help it; he burst out laughing. He knew it was against the rules, but it was an uncontrollable reaction that needed a voice. "Oh, hell, Pans, you're good! In less than an hour, you brought home a puppy!"

Parkinson threw him a death glare. "Shut it, Drake," she warned, her eyes glittering with the promise of retribution for making a joke at her expense.

He wiped the tears of hilarity from his eyes, and tried to compose himself, but fell into another round of wild, amused chuckling.

Across the way, Gryffindor's former Keeper had gone still with fury. "She's fucking hot, Malfoy," Weasley countered coldly, leaning forward in his direction for emphasis. "You're just too stupid to see it."

Abruptly, Draco's amusement disappeared, much like a candle extinguished with a strong puff of breath. He (and the others in the room, he noticed) stared with incredulity at the Weasel King. The bloke was serious. Really, truly serious.

Hell's bells, not an hour ago, he and Parkinson had practically been at each other's throats!

Draco quickly changed his focus to Pansy. His ex was staring at her game partner, astonished. Her dark eyes were blown wide with disbelief, but the definitive sparkle of interest glimmered in the back of them. Abruptly realising she was the object of Draco's attention she shuttered her lids and looked down at her hands. He would almost say she looked… shy.

"Oh, hell, he thought, with some small measure of concern. "Tell me you're kidding."

He glanced between the two sides, his eyes bouncing between his ex-girlfriend and the one guy in the world he couldn't stand more than Potter.

"Shut it or else," Weasley growled, looking ready to leap up and throttle him at any moment.

"Bloody hell," Draco grumbled, resigned to the fact that the truly bizarre was going to inevitably be part of tonight's game. If Pans wanted to toy with the redhead, who was he to play the protector of her remaining virtue? He had enough to think about with Granger, anyway, whose turn it was next to answer. "Whatever. Rules say you can't answer that way. Finnigan's card was specific. You have to pick three to five people from the group. So either answer completely, or take a Forfeit."

Weasley looked to his friend and Captain, but Potter simply hung his head and nodded in concurrence. "Malfoy's right. The rules are specific. Sorry, Ron."

The ginger git looked torn and gazed across the space at Parkinson again, whose eyes were still on her lap. Without any more thought to the matter, he reached for a blue card.

Obviously having caught the motion from her peripheral vision, Pansy's head jerked up in astonishment, and then a small smile tugged at her lips and relief was evident in her eyes.
Seriously, whatever, Draco sighed, turning his attention on the one person whose answer did matter to him.

Hermione didn't even look at him as she reached for a Forfeits card, saying nothing.

Not surprising. Really, he could have bet the odds on that one and come up the winner. Let down by her lack of courage, though, Draco sat back into the couch and contemplated his partner with intense scrutiny, silently willing her to look up so he could aim that disappointment directly into her brain.

The She-Weasel copied her best friend exactly. All the while, the two ladies maintained a death grip on each other's hands. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Blaise smirk and look to the side, as if the response from his partner hadn't been at all unexpected.

Prince Potter was talking then, and Malfoy shook himself out of his contemplation to tune-in to the nonsense. "I'm monogamous. That's not my kind of thing, and just speaking hypothetically about it isn't comfortable for me either, so I'll just take a Forfeit."

Gryffindor's Captain snatched up a blue card as game play passed quickly to Theo.

Draco's other best friend crossed his arms over his chest and frowned, clearly considering the wisdom of answering or not. With a growl, he lunged forward and took a red card, then tapped it against his knee. "I'd fuck any of the girls here, but if I had to pick, top three choices would be Greengrass, Granger, and Brown." He stared at Daphne pointedly as he replied, as if challenging her to argue.

For her part, Greengrass remained wisely silent. She adjusting her glasses again across the bridge of her nose and stared off at the far wall with deliberate insouciance. This only seemed to anger Theo more, though, Draco noted; his friend's free hand actually clenched into a fist.

Damn, what had happened between Nott and Greengrass in that private room to make Theo react so aggressively? He'd never known his friend to be so affected by a woman!

But then, Draco could relate. His obsession had been on-going for a rather long time, however, and was therefore had deeper roots.

He turned to his own partner, feeling a tad bitter about the answers this round. "My, aren't you popular with the boys," he bit, his own jealousy manifesting.

He knew he was behaving immaturity, but the fact that every male in the room wanted to fuck his girl (and he was quite sure that the Weasel and Potty would have listed Granger, too, had either of them had the cojones to do so) made Draco terribly resentful.

Granger stared at him as if he'd just said something completely nutters.

"No discussion," Potter reminded him and Draco was forced to turn aside his need to lash out. It wasn't, after all, really Hermione's fault that she was desirable enough to put on a list of women a bloke would most like to fuck. Slytherin's balls, he even wanted her, and he'd been her antagonist for years.

"Parkinson, back to you," Scar-Head indicated.

Pansy practically glowed neon red, opened her mouth, shut it, then hung her face in her hands and muffled her reply. "I'd pick Weasley. No one else." She reached for a Forfeits card, not able to answer the question correctly either.
"No shit?" her partner asked, breathing a shaky sigh of relief. "Well, that's... good."

Draco looked between the two former enemies-slash-new best bed buddies and, mentally shook his head.

"Time to turn your cards over," Potter announced.

Draco flipped his placard and read it carefully, then uncrossed his legs and stood up. "Time," he demanded, tapping the *Deeds* card against his thigh.

"Its 8:40," Potter replied, replacing his fob watch in his pocket. He reached for those invisible glasses of his again and sighed when he remembered he no longer wore them. He'd have to find a new OCD tick, it seemed.

"All right, you've got until 9:30," Draco declared, turned on his heel and made for the same room as last time, knowing Granger would have no choice but to follow him. She had a punishment coming to her, after all.

Behind him, Potter's voice rang out. "Pregnancy charms, ladies, if you please."

Draco snorted, re-reading his card as he reached for the knob and pulled his door open. Maybe they'd have better use for such a spell with Granger's *Forfeit*, because his action round certainly wouldn't call for the use of such a spell. Talk about rotten luck.
Chapter Summary

Lavender's determination not to be hurt by Seamus ever again is seriously put to the test...

Chapter Notes

CONTEST WINNER THIS CHAPTER: User "Daisykins" recommended the song, "Give and Take" by Tyler Collins for Lavender & Seamus this go around, and I thought it a perfect complement to Lavender's thoughts here. So, this chapter is dedicated to DAISYKINS - congratulations!

PLEASE REVIEW!

Back in their own private version of the Gryffindor common room, Lavender tossed her bum down in the same cozy chair she'd previously occupied during the last two action rounds, crossing her legs. She positively glared at Seamus as he entered behind her and quietly shut the door.

Swaggering over to the couch, he carefully removed his woolen jacket and jumper, laying them across the back of the sofa, and then literally jumped into the same catty-corner as before, lounging back as if the world was his oyster and he had no cares. He unbuttoned his white, cotton dress shirt at the collar, and did the same to his shirt cuffs, rolling them up to mid-forearm.

They stared at each other the whole time in silence, she trying hard not to notice his predatory inspection of her person. When he'd made himself quite comfortable, he lifted his card and read it aloud to her:

DEED: Caress every inch of your partner's naked body on the outside.

Lavender felt the blood drain from her face. "You have got to be joking!"

That sexy smile of his put in an appearance, gliding up his cheek. "'Fraid not, sweet angel. Shall we get ta it then?"

She grit her teeth, letting her fingernails roll-tap over the arms of the chair. "I'd rather not."

Her partner frowned, losing his good humour. "Yer mad about how I answered the question, aren't ya?"

She hated to admit it, but the fact that Seamus had so casually tossed out the idea that he wouldn't mind getting it on with two other women, one of whom was her good friend, had stung. Lavender had always felt she'd placed second when compared to Hermione, whether it be in Ron's arms or in
their various classes. To have Pansy included in the mix... she couldn't even begin to describe how that had galled her. The woman was a Slytherin, for Merlin's sake!

Of course, it hadn't helped that not a minute later, Ron had said he'd preferred Pansy, too. Her self-esteem had taken a big hit then.

Was she going to let Seamus know any of this, though? Abso-bloody-lutely not. He had too big an ego as it was.

"Let's just get this over with. It's not like you haven't already had me naked before,"

Quelling her terror, tamping it down deep into her gut – she was a Gryffindor, after all – Lavender stood up and reached behind her neck, pulling the string tie to the halter of the dress, letting it fall. Peeling the dress away with a wiggle here and there, it drifted to the floor in a satiny heap.

Seamus sucked in his breath as he took in her lingerie. "Bloody hell!" he swore in amazement, and wolf-whistled. "Ya went and grew up on me, love. And yer knickers are quite fetchin', ya know." He got to his feet in a flash and approached.

Teetering on her heels as she took a step away, Lavender nearly fell back. Sea caught her with an unexpected swiftness, however, gathered her into his arms and effortlessly held her up against his solid chest. His arms were steel bands around her, pressing her into his warm curves. They were nose to nose when she looked up.

Godric, he was gorgeous, wasn't he?

An electric tingle shot up her spine and into the back of her head, causing her knickers to go instantly wet, just as it had last round when he'd touched her. She might have said it was some sort of magic she'd felt that caused the reaction, but he wasn't holding his wand.

"Easy, sweet angel," he murmured in a gentle tone. "No need ta be rushin' and hurtin' yerself. Let me enjoy ya like this a bit, yeah?"

Lavender's inner alarms blared in warning. From the end of third year, when she'd first developed a fancy for Sea, he'd been her greatest temptation, with his smooth moves, his alluring woody scent, and those full, kissable lips and intense, green eyes. And that brogue... gods, that lilt, with the rolled r's, and the way he emphasized the 'La' part of her name! It made her shiver inside and out. Her ex-boyfriend had a way of enchanting her with a look or a simple phrase - which is why she'd made such a grave error in calculation two years ago and given up her virginity to him.

She'd promised herself after that fiasco that never again would she be made a fool of by putting her feelings so easily on the line. She'd cried too many tears, for too many months to count, and didn't intend upon repeating such a mistake. That vow was one she had lived by since, as she absolutely refused to become a victim to any man's clever wit or sultry looks a second time. In order to assure that happened, there was no such thing as 'making love' in bed – it was 'just sex' now.

That meant that Mister Seamus Finnigan, who had made the claim tonight that he was offering her something deeper than a simple physical relationship, was strictly off-limits. Besides, she didn't believe his offer to be true, anyway. It was most likely that he was simply trying to alleviate his guilt by earning her forgiveness. Once she gave it, he'd probably skip off to the next girl.

Narrowing her eyes, she threw him her most disapproving frown. "The card says nothing about either one of us enjoying this. I just have to do it."

The teasing glint left Seamus' eye and his countenance became very serious. "Lavender, I want this
ta be good for the both o’ us. Don’t make me touch ya without care, Angel. It would… hurt me.”

A sharp pang stabbed Lavender’s chest. Well, that had seemed totally sincere…

_No, he’s a silver-tongued liar!,_ she sharply reminded herself, shaking off her momentary doubts. She knew better than anyone that this wizard talked a pretty speech to get a witch into his bed. The rumours from the other females around school only confirmed it; he’d turned dumping a girl into an art form. Frankly, Lavender didn’t trust Sea any further than she could throw him.

"You did it before, so why should you care now about a repeat?"

The frustration flashed through his eyes, making him stern, almost scary. "I told ya why already! Merlin's pecker, woman, don't ya listen? I care about ya, a'right?"

"Pretty words, but just that," she threw back, her heart fluttering behind the cage of her ribs in anxiety over this confrontation. "But then, you're known for them, Sea. Every girl you've shagged says the same thing: you're a regular Lothario blessed with Cassanova's mouth."

He closed his eyes and sighed, obviously trying to rein in his temper. "Lavender…"

"Save it," she interrupted, pulling herself out of his embrace, reaching for her heels to get the bloody things off her feet so she'd stop tripping. "Your history speaks for itself, Finnigan, and I don't believe you." She kicked her shoes across the room, and then shakily began removing her heart bracelet. "So, let's just get this over with already."

_I will not cry, I will not cry, I WILL NOT CRY_, she repeated the litany to get rid of the unexpected wavering tears in her eyes.

Why in all the levels of Hell was she this distressed? She'd promised her heart that she would never allow a man to upset her like this again; would never to let a man tip her whole world upside down and turn it inside out a second time…

…and why was this fucking clasp not coming off?

Gentle hands intervened, pushing her shaking fingers to the side and calmly removing the bracelet from her wrist, placing it down in the center of the nearby chair's cushion. "Slow 'n easy, sweet lass," Seamus coaxed, stepping back into her sphere, pressing in too close.

Wait, didn't he hear what she'd just said? Didn't he understand that she didn't want him like that ever again?

Those strong fingers of his slid over her arms and up to her shoulders, gently slipping her bra straps down, softly caressing the skin in passing.

Godric, he was stripping her. She should stop him!

No, he was only doing what his card allowed. If she stopped him, it would be her forfeit, and that was something her pride wouldn't let her do. She wouldn't be chased out of this game! She wasn't some little, naïve girl anymore. Their experience two years before had irrevocably changed her. Now she would show Seamus Finnigan that she could endure whatever he could dish out like the grown, mature woman she'd become!

Heart skipping madly, threatening to crawl up her throat, Lavender fought to regain control of her rapid pulse, to stop her body from trembling, and to calm her breathing. That odd, warm sparking tingle continued up and down the length of her spine, though, making it hard for her to ignore.
Godric, was she that desperate for his touch, or was their chemistry just that bloody good?

Seamus slowly circled behind her, giving her a bit of space… but was too little a gentleman to stop, apparently. When he began unhooking the clasp to her bra, her inhalations sped up again. "Calm, me love," he coaxed in a soft murmur. "I won't hurt ya."

"Liar," she whispered, unable to match the strength of the echoing shout in her head.

His touch was tender, unhurried, and when the tension of her bra eased up, his warm hands smoothed the fingerie away, pulling it from her arms and dropping it to the floor. He leaned his head over her shoulder and looked down, his hands coming to rest on her waist. He melded his body to hers. "Yer beautiful," he whispered, and began tracing circles over her skin with his fingertips, gliding them across her abdomen. "Tell me, love, can we combine our cards, do ya think?"

Against her better judgment, Lavender nodded. Perhaps if they did their actions together it would go faster? She recalled her card's requirements and recited them back verbatim for him:

**FORFEIT: Your partner gets to use a feather on you in any way they wish.**

Seamus hummed in approval and held his hand out before her. Into it appeared a rounded wooden knot, at the top of which was bound a grouping of cockerel feathers. He gripped it between his fingers and brought it towards her without pause. The pulsing organ in Lavender's chest tried to leap out between her ribs.

*No! Get control of yourself!* She adamantly refused to let what he was about to do to her affect her. She'd grit her teeth and endure it, but she would not enjoy it!

Oh-so-gently, her partner stroked the feathers over her throat. "I'll only touch ya this way, angel," he pledged, running the extremely soft plumes over her neck, up and down, back and forth from one shoulder to the other. "And ya don't have ta get any more undressed unless ya want ta. I won't force it."

"But the cards say-" she began, but he cut her off, stroking the feathers over her lips.

"Sod all the cards," he denounced, moving the fetish toy over her cheeks and jaw. "It's me turn, and I get ta interpret the bloody things as I want."

As the wispy strands of the feather edges moved past the bridge of her nose to her forehead and back down, Lavender had no choice but to close her eyes. Trying to hold absolutely still through this wasn't going to be an option, as her body was shivering from the pleasurable sensations as the feather ran over her sensitive pulse in her neck again. Anticipation quickened her breath.

Seamus' lips were right on top of the shell of her ear when he groaned in longing, but instead of trailing the feathers down her breasts, as she'd expected, he teased them over the flesh of her right arm, bringing goose bumps to the surface.

Lavender kept her eyes closed out of fear and embarrassment now, and bit her bottom lip when the tickling centered on the inside bend of her elbow and over the veins in her wrist, for that feeling did more than just delight – it set off a rioting of butterflies in her stomach, making her belly clench. A gasped huff escaped her mouth despite her will.

As her fingers received a light stroking, the brush moved across her abdomen in a zigzag pattern from just under her breast to her lower left hip bone and back, before centering on her bellybutton. She was not normally a ticklish person, but that light grazing made her burst into helpless giggles. Trying to staunch the eruption was impossible as well, because Seamus didn't let up until she pushed...
his wrist away.

"No, no, lass, ya canna prevent me from touchin' ya how I want," he kidded, stroking the feathers down the length of her spinal column. "This is me reward, after all."

_His reward._ Lavender instantly sobered, opening her eyes once more, the harsh reality of their situation coming down on her once again. _That's right. That's all this is about – winning me over so he can get my forgiveness and appease his guilt._

Stiffening up again, she stood stock still. "I apologize for interrupting. You can continue. I won't move again."

Finnigan sighed and she could hear the frustration. There was an awkward pause, and then she was being tugged to the sofa, being forced to straddle him once more. This time, however, her breasts were thrust into his face. She backed off as far as he would allow – which was only to put a little space between them. Her ire shot through the roof.

"You can't touch me like this! It's a foul!"

"I'm beggin' ta differ," he countered with a growl. "I need good access ta ya front, since that's where I'm wantin' ta touch ya next. Sittin' here like this gives me what I need ta fulfill the cards." He jerked his knees out, forcing her thighs wider, and leaned forward, leering at her. "Yer gonna like this part, I'm thinking. Now, don't move, like ya promised."

With deft hands and one rather determined feather, Seamus managed to transform her irritation into instant desire, as he trailed the stimulating ends of his toy over her right breast, circling her nipple with it. More electric sparks shot along her spinal column, seeming to centre in the very sensitive spots at the tip of her tail bone and at the nape of her neck. Everything inside her clenched, making her literally quake, and a startled gasp escape her lips. It took a supreme effort of will not to clutch at his arms for support, instead forcing her hands into clenched fists at her sides.

"Ah, ya see, angel," Seamus enticed, continuing his lazy sweep of her tiny rosy-beige buds. "Yer body isn't as cold as ya'd have me believe." He flicked the wispy feathers under the curve of her breast, following it around to the top and over to her left nipple, where he repeated a languid figure eight pattern across her skin.

"Yer tiny nips are perfect for suckin', me lass. I'd love ta run me tongue o'er this one here first," her former boyfriend indicated the breast on the left, tickling it with the feathers. The hot air from his sultry, thickly-accented speaking voice lightly danced over her skin at the same time, adding to the stimulation. "I'd bathe ya in me wet, warm mouth, lappin' across yer nipple, sucklin' and leavin' behind a love bite ta mark ya as mine."

He tilted his head to the other side, making sure his mouth hovered very close to its intended target. He exhaled and cool air instead caressed her skin, making Lavender choke back a whimper and resist the urge to squirm. "This one here, I'd clamp me teeth around and pull." He pressed his torture device directly against that nipple and slowly rotated it. "Gentle like, ya know? I'd let go right when ya were on the brink a'tween pleasure an' pain, then do it again and again."

Seamus continued his languid sweep around each breast, over and over again, turning his head to supposedly 'inspect' his work, all the while changing the temperature of the air around them by physically exhaling through his open mouth, or pretending to blow air out. By the time he moved the feather toy down her abdomen again, Lavender teetered on the brink of insanity.

And still he wasn't done with her.
The velvety smooth titillation continued its downward trek to just over her knickers, tracing the edges from one hip to the other, and around the curves of both thighs. The sensitive flesh there quivered in response, tensed up, and now she had to place her hands on her thighs to keep herself from jumping up off his lap.

"Ah, such soft lookin' skin ya have, me love," her partner murmured. "I gotta touch ya again." He put the toy down at his side on the cushions, and then blew on his hands and rubbed them together to warm them up. Lavender went as stiff as possible, steeling her resolution and dedication to her previously made vow, her fingers twitching and digging into the area just above her knees.

Tender, determined fingers splayed across her ribs and roamed slowly upwards, cupping her breasts and pushing in a smooth rolling motion. Lavender lurched and bit her tongue.

"Godric's rod!" Seamus breathed in awe, letting his fingertips stroke her nipples back into hard, little points. "What a fool I been, missin' this beauty."

He tweaked each of the tiny buds between his index fingers and thumbs, and that's what sent Lavender plummeting to her doom. She cried out and grabbed at his biceps, arching into him. With her face pressed to his neck, and her breathing ragged, she drew in the scent of Seamus once more, drowning in his musky fragrance, letting it roll over her, just as she had when she'd kissed him not an hour before.

"I wanna kiss 'em, sweet angel," her seducer whispered his wish against her ear. His fingers continued to work their magic on her overly-sensitive breasts. "Will ya let me?"

Stop fighting it, a naughty voice in the back of her head coaxed. Give in.

Her walls battered down by his physical assault of her senses, Lavender was helpless to do anything but nod in surrender.

His mouth closed over her left breast, and just as he promised, he took it into the moist cavern of his mouth, and licked and flicked gently with his tongue, soaking her in his saliva. Her hands moved into Seamus' hair and grabbed on, as she pressed into him more firmly, a low, desperate moan leaving her throat. Deep in her womb, she felt the fire of need burning, and between her legs, warm fluid trickled from her opening, wetting the fabric of her knickers.

Tilting her hips forward, she tightened her buttocks, and Seamus' hands roamed down to cup her backside in response, pulling her body in tight against his. As soon as she came in contact with his very hard erection, he began a hard sucking of her tiny bead, leaving behind what she knew would be that love bite he promised. Driven by a lusty greed, she ground her pelvis against his covered cock and cried out in pleasure.

When he was satisfied with his attentions to her one breast, Seamus turned his mouth towards the other, and again, as he had described, he took her bud expertly between his teeth and clamped down, tugging it away from her chest with slow, deliberate pressure. Digging her nails into his skull, Lavender hissed and arched more vigorously into her former lover's embrace. "Oh, Merlin!" she panted, as his hands began kneading her arse, pulling her over his solid length, humping to a slow, insistent rhythm. His fingers slid the edges of her knickers up and over until they met in the crack of her bum, and then he glided over the exposed flesh, rubbing it, urging her to continue pumping over him on her own. All the while, his teeth never stopped tugging and releasing her nipple.

"More," she whimpered, ashamed by how easily he'd enslaved her to the need for him that had never quite gone away over time, no matter her contrary claims. Godric, help her, but she wanted Seamus – always had. He was her one weakness…
Never breaking contact with her breast, her lover guided her back onto the couch. Hovering over her, he continued to place wet, warm kisses between her tits, even as he shifted to find a comfortable position kneeling between her legs. He didn't mount her as she'd expected. Instead, he pulled the edges of her knickers up in the front, letting them ride her slit, tugging them with gentle insistence so they stroked up and then down, rasping against her clit.

Shite, that felt good!

Spanning his fingers over her mound next, he teased her small patch of well-trimmed curls, moaning as he found them dampened by her musky arousal. Pushing the heel of his palm up, he caused the panties to continue to ride her clit. Rocking against her this way, he easily overwhelmed Lavender's will as the onslaught of such lovely feelings shoved aside all logical protest.

Deep inside her core, electricity began arcing. It worked its way up her spine and simultaneously traveled down her hipbones, centering under Seamus' touch. "Oooh, yes," she hissed, her pelvis swaying forward to meet the thrust of his hand, her fingers running through his hair and pulling him into her in an unconscious gesture of longing. "Don't stop," she begged in a heated whisper, her knees bending to cradle against his outer thighs, rubbing against his crisp woolen slacks. "Feels so good."

His tongue and mouth continued to love her as thoroughly as promised, even as his fingers gently scraped through her pubic hair at the same time as increasing his palm's tempo. Scorching fire shot through her engorged clit, sending sparks rioting along both the outside and inside of her pussy lips. She soaked the thin strip of fabric that rested in her seam, scenting the air between them with her body's natural musk. Her lover indulged Lavender's utmost gratification, utilizing his honed skills to bring her to the brink in moments.

By cherishing her body as he was - as he'd previously neglected to do years ago - the fortified wall of Lavender's anger began to erode. Perhaps she could let this happen between them again. Perhaps she might be able to trust him. Perhaps...

A sheen of perspiration dotted her upper lip as she panted, reaching… reaching…

Lifting his head, Seamus placed his lips next to her ear, breathing hot air down the curve of her neck at the same time as pushing up with his palm again, making her shudder. "Let go, me love," he gently bid. "Come."

Like magic, his words freed her, and Lavender tumbled over the edge of bliss with a wild, lusty cry. Her back arched off the cushions, and behind her tightly shut eyelids, detonations of colour burst in a parade of light. She floated high on the wave of pleasurable sensations for several long seconds before slowly coming back down to earth.

"Lavender," her wizard purred against her throat as she rode out the aftershocks and slid into the warm glow. "Yer so lovely, me lass. How I wished I'd been able to bring ya back then like this."

His words… they wounded without intention. Why couldn't he have said these things to her back when she'd given him her virginity? If only he had, things might have been different between them. They were such small words, but they were so very important.

Her tears came, as a hot rush of mortification overcame her, adding to her vulnerability. She burst into sobs, trying to push Seamus away, afraid of her weakness, but this time, he wouldn't let her go. Wrapping those powerful arms about her, he pulled her up against him as he knelt back on his haunches, and rested her face into the cradle of his neck. "I'm so, so sorry, love," he murmured, gently rocking her. "I wish I'd had this knowledge in me head back then. I'd have made yer first time
so special. I'd have loved ya all night, and never let ya go."

Her icy resolve cracked, splintered, shattered as she threw her arms about his neck and buried her nose against his throat. "Oh, Sea!"

Her lover held her tight to him, letting her anger and sorrow run its course, and bathe his shirt in her tears. When it passed over her at long last, she lay like a limp ragdoll in his strong, comforting embrace. He finally let her go only when the chimes rang out to tell them that their time together was nearing its end.

Helping her to her feet, he redressed her with tenderness, fitting her breasts away inside the cups of her bra – not sexual now, but sensual, caring. When the tie on the back of her halter was redone, and he'd loaned her his handkerchief to wipe away her tears, he gave her a final look-over, stroking her cheek with one finger.

"Do ya want me ta forfeit the game, so I canna force ya ta do anything more?" he asked. "I won't hurt ya again, Lavender."

Her heart gave a lurch.

This was it, then – the decision that would affect both of their lives. If she said 'yes,' he would walk away and set her free. If she said 'no'…

"Kiss me," she breathed, leaning up on tiptoe, wrapping her arms about his neck, wanting to know what his mouth would tell her about his sincerity.

Seamus sighed in resignation, taking her request as a sign of her rejection, and yet, he did not let that stop him from sweeping down and gathering her into his arms again, slanting his mouth over hers in hungry possession. Their tongues twined, pulled apart, their lips following the rhythm as if it were the most natural of fits in the universe.

This was meant to be. She realized it then – felt it in the marrow of her bones. Some small voice inside her head told her to follow this path of second chances that the game had provided to see where it would lead. Perhaps it had been fate that they'd both agreed to play tonight, after all.

Lavender sighed with contentment as he moved away. She finally had her answer. The wall she'd protected herself behind for so long began to crumble, and the ice of her cold anger to melt. "I want to see where this leads us," she told him. "So, no, don't quit."

His spring-green eyes glimmered with the light of new life and hope. Taking her back into his arms, he pulled them in good and tight. "I meant it when I said I wanted ya fer me girl, Angel, so I'm gonna do everything I can ta win yer heart back."

Blushing to the roots of her hair – *Merlin, please don't let this be a mistake!* – she gave him a quick peck on the lips. "We should go. Time's almost up."

Seamus nodded and taking her hand, he led her from the room. He didn't let her go, even after he'd sat back down on the main area's couch at her side. The feeling of him holding onto her was much more comfortable than she'd anticipated. In fact, it felt warm and good. It felt… right.
As soon as Pansy entered their private room and Weasley shut the door, she turned on a sickle and faced him, holding her card up. She read it aloud:

**FORFEIT: Do a seductive strip tease down to your knickers for your partner.**

Ron grinned ridiculously, and read his card:

**FORFEIT: You have to go down on your partner and make them come. Good luck!**

They stood there looking at each other for a good minute, before she and her ginger-haired partner simultaneously tossed their cards aside, and Ron stalked her towards the round bed, where she backed up and unceremoniously fell into the soft, white mattress. He unbuttoned his jacket and tossed it against the pillows near the headboard, then leaned over her, placing his palms on either side of her head and lowered his mouth, hovering above hers, staring her in the eye hotly. "I'm going to snog you senseless before we go any further, Parkinson," he told her rather dominantly. "Unless you object, that is?"

She shook her head fervently, her mouth watering at the idea of tasting his moist, pink tongue again. "Kiss me hard, Weasley, and make it count."

"Yes, m'am," he approved and dropped his lips to hers without further ado.
Like before, Pansy's stomach erupted with fluttering pixies, her senses reeled, and she moaned eagerly, letting him claim her again. How was it that this boy — this man — made her panting hot and wet with the simplest touch of his fiery mouth and tongue? She clung to him, wrapped her legs about his waist and held on as he used those bulging muscles of his to push them into the middle of the bed, riding her dress up in the process. They kissed and kissed for a bit, enjoying each other's flavors, before finally having to come up for some air.

Lying fully atop her now, wedged between her legs, supporting his weight on his elbows, Ron stared down at her. His fingers, she noted, were absently playing with her hair, slipping through the straight, dark, short strands. "Parkinson, I meant what I said out there — you're so fucking hot you burn me inside and out," he admitted in between breaths, aqua eyes simmering with lust again for her. "I'm so hard for you it hurts."

Pansy's womb did a little jig and her vanity took a euphoric trip down Jubilation Lane. No man had ever spoken to her, or had looked at her as Ronald Weasley was doing now. For the first time in her life, she felt desirable and beautiful and worthy — three things she had never, in the entirety of her life, ever believed of herself deep down inside. It made her want to give back to him; to make this wizard feel as good as he was making her feel just then.

"Do you want your strip tease now?" she asked, eager to watch him lose all control again.

Ron nodded enthusiastically. "Then, I'm going to eat you out, like my card wants. I'm going to make you come all over my face, baby," he promised with a wicked, delicious smirk that took her breath away.

It was heady, this ability to make a man look at her like that. All of her 'grown-up' life, Pansy had been at the whim of the opposite gender. She had never learned to assert herself properly two years ago, when she'd lost her innocence to the first love of her young life, Draco Malfoy. He'd taken her virginity and her heart and taught her the folly of giving such things to a man who didn't have reciprocal feelings. Oh, no, he hadn't been cruel; he just hadn't shared the same depth of feelings, and that had hurt. Since then, she'd searched in the beds of a few other men and even one girl for the one who would look at her with wild abandon, who would desire her before his or her own nefarious ends. It seemed she'd been looking in the completely wrong House all along.

"Then let me up so I can give you your reward," she murmured against his lips, licking them like a cat with cream.

Weasley groaned and reluctantly pulled away, rolling off of her.

As she regained her feet, Pansy turned her head to look over her shoulder, noted Ron was still lounging on his side, propping his head on his hand as he watched her, that black, silken shirt clinging to his muscled frame, those tight, black trousers showing off his toned legs (and the bulge already beginning in his pants). His booted feet hung off the end of the bed casually as he awaited her pleasure, and in that second, she thought him truly, desperately handsome. Why hadn't she noticed before?

A catty, cynical part of her chimed in that it might have something to do with the clothes (and not just that wicked tongue of his). To be completely honest, Pansy was a sucker for a man who dressed sexy in refined garb (much as her mother loved a man in uniform). Weasley's outfit tonight certainly qualified as that; he was the best dressed of the bunch, in her opinion, and that certainly added to his appeal.

But the truth was, there was something compelling about the honesty in his face. Having lived in the paramount den of vipers for the last seven years, it was distinctly refreshing to know that he wasn't
putting on an act (for she had trained herself, having bunked with Slytherins continuously for most of
her growing years, to sniff out a lie from a hundred paces). Her partner wasn't a liar – he had the
courage to say and feel what he willed without fearing repercussions, and she liked that best about
him.

If only she could do the same…

His hands dropped down onto the mattress and he looked at her with concern suddenly. "If you don't
want to do this, I won't make you. We can just trade cards or something."

The selfless offer melted some of the ice around her serpent's heart. "No, I want to do this," she
explained. "I was just…thinking up a good song to do it to. It's better with music."

It wasn't a complete lie, as in the back of her head she had been, in fact, considering a musical
selection to set the mood for her disrobing. In a flash of inspiration, she settled on one by her favorite
R&B singer, Prince (who skimmed both the Muggle and Wizarding worlds effortlessly, being a
Half-blood, with the Muggles none the wiser as to the man's true talents). Yeah, his song, "Cream"
would be the perfect accompaniment to set the tone for the next hour.

As Pansy slowly turned fully, the lights dimmed at her mental urging and the song's slow, bass-
heavy beat began. Hips swaying in time to the music, she gave Weasley the hottest stare and
naughtiest smile in her arsenal – the one that promised wicked things soon – and reached for the
buttons down the front of her dress.

This is it!
It's time for you to go to the wire.
You will hit!
Cause you got the burnin' desire…

Slipping each chain free of its accompanying button, her nimble fingers moved to part the mesh frock
and pull the satin silk of her dress up her legs slowly, revealing her knees. The dress inched up
 unhurriedly as she gyrated her hips in a circular motion, revealing the garters holding up the edges of
her stockings.

It's your time!
You got the horn, so why don't you blow it?
You are fine!
You're filthy cute and, baby, you know it.

Her fingers purposefully edged under the material, which she stopped at the bottom of her knickers.
She licked her lips sexily and put one leg up on the bed, bending her knee and tilting her hips
forward, giving him a perfect view of her dampening knickers.

Cream…
Get on top.
Stroking herself over her panties, then gripping the edge of one side, she pulled it over, exposing her dark curls to him once again. Slipping a finger up and down the center of her slit, Pansy tossed her head back, exposing her collared throat, and moaned, caressing herself erotically over her moist lower lips. The jangle of her silver snake bracelet on her left wrist accompanied the sound of the music's beat as she moved her hand in time, swirling circles around her wet vulva.

On the bed, Ron's eyes had gone positively feral with heat and his breathing had become harsh.

**You're so good!**
Baby, there ain't nobody better.
So you should
Never, ever go by the letter.

Having had enough of teasing, and with a knowing smirk (his erection was now raging to be let out of his slacks, she noticed), Pansy let her hold on her knickers go and dropped her leg back down to the floor. The dress slid back into place as she reached around behind her to grasp the zipper and began pulling it down.

**You're so cool!**

**Everything you do is success.**
Make the rules,
Then break them all cause you are the best!
Yes, you are!

When the fastener hit its base, and she could easily inch out of the dress, Pansy played with the straps of her outfit, slipping them down her shoulders and arms coyly. Pretending to hide her breasts and crotch away with her hands as the purple-magenta-black fabric fell and pooled at her feet, she made a cute moue with her lips, as if surprised to find herself in such a state of *en déshabillé*. "Oops," she faked being ashamed, grinning like a shark.

She continued to swivel her hips in time to the music, and kept her gaze locked firmly on her partner the whole time. "Want to see more?" she eventually asked him in a low, husky tone.

Transfixed, Weasley nodded, shifting up into a sitting position, bending one knee and leaning an arm on it. "Hell, *yes,*" he murmured. "Take it all off for me, baby."
Sliding her hands away from their false pose of hiding away her body, she skimmed her belly with her long, painted nails, watching him follow the path she laid out, up over her sternum, eventually caressing her breasts.

He licked his lips, his cheeks taking on a dusky hue as his lust reared to the surface. "Rip your bra off."

With a throaty laugh that had Weasley scooting to the edge of the bed, Pansy did as her partner wanted, yanking the top of her strapless down with a harsh tug, revealing her bared breasts to him once again. She then shimmied it down to mid-abdomen before reaching behind her and unclasping it. Tossing the bra into his lap – right over his crotch – she cupped her nude, swaying boobs and thrust them out at him with a kittenish arch of her back.

"Do your dance!
Why should you wait any longer?
Take a chance!
It could only make you stronger.

"Pinch your nipples for me," he coaxed next, his eyes darkening with untamed hunger.

Sashaying up to him smoothly, Pansy caressed her breasts right up in his face and did as he wanted, hissing in pleasure from the electric shocks that traveled down her center to her core, instantly moistening her lower lips. After a few more passes, she felt emboldened to try something truly naughty.

Bending her head, locking her eyes on her paramour, she licked zealously over her own hardened nipples one breast at a time.

"It's your time!
You got the horn, so why don't you blow it?
You're so fine!
You're filthy cute and, baby, you know it.

"Holy bloody hell," Ron swore on an exhale, licking his lips again and swallowing loudly. "Baby, you're so getting fucked sometime tonight. Hard. To this same song." Widening his legs, he reached
for her waist and pulled her in close, meeting her gaze (amusedly tearing himself from the appealing sight of her lapping at her own breasts with some measure of effort, she noted). "I'm gonna fill you with my aching cock and make you scream my name," he vowed, tilting his lips towards her straining nips. "Now, can I suck on these?"

Running her hands through his crimson hair, Pansy nodded and smiled sinfully, her cunt throbbing with the visual his words conjured. "Gods, yes!"

Come on!

Cream...
Get on top.
Cream...
You will cop.
Cream...
Don't you stop.
Cream.
She-boogie bop.
Boogie!

Weasley had Pansy moaning and gasping and grabbing at him in no time, that talented tongue of his again taking her breasts to attention. Throwing her head back wantonly, Pansy cried to the ceiling as his teeth scraped, then nibbled, then finally bit with some measure of pressure.

"Have to… finish the… strip tease for you," she panted the reminder. They were on a time-limit, after all, and she really wanted to play his card soon, as she was slippery between her legs and dying for fulfillment.

A man of direct means, Ron's fingers simply pulled the garters off of her stockings and began dragging the mesh-lace mini-corset down over her knickers, apparently deciding to finish the strip tease himself to get it done quickly. He tugged the garment until it reached her lower thighs, where gravity simply took it the rest of the way down to her feet, then jerked at her panties next, letting his mouth trail down her abdomen.

Warning bells went off in Pansy's head; her partner was now dangerously close to be in violation of the cards. Pushing a tad away, she raised his face to hers to stop his determined actions and stared him in the eye. "Yes, I give you permission to touch me all over and to put your mouth on me anywhere you want." When that formality was done, she stepped back into his sphere of warmth and giggled down at him. "You owe me now," she smiled slyly. "I just saved your hot arse."

Taken aback, Weasley let out a whistle. "Close call, there. Sorry 'bout that." He let his hands slide up her waist, around her back, following the sway of her hind as he rested his chin on her abdomen and looked up at her through his red-gold lashes. "I definitely owe you, baby," he readily agreed. "Will you let me pay you back now?"

She tilted her head, pretending to consider his offer. "Well…"

He tickled her sides in response, grinning from ear to ear like a fool. "Wicked witch."

Laughing, she wrapped her arms about his neck. "I suppose you could take the rest of my clothing
Ron's eyes lit up, and his fingers moved once again to her knickers, thumbling the sides and wrenching them down without any finesse. When they, too, fell to her ankles, he looked at her, considering what to do next. "Leave the stockings on. It'll take too long to get 'em off anyway." With that, he yanked her into his lap, forcing her to straddle him, and as he bent his head to take her lips once more, he asserted his possession of the thatch between her thighs.

Kissing her to distract her, he rolled and laid her back on the edge of the bed, swapping places with her, leaning over her body. "My turn," he announced cheerfully, dropping to his knees between her legs without further ado.

"Oh, gods above!" Pansy howled as his tongue swiped her clear up the middle, and then he was sucking on her clit hard, his fingers diving into her body, pistoning to a strong rhythm that was relentless and sought only one goal: to drive her over the edge. "Yes! Yes! YES!"

"That's right. Come for me, pretty baby," her ginger-haired partner moaned, focusing all his attention and skill on bringing her again.

Slytherin's skull cap, who'd have thought Ron Weasley would be the best lover she'd ever have? And she hadn't even had actual intercourse with him yet! He was a natural sex enthusiast, attentive and sincere in bringing her pleasure, treating her with respect – something no man had ever actually shown her before in bed. His willingness to give made her want to give back, and although that frightened her because of its unfamiliarity, it was also a powerful rush – like flying head-first at top speed towards the ground on your broom.

He flicked her taut bead with his tongue, alternating pressure between suckling on it and lightly teas ing it. The dichotomy drove her insane with electric need. Gripping his hair tightly, she shoved her hips at him over and over. "Eat me up," she begged, rambling incoherently as she mounted her orgasm quickly. "Oh, Ron! For you! Oh, yes…all for you!"

Lifting his head, their gazes connected. "That's right, baby, for me," he agreed, lapping at her clit in oddly shaped patterns. "And for you."

She squeezed her eyes shut, leaned her head back and concentrated on giving to them both, as he traced strange patterns over her wet pussy. Just as she tipped over the edge, she finally realized what he was doing, and her scream of delight ended in amused laughter. Between her legs, Weasley chuckled darkly, finishing up licking the last of her cream before finally leaning up and over her once more.

Wrapping her arms about his neck tiredly, and drawing him down for another kiss, Pansy grinned and shook her head. "Isn't there a 'y' at the end of your name?"

Ron shrugged, grinning. "Couldn't quite finish. You were squeezing my head too tightly."

He slid one arm around her shoulders and held her close, kissing her lips, her jaw, her throat, while the other hand slid first down her taut belly and then into the crisp, damp, dark curls between her thighs. He began to tease her labia softly at first, then more insistently, circling her still-aroused clit with his fingers and sending renewed shivers up her spine.

Gods, was he kidding? He wanted to bring her again?

"Ron, that feels so wonderful," she whispered, shivering with anticipation at the feeling of his hand buried between her thighs. But, wait…he hadn't even enjoyed himself, had he? He hadn't found his
Ron moaned against her mouth. "This is what I need right now, Parkinson." He caressed her slit straight up the middle with two fingers. "Bloody hell, Pansy, you're so wet," he murmured as he ate at her mouth, gasping right along with her. "I love that you get so turned on just for me. I love that I do this to you - that you're letting me."

The sound of her name on his lips made her heart tighten up in her chest. "Don't tease, baby," she begged. "Go inside me again."

His fingers tickled her entrance, driving her spare, before plunging into her grasping channel a second time. Pansy cried out in bliss as she felt him part her folds once more, moving slowly in and out with tender care. He was fucking her with his fingers as if this were the most important act in the world just then, holding her and kissing her with an equally gentle awareness. His mouth traveled down her collar equally as slow, licking a determined path to her left nipple. He circled the dark areola twice before taking the super sensitive bud between his lips and sucking. All the while, his hand kept up its rhythmic destruction of her senses between her legs.

"Oh, gods…I love your touch, Ron. Please, don't stop," she whispered the plea, her hands gripping onto his hair and pulling him closer into her.

He shook his head. "Won't stop, baby, promise," he quickly answered before returning to the task of suckling on her tits and cherishing her pussy.

It had been too many months since her last relationship had ended; too many nights of fingering herself in her lonely bed, silencing the curtains around her to prevent the others from knowing what she was doing. It felt so good to have a man touch her like this again – to have him touch her. To be able to scream with her pleasure if she wanted, and no one but the two of them would ever know.

Tears burned in the back of her eyes at the intensity of the emotions building in her chest. Could she give this up at the end of the game? Could she walk away from this perfect brand of loving now that she'd found it after searching for so long? Slytherin help her, she was starting to think that maybe she didn't want to. She liked what they were doing too much; was starting to realize that she actually liked Ronald Weasley in the mix, too, and not just because he made her come again and again, but because he seemed to sincerely want to do so. He cherished her, desired her. Could they build something out of that?

Gods help her, she was in way over her head this time. This couldn't end well for either of them, because her future was set, and her Gryffindor lover wasn't going to be a part of that picture. Not that she had any say in the matter…

"Ride my fingers, baby," he coaxed, lapping at her right breast, his free hand petting her cheek, his naughty hand retreating from her body slowly, only to slide home again and again and, merciful gods...again. "Use those hips of yours. Moan for me. Let me make you come again."

Pansy did as bade, thrusting her thighs and arse in time to his hand's patient cadence, coupling with him in a way she'd always wanted to with a man – sweetly, sensually. She moaned, she begged, she sweated and reached for her climax with all her might, wanting to call out to him at that perfect moment.

When Ron's thumb brushed her swollen, vulnerable clit in a circular motion, she let go, screaming his name. Behind her eyelids, the world exploded in bright, white stars, and in her veins, lightning and blood rode fast together, shattering every nerve ending with pleasure. Her orgasm lasted the
longest she'd ever experienced; she just kept coming and coming, her whole body shaking, out of control. "Oh, Ron!" she cried again, pulling his head up and fiercely sealing her lips to his, wanting to shove these feelings into him to share, wishing he could know and understand how much pleasure he'd just brought her.

When the wave finally retreated, and she lay limp and sated in his arms, Ron withdrew his fingers from her body with a final swipe up the center. He then brought that hand to his lips and sucked on her release, licking every bit off. "You taste so good, Pansy," he moaned. "And you smell fantastic." His mouth moved to slant over hers, and she tasted herself on his lips as she kissed him hungrily. When he pulled back, he looked down at her with a contented smile. "I loved doing that to you, baby," he admitted, brushing her sweat-damped hair from her forehead and cheek lightly. "And I'm gonna do it again and again to you, too. Every chance you let me."

Her chest tightened painfully. Every chance… If only there was a chance beyond the next twenty-three hours.

_Foolish woman, he's not meant for you and you know it_, she self-censured silently.

It was a waste of time pining for 'what ifs,' especially when she didn't even know Weasley's real feelings about her; this might all just be a fun one-off for him anyway. No, this game, the time she spent here with this wizard, she would enjoy it, and it would just have to be enough to fill the loneliness and need within her. Perhaps it could even carry her through what was awaiting her after graduation.

"I'd like that," she smiled up at him, stroking his cheek delicately with her fingertips, locking her anxieties away in her heart.

Eyes as blue as the oceans gazed down on her with tenderness, and then he bent his head and claimed her lips again. They kissed and kissed for a long time, enjoying the taste and warmth they shared, and then the chime rang, and Pansy realized she was still not dressed. "We're going to be late," she warned, pulling her mouth from his. "Ten minutes over final call time and it'll be the end of the game for us both."

Weasley looked down at her, measuring, and then grinned and shrugged. "We lose, big deal." He pressed his jutting erection up against her. "Wanna fuck now?"

Pansy shook her head and pushed him, sitting up and rushing to gather her clothes, hastily throwing them back on. "Forget it. You're not ferreting out on the next cards, my sexy wizard." She turned after throwing her dress over her and smoothing it down, deciding to leave her shoes on the floor where she'd flung them, entirely too unbalanced at the moment for heels (her world was still glowingly reeling from what he'd just done for her). "I want to play with you some more before we get down to it, mister."

Her partner's eyebrows hit his hairline as a terribly naughty thought passed over his features. "Oh, yeah, we still have my _Deeds and Forfeits_ to go!" he grinned brightly, rubbing his hands back and forth in anticipation. "Can't wait!"

Pansy couldn't help it; his enthusiasm was so real and contagious that she burst into laughter again as he opened the door for them and took her hand in his. They were both laughing and breathless with anticipation as they raced each other to the couches, eager for the next round's surprises.
By the time Hermione had caught up to Draco's longer, faster strides and entered their private room, the interior had changed. Gone was the blindingly white décor and in its place was a beach scene, complete with a fake, glimmering ocean and a full moon in the background, and a layer of flattened white sand upon the floor.

It was the setting for a romantic dinner for two.

Her heart beat a little faster at the thought.

In the centre of the room a table had been laid out with an elegant flair, a set of burning candles and a small exotic flower arrangement garnishing its surface. Circling the table, set into the sand at even intervals, were a series of golden candle lanterns that glowed and a few steps beyond that ring, a series of lit Tiki torches, each tied with a pink Hibiscus. The sound effect of ocean waves lapping gently upon a shore was piped in from somewhere above, and the ceiling was charmed to look like the night sky.

Apparently, Malfoy had taken her confession last action round and had decided to give her a fantasy come true…or as much as possible, given the limitations of the room.

How thoughtful and charming!

How obvious.

He was trying to win his way into her bed by wooing her, since he'd realised that last round was a fluke and that she wouldn't be such an easy mark. As if one candlelit dinner under a false skyline filled with stars would be enough to get her to throw her knickers at him. Pah! Was he in for a disappointment!

"Are you going to stand in the doorway all night?" Malfoy teased her with an arrogant smirk that
He really did have a sexy set of lips on him…and hands. Damn him for having such good genetics!

"That would be an awful reason to forfeit at this point, especially given the treat awaiting you this round," he told her and recited his card for her from memory.

**DEED: Order and share your favorite meal with your partner. Explain to them why you like every part.**

So he was going to do the confessing and sharing this round, it seemed. That sounded more than fair, considering everything she'd given up to his last round.

Snapping to, Hermione stepped into the room, and instantly realized the impracticality of her heels in the sand. "Tamer than I'd expected for this game," she said as she bent, balancing one hand against the wall just inside the door and removing her sandals. "I wonder who thought that one up."

Bending to remove his own shoes and socks as well, he answered, "In a guess: Potter or Brown."

"No, our team read each other's cards before we turned them in," she told him, setting her shoes to the left of the door, out of the way. The sand under her feet felt wonderful, and she wiggled her toes through it to enjoy the soft, warm sensation. "It has to be someone from Slytherin. I don't know her well, but given what little I've seen and heard tonight, this one feels like it might be from Tracey Davis."

Malfoy was staring at her with an amusement that sent off warning flares in her head.

"You shared cards with your teammates?" he asked. "So you're admitting to cheating."

How was it he could get her hackles up with just a word or two? "It's not cheating," she said, a touch defensive. "I don't recall any rule in the replicated booklet you gave to Harry that said we couldn't show each other our cards in advance. At most, it's a loophole I exploited." She waved him off as his smirk only widened. "Besides, I prefer to think of it as necessary preparation. After all, we were going into a game with a bunch of Slytherins. 'Those cunning folk use any means to achieve their ends.'"

Draco tossed his head back and laughed, and she couldn't help but notice the attractive line of his throat as he did so.

"You say that like it's a bad thing," he noted. "As if you didn't use a little cunning yourself to get around the game's rules. Sounds to me like you've got a little Slytherin in you, too, love."

Hermione growled at him and turned away, not wanting to have that discussion. There were some secrets even she didn't want revealed, especially where the Sorting Hat and her House affiliation were concerned.

Her stomach took that moment to make a similar sound at her, reminding her that she'd hardly eaten a bite at dinner tonight. She made her way over to the table, noting the colorful and unique array of haute cuisine dishes already laid out around the centerpiece, all kept warm under mini glass domes on fancy plates. There were also two full settings arranged, signaling that she and Malfoy would share each portion.

"How lovely," she said, taken aback by the rich variety before her. "It all smells so delicious, too."
Before she could take a seat, her partner was suddenly behind her, tucking her into her chair with an old-fashioned chivalry she hadn't expected. He even laid her napkin out on her lap before circling around and taking the seat across from her. From a silver ice bucket at his side, he pulled out a chilled white wine. It had recently been uncorked and was waiting to be poured. With expert handling, Draco filled her glass goblet halfway, twirled it to aerate, and then handed it to her by the stem, as was proper. He measured out an equal amount for his own glass, and then set the wine bottle back down to remain at a cool temperature.

Raising his glass in a toast, he stared at her evenly, his face an unreadable mask which, for some unfathomable reason, seemed even more dangerous to her than the smirks he'd been tossing her way all evening.

"To the game," he saluted. "May the next twenty-four hours be unforgettable for both of us, Granger."

As she stared at him and his carefully blanked expression, a terrible suspicion began overtaking her: what if this whole scheme wasn't just about getting her to give 'it' up to him so he could brag that he'd had sex with her to the whole school and humiliate her that way, but to get her to let her guard down and to actually fall for the act? To fall for him...so he could crush her heart, too.

Using sex to win her affection, as the mythological Eros had attempted—and succeeded—in doing to Psyche.

It was a good plan for a man hellbent on revenge against the one witch he'd always felt was beneath him, and yet who always managed to outscore him in their classes. It had started to work, too. She'd caved a bit there last action round, she hated to admit. In her defense, he'd been very good at disarming her by pretending to listen and care...and that cologne had definitely done a number on her libido, which had gone a long way to getting her to drop her shields, too.

She'd made a grave tactical error. Malfoy was far better at this whole seduction thing than she'd given him credit for, honestly.

_All men are untrustworthy._

She wasn't sure where that thought came from, but it fed into her doubts like an insidious whisper in her ear.

"Not going to raise your glass?" he asked, his expression sincerely curious.

The act was a good one, she had to admit.

Hermione plastered a fake smile on her lips and toasted him in return, clinking glasses. "To the game," she replied and sipped at her wine, amazed with its smooth, melting flavour as it rolled across her tongue and down her throat. There was no bite, denoting the wine was of a good reserve and age. "You seem coached in the etiquette of fine dining, Malfoy," she wryly noted. "But then, I suppose with your family's wealth, this sort of meal would be a regular staple at the Manor House."

He watched her carefully over the lip of his glass, drinking half in one tilt of his head, and putting it back down on the table.

Rather than reply, as she'd expected, he reached out and removed the lid on one of the dishes. "Black mission figs with Serrano ham," he explained, using the small fork that rested on the plate to serve her a few pieces of each. "While you were sunbathing like some sort of sea goddess on a Greek beach the summer before third year, we were having dinner with the family of one of my father's
friends in Barcelona. The wizard had a daughter named Alara. She was a year older than me...and she played a wicked game of footsy under the table when the adults weren't paying attention." He smirked and shook his head with the memory, putting the appetizer plate back down and reaching for his own napkin, laying it across his lap. "She gave me my first kiss. Snogged me senseless for over an hour under one of her father's fig trees in the far back end of the orchard on the estate. After, we ate the figs right off the branch and returned to the house holding hands." Picking up his appetizer fork, he poked at one of the sliced fruit portions, spearing it, and bringing it to his lips. "I asked her to be my first girlfriend."

Hermione nearly dropped her fork into the sand at that last bit.

Up until that point, she'd been half-listening, trying to decide on a course of action to take now that she knew he intended on using this game as a weapon. However, at the mention of Malfoy falling hard for a girl, a child's fancy much as she'd felt for Viktor not a year later, she completely tuned-in to his story, curious at the very idea that he actually had a heart and had put it on the line for a girl. "What happened?" she asked, conjecturing that they weren't together anymore by the fact that he'd dated Pansy a few years back...and a whole peck of girls since.

As soon as the words left her mouth, she wanted to bite off her tongue and swallow it, realizing that she shouldn't care a fig for Malfoy's personal life. Instead, she shoved a piece of the dark-purplish fruit in her mouth, tasting the fresh, sweet ripeness of it from the first chomp, chasing it down with a small slice of ham. The bit of wine she'd sipped earlier didn't detract at all from the flavour, thankfully, allowing her the full experience of the combination.

"The other visiting family at the time had a son the same age. Turns out he liked figs, too."

Hermione's gut instinct was to instantly sympathize; she felt a small, sharp pain for the cynicism reflected in his wintry grey eyes. A first heartbreak was never something you forgot, and it was never easy to swallow. "That's...awful," she mumbled, because it was the only thing to say. "Sorry."

He shrugged, as if it was a non-issue. "It was five years ago. It's behind me."

Clearly, it wasn't, as he'd picked his first revelation to discuss it.

Or was that the ploy: to begin by eliciting sympathy with a sad tale of young love rejected in the worst sort of way?

She chewed and carefully considered that as he asked, "What do you think of the meal?"

"It was wonderful, actually," she told him as she daintily wiped her lips with her napkin after swallowing down the last bit. Goodness, she'd eaten the whole thing! "The fig was sweet and nutty, but not too juicy. That particular style of ham was just the perfect complement too, a tad smoky to balance out the sweet. Had it been thin-sliced prosciutto instead, I don't believe it would have been as enjoyable. Much too chewy, and the additional curation it undergoes would have created too pungent an odor, unbalancing the presentation. These two in combination was just right."

Malfoy was clearly intrigued by her assessment.

"And what did you think of the wine?"

Lifting her glass again to her nose, she closed her eyes and inhaled, letting the aroma fill her up. "Notes of Anjou pear, fresh vanilla bean, and a hint of roasted almonds." She took a sip, letting it rest upon the back of her pallet before swallowing. "Very nicely aged, smooth. Barrel-fermented in French oak?"
Her partner's mouth literally dropped open. "Colour me surprised, Granger: who'd have guessed you're secretly a food connoisseur?"

She felt her whole body flush with embarrassment and quickly put the wine glass back down. "My mother's family is Greek. Food and wine is a big part of their culture."

"Well, that explains the wild Amazon hair," he said, smirking again. "So you were visiting them on that Greek island where you were sunbathing in the nude?"

"It wasn't in the nude," she growled at him. "And yes, Mykonos was where we all holiday'd together. My grandmother lives there with two of my aunts and their families. And there's nothing wrong with my hair!"

"Topless then, and yes there is. Your hair is feral, Granger."

She smoothed a hand down her carefully arranged curls. Lavender had spent hours helping her get it ready for tonight's game. "A bikini halter is not topless. And I prefer to think of it as...untamed, like it's owner."

His smile bloomed until it was a full-blown grin, and it was only then that she realised she'd actually revealed to him the very information he'd wanted last round—information she'd haughtily pronounced he'd never pull out of her.

That slimy, slippery snake! He'd tricked her!

"Careful, beautiful. Some men might find that last statement to be an irresistible challenge," he warned her.

Feeling sulky because she'd been outwitted, Hermione sniffed and turned her nose up at him, refusing to say anything else that might incriminate her or otherwise be used as fodder later by the man sitting across from her.

They sat that like, in silence, as the clock ticked down. Sheer stubbornness was all that held her tongue in check.

When the stalemate stretched into its fifth minute, though, Hermione thought that maybe she was behaving a bit childish, and decided to let go of the fact that he'd fooled her again. Really, it wasn't anything she should be surprised by when dealing with Malfoy, anyway. He was Slytherin, after all.

Besides, continuing to delay this round could come back to bite her, as the game might count her out for not having performed her card in the allotted time. Best get back to it if she didn't want to be disqualified.

A quick glance over the white hydrangea and orchids adorning the centre of the table found her the target of Draco's intense focus, however. "What?" she demanded, not liking the fact that he'd already unnerved her somewhat, and they'd only been in the room for about fifteen minutes.

"The way you dissected that meal... Is that why you're a snap at Potions?" he finally asked. "Can you smell the ingredients well enough to know what goes into each concoction?"

Hermione considered it. "I suppose. I've never compared the making of a draught to the process of making a meal, but I can separate out the tastes when I ingest an elixir."

Malfoy seemed to mull over her answer for another few moments, before turning to the next menu item without a reply. Lifting the lid, he slid one of the two shelled lobster claws onto her plate, and
scooped on top some of the buttery sauce. He then added some side greens on top. "Christmas, sixth year, my parents took me to Boston. We dined at a fine establishment in the wizarding part of the city. I ordered this dish. My father abhors seafood, and made a comment to such an effect as the server brought our appetizers to the table. I spent the rest of the meal trying to convince him to try the dish. He eventually gave in, just to shut me up. He orders lobster now." He had been slicing his meat up as he spoke and now took a bit, chewing it and shutting his eyes in pleasure. When he finished, he took another sip of his wine. "It was the first time I'd actually been able to sway my father on any issue."

Hermione listened, finding her curiosity piqued again, as she tried the appetizer. The moment the lobster crossed her tongue, she was unable to prevent the moan of pleasure from passing her lips. "It's delicious! Buttery soft meat, with a hint of garlic and parsley that explodes the flavour in your mouth!"

"Both are finely chopped to ensure that," her partner admitted. "Try the greens with it."

The combination of crisp butter lettuce with the meat was succulent. She smiled and nodded in approval.

"So, do you have a 'lobster story' to share, Granger?"

She swallowed and dabbed her lips again with her napkin. "Or a 'fig' one?"

He nodded. "Either."

Hermione pondered for a moment how much to share as she reached for the next dish: some sort of dark, roasted meat covered with cooked, sliced cherries. It smelled of cinnamon and sweet wine; she inhaled as he ladled out a heaping spoonful onto her plate.

What would it hurt to tell him of things that had no consequence in her life really, she wondered. It wasn't as if he'd ever meet most of the people she spoke of, and nothing she'd share would be any life-altering secrets—like the bikini thing; in retrospect, who really cared if he knew that, as it had no real bearing on her life. And maybe in telling him meaningless trivia now he wouldn't attempt to pry from her the deeply personal things later, if the game required it.

Trading a Knut for a Sickle, and hoping he wouldn't notice, was a gamble, but...

"I shared a plum pudding with my nine-year-old neighbor named Adam," she admitted with a fond smile at the silly memory. "He and I were the best of friends growing up. I'd fancied him from practically the start of our relationship, but he'd never seemed to notice. I thought that if we shared the dessert, he might decide to like me back." She chuffed at the reminder of how things had worked out. "He'd stuffed his face on most of it himself, and then ran off to play in the snow, leaving me to clean up the mess. I was so angry with him that I walked outside with the pudding plate and dumped the last of it on his head. I refused to talk to him again until he apologised. He came groveling back a week later, with the recipe for making a plum pudding folded up in his pocket. He handed it to me with an apology and we were best friends again after that." She laughed and shook her head. "I live a very exciting life."

Malfoy's eyes narrowed the moment she'd mentioned Adam, she noticed.

"Whatever happened to him?" he asked. "Your Muggle neighbour."

"We still see each other on occasion," she told him, swirling the last of her wine around, preparing it for the final swig. "On breaks when I go home. He only lives a few doors down from my parents,
and its tradition to have a dinner with them around the winter holidays. He doesn't know a thing about me being a witch, though. Professor McGonagall made it clear when she delivered my Hogwarts letter that being a practitioner of magic was a secret we couldn't share with anyone outside of our immediate family, unless they already knew. Now that I understand the history around the Statute of Secrecy and why it must remain in place, especially after reading about the lunatic, Gellert Grindewald, I know I can never tell Adam about this." She indicated the room all around them, implying the magic that made it all possible.

As casually as possible, her companion reached for a bottle from a non-chilled bucket to the side. This one contained a red wine. He uncorked it and sniffed, then poured half a glass into her empty goblet. "Unless you marry him, of course," he pointed out the obvious.

Hermione sipped at her wine and laughed at the idea.

"Not going to happen."

"Why not? You fancied him once," Malfoy pointed out. "What, did he grow up to be as ugly as a Skrewt?"

She stared into the heart of the red wine, swirling it to aerate.

"Let's just say that I'm not his type and leave it at that."

That damnable smirk was back again, pointed right at her like a dart aiming for the board. "Ah, a man who fears challenges, then," he teased. "Face it, Granger, you're too much woman for him."

He didn't know the half of it!

Shrugging the matter off, she took another healthy swig of her wine. The stuff was starting to go to her head, but both the last vintage and this one tasted too fine to waste. They were a well-paired extension of the food thus far.

"I like that you dumped the pudding on the tosser," Malfoy continued. "He deserved it."

Hermione's heart sped up as he took her side. In all the years since that incident and in all its various telling to others, he was the only one who had ever agreed with her sense of justice. Most people censured her for behaving so 'overly-dramatic'.

"You've deserved a plate of gooey cake over your head more than once, too, you know," she pointed out.

"I'm sure I have," he conceded, giving her a smoldering grin that had her heart palpitating for an entirely different reason now. "For the record, does your food fetish continue in the bedroom, perchance?"

"Certainly not!"

"Ever try it?"

No, she hadn't. She certainly wasn't going to admit that much to him, though, knowing he'd probably use it to build a case against her 'vanilla' tendencies during sex...as if that was a bad thing.

With cheeks as hot as a stove top at winter, Hermione attempted a quick deflection. "What about this dish?" she asked, pointing to the dark meat with the cherries on her plate. "What's this one?"
Malfoy chuckled at her obvious ploy. Of course he'd know what she was doing; deflection was a Slytherin's favourite tactic, after all. "This is the dish I was enjoying during the Easter break this year, when I had my revelation about my future. My parents and I had traveled to Argentina with the Parkinsons. Yes, Pansy was included. They were trying to establish an open dialogue about marriage entanglements between our families, as we were close to finishing up at Hogwarts." As he talked, he filled his own goblet with the red wine and swirled it around, before diving in for a taste. "I'd just taken a bite of my dinner when I realized that if I didn't speak up in defense of my own wants, tell them I was against the prearranged marriage the adults in the room were determining for me and Pansy, I was going to end up just like the rabbit we were eating: a tasty morsel for others to enjoy. My life would be over." He shrugged. "So, I spoke up, made it clear I wanted a future of my own making, not one designed for me. Just like that, I was free...like a rabbit is supposed to be."

A cold horror raced up Hermione's spine. "Prearranged marriage? You're joking!"

"Not at all," he assured her, taking a bite out of the meal before him. "Its the custom for pure-blood families to have their marriages decided by their parents, and to consider marriage at such a young age."

"Why?"

"Are you asking why do the parents decide, or why do they insist we get married at seventeen and eighteen?"

"Both."

He brought his fork up to his face, but didn't eat the cherry that was currently stuck to the tines. Instead, he stared at it, as if that small image represented the whole of his life. "Political alliances and purity of stock, to answer your first question. To ensure there are enough years to beget an heir and one to spare, to answer the second. I already said, it's an old tradition."

"It's outlandish! This isn't the Dark Ages, Malfoy! You mean to tell me that you parents would really have foisted Parkinson off on you if hadn't said anything? Why would they think they could have that kind of power over you? You're an adult, legally-speaking."

Draco's expression twisted with bitterness. "I still rely upon the goodwill of my family's inheritance and the protections allotted the Malfoy name to establish myself in the world, though, don't I?" He took another sip of his dark, ruby-coloured wine. "Regardless of what you may believe, Granger, there is a wizarding elite and they move in circles that half-bloods and Muggle-borns don't have a clue exist. Those circles open doors that are normally closed to others, so it would be foolish to jeopardize those connections."

"But that's just what you did!" she pointed out. "You defied them!"

"It wasn't really all that dramatic. I was pretty confident that, as the only heir, my parents wouldn't go that far."

"But what if you'd gambled wrong and they'd disinherited you for what you did?" she asked, wide-eyed at the thought. Her parents would never consider interfering in her life in such a fashion, much less writing her off if she didn't follow their advice. She thought her relationship with them was such that even if they disagreed with her on major life choices, they would always have her back. Apparently, she was lucky in that regard, as not everyone had the same rapport with their parents. "You took a rather large risk, don't you think?"
Malfy shrugged, as if what he'd done was not one of the most audacious things she'd ever heard...and completely unexpected coming from him.

"Better to be eaten by the sharks then to sink with the ship," he replied.

Hermione was simply floored.

Her impression of Draco was heaving and listing under the weight of this new revelation into his personality.

"That took serious courage, Malfoy. I admit that I'm decidedly impressed that you could do such a thing, knowing that you could have lost everything you hold dear. It was a very…Gryffindor-ish… thing you did, standing up for your dreams like that."

His smirk was positively wolfish as he chuckled again and shook his head.

"Don't paint me so daring, Granger. My mother has a way of making my father agree with her, and I'm her baby boy. I banked on her sympathy and support to sway his opinion, honestly. It took five days of her not speaking a peep to him afterwards to relent." He nudge his jaw towards her plate.

"Are you going to try it, or are rabbits like house elves: too innocent and cute for the roasting pan?"

Laughter bubbled up inside her.

"You are absolutely…incorrigible!"

He waggled his eyebrows at her in a most provocative manner.

"At least you're finally noticing."

With a shake of her head in exasperation, Hermione hooked a piece of the juicy-looking meat onto her fork and popped it into her mouth. The rabbit was definitely a more gamey taste than typical store-bought meats, but it was a delicate flavour, having been tenderly braised. The spices and garnishments were a perfect combination to bring out the meat's wilder essence. When she'd finished sampling the first bite, she took a sip of the red wine. It was the ideal counterpart to the meal.

"Delicious!" she concurred. "The cherries and cinnamon make the meat pop, and the wine adds the bite needed to wash it all down. This truly is a wonderful meal!"

To her astonishment, Malfy was smiling at her when she glanced over at him. Not smirking, but an actual, warm smile that curled his lips in a decidedly attractive manner.

"I'm glad you're enjoying it," he murmured, his voice low and husky.

As it had been when she'd been overwhelmingly attracted to his cologne last round, once more she felt that hot breath of desire racing through her. *It's just sexual attraction*, she reminded herself. She'd felt it before for others. It meant nothing. Still, her fast-beating heart was pounding loudly enough in her ears to tell her this was quite a bit stronger an interest than any she'd previously felt.

"There's still dessert," he offered, reaching for the final plate on the table that had remained untouched.

He lifted the lid to reveal a slice of a moist lemon-coloured cake, topped with what looked to be a fresh cream sauce. On the side was a scoop of what appeared to be vanilla bean ice cream, and beside that, a mini, round tower of solidified custard. Decorating the plate was some sort of caramel sauce, a vanilla stick, and some thinly-sliced fried fruit—an apple and a banana.
It was a pleasing presentation, certainly, and just enough for them to share.

With a thought, the other plates all disappeared from the table, both of them having finished eating the main meal. All that remained were the desserts, two forks, and their glasses of wine, his nearly a quarter full, hers less than half.

"Please," he offered, indicating she was to try a sample first.

The dessert was too tempting to pass up, so she picked up her fork and made ready. "Where do you recommend to start?" she asked, trying to keep things polite and cordial, backing off from the earlier familiarity to give her heart and mind some space.

Picking up on the changed vibe, Malfoy paused and threw her a concerned look. "The panna cotta cake," he recommended.

Hermione dove in to keep them from deviating away from completing his card...and answering any uncomfortable questions. As she took the first bite, allowing the texture and taste to roll across her tongue, he began explaining the history to the choice of this dessert.

"I was fourteen, it was two days before New Year's, and we were in Italy at the Zabini's manor house for Blaise's grandmother's seventieth birthday. This was the cake they served. One of the cousins in attendance, Leila, simply appeared at my side while I was enjoying it and took a bite off my plate without asking. She was seventeen, blonde, green eyes, and very pretty. We talked for a bit after that. I lost my virginity to her in an empty bedroom upstairs later that night while everyone else was downstairs at the party."

She nearly choked on the cake at that reveal.

Malfoy patiently waited out the coughing fit while she regained her composure.

"I apologize for the interruption," she finally said when her throat stopped convulsing. She wiped the tears from her eyes and waved him on. "Continue."

"Try the apple custard flan next," he nudged her while going in to finish off the panna cotta.

She scraped a bit of the custard onto her fork and asked, "Will you wait to spring the next story on me until after I've swallowed, at least?"

Draco barked a laugh, and it was such an infectious sound that Hermione couldn't help but snicker and smile in return.

"This story isn't quite so shocking or scandalous," he promised her. "The flan was one of my favorites from Kyoto, when we went there during Easter break in fifth year. We stopped in a small café in their wizarding alley and I ordered it. Out the window, across the street, there was one of the oddest apothecary ingredients I've ever seen: a talking purple flower. The thing sounded like it was bemoaning sitting in a pot outside the shop, because it kept calling and turning towards passersby, acting like it wanted to go home with one of them. I couldn't understand a word it said, but it was bloody hilarious to watch." He wiped a bit of powdered sugar off his top lip with his napkin, while she tried out the custard. "I'd never seen anything like it before, and realized that we were missing a lot of the Eastern cultural traditions here in Europe, because we didn't have access to their unique plants and herbs."

Hermione swallowed the mouthful of appetizing flan, loving the sweet-sour combination that reminded her of a Granny Smith apple, and hummed in pleasure. "Mmm, I suspect you saw a Singing Dog's Tooth Violet, as they're said to be melodramatic and temperamental." She scooped out
another dollop of the apple custard. "They're quite rare, you know. Endemic to Japan."

When Malfoy didn't reply immediately, she looked over at him.

He was watching her with that same inquisitive glint in his eye as before. It made her decidedly uncomfortable.

"What do you use them for?" he asked. "The Singing Dog's Tooth Violet."

She shrugged, recalling the information she'd read in *Kampo Medicines for the Treatment of Common Diseases* as part of her extra-credit work in Herbology during sixth year. "Their roots were once ground up and used as a binding and thickening agent in beauty-products," she explained, "but in the 19th century, potato starch became the predominant ingredient for such things because it was cheaper to reproduce and didn't talk your ear off when preparing it."

Gently placing his fork on the edge of the plate to indicate he was done eating, Malfoy wiped his mouth again and folded his napkin, putting it on the table next to the fork. He finished off his wine in one swallow.

"No wonder you're the top of the class," he said. "I formally concede; you utterly deserved the spot, Granger. You're twice the brain I am."

Hermione's jaw nearly fell open at the unexpected praise. "T-there's a book on it in the library-" she explained, feeling a bit self-conscious at having been complimented on her intellectual aptitude. It was one thing to have a professor or a friend or family member laud her, quite another to have the boy who had teased and tormented her for years over her 'swottiness', as he'd always deemed it, suddenly do an about-face on the matter. She wasn't quite sure what to make of it, honestly.

"Of course there is," he replied with a playful smile. "One you've read cover to cover, no doubt."

She looked down, feeling a familiar hot shame roll through her. "I hate it when you do that," she murmured, putting her fork down and sitting back in her chair. "You make fun of me because I enjoy learning new things. I like reading and I like sharing information with others. So, why is that so wrong? At least I can carry on a conversation that isn't exclusively centered on the week's 'Dear Tabitha' column in *Witch Weekly*.

Malfoy was quiet in the face of her censure, and the sound of the ocean waves returned to help balm her raw feelings.

"I didn't mean it as an insult, Hermione."

Shocked that he'd used her first name again, as if they were friends or something more intimate, she glanced up at him.

"You really are the brightest practitioner in our class. Most likely in the whole school, excluding a few of the professors," he continued. "I'm just still amazed every time I witness it, and...I admit, I'm a tad jealous."

"Only a tad?" she asked before she could stop herself.

His lips lifted and crooked at her in a way that had her breath catching and her toes curling.

"Perhaps a bit more than that," he confessed after a significant pause where there eyes met and there was no question that sparks flew.
She dropped her gaze to the last dessert.

Alright, fine, he might not have meant it in the way she'd assumed, and he certainly seemed genuine in attempting to explain and make up for her misunderstanding...

Reclaiming her fork, she poked at the melting ice cream scoop. "And this?" she asked, wanting this action round to end sooner, rather than later. There were too many conflicting things that had been said and done over the last twenty minutes that had her reconsidering her earlier resolution about Malfoy, and she needed time away to process.

"This one reminds me of Indonesia, a few days after my eleventh birthday, when I received my Hogwarts letter. My mother wanted to treat me to something exotic, so my father Apparated us all three together to a small café in Jakarta's small wizarding hub and we gorged on the local cuisine. This was my favorite part of the meal, though: the banana-vanilla bean ice cream. It was made fresh, and was already melting by the time the bowl arrived to the table. The fried banana slice on top was coated in caramelized sugar, just the same."

He smiled, reached for his fork and took a small dollop into the end of the tines, bringing it to his lips. As he chewed it down, he sighed in pleasure.

Hermione indulged as Draco continued talking, enjoying the rich flavor of banana combining with vanilla and cream across her tongue.

"My father had wanted me to go to Durmstrang, but my mother wouldn't have it," he explained. "Too far for her tastes. I was pleased, actually, because I'd wanted to go to Hogwarts since I found out my father had gone there. I wanted to get into Slytherin to please him, to follow in his footsteps so he'd be proud of me." His smile suddenly and unexpectedly dropped, and his gaze unfocused, turning inward. "It seems I've disappointed him once too often lately."

Hermione was almost afraid to ask, but for some reason, felt compelled to know more; to know what it was that had made Draco Malfoy frown with some measure of pain as he was just then.

"How could you possibly have disappointed him? You're perfect at everything you do, and every girl in school trips all over herself to get your attention!"

His attention returned to her. "Not every girl."

Finishing off the final bit of ice cream, scraping it through the caramel sauce, she put her fork down for the final time, wiped her mouth with her napkin, and folded it the same as Malfoy had earlier. She also finished off her glass of wine, feeling the alcohol shoot straight to her brain, emboldening her in a way she was sure she would regret later.

Picking her card up off the table, where she'd laid it when taking her seat, she read it aloud to him:

**FORFEIT:** **Tell your partner a frightening secret about yourself. Explain it in detail. Answer their questions about it.**

Staring into Malfoy's eyes, she knew exactly what secret she was being compelled to tell him, thanks to the card, and felt a micro-second's fear that once it was out, she'd be made a laughingstock.

Taking a deep breath, she confessed, "I've secretly fancied you all this year."

Malfoy's eyes widened and a tension built in his shoulders that had his arms flexing.

"It's just a small interest, so don't make it a bigger deal than that," she hastened to add, "but...there
you have it: every girl in school finds you attractive enough to snog."

"To snog? You want to snog me? Really?"

Here it came...the snickering and smirking, that shame-inducing look of triumph in his slate-grey eyes...

"Why?"

She threw him a mocking glance. "Why? Were you not listening last round? I've already told you that I find you handsome, and your intelligence and ambition are compelling traits. It's your mouth I don't care for. If you weren't such an unbelievable prat most of the time, I think I could actually like you more."

To her surprise, he didn't ridicule her at all. Instead, he gave her a look that conveyed his desire to tear her clothes off, to lay her out on the table and to make a banquet of her instead.

Hermione groaned.

Another secret would have been a better choice to share. Any other one, really. Now the power balance between them had shifted in his favour once more, putting her at a distinct disadvantage.

Bloody, randy alcohol!

Bloody, awful card!

Bloody, stupid game!

With a thought, the table and all its accessories before them was banished into the nether-sphere, as were the table-side wine buckets. Hermione tried to scramble to her feet to make a hasty get-away, just as Malfoy stood to his full six foot-one inch height and loomed over her. His hands shot out and gripped the back of her chair, effectively trapping her between as he leaned down, his face mere inches from her own.

Gads, she'd forgotten how fast he really was, thanks to his Quidditch training!

"Clarify something about your answer for me, Granger," he said, staring her down. "Before tonight, have you ever thought about me in a sexual manner? Does your secret fancy of me include sexual fantasizing of us together?"

Quelling the riotous pixies fluttering around in her stomach and threatening to turn her into a ninny-mouth, Hermione did her best to instead affect a bored look. "As I said, every girl wants to snog you," she replied with a casual shrug. "I'm sure I've done the same."

It wasn't a lie, and it did answer his question in a manner of speaking...

His smirk became positively wicked as he moved in, swooping towards her ear at the last moment. Hermione hadn't been worried he'd actually kiss her, because he'd have needed her permission to do so or he'd have violated the rules and would have had to forfeit the game...and she didn't think he was that careless, honestly. As a Slytherin, everything he did was well-calculated.

"You didn't answer that question completely, did you?" he asked her in a whisper that made her spine tingle. "Tell me the truth: in these...snogging...daydreams you have of me, have ever touched yourself and made yourself come?"
She clenched her jaw, tried not to answer, but the stupid spell on the cards was going to force her. She could feel its compulsion to give him what he wanted, and since she’d foolishly opened this can of worms in picking this specific secret to reveal, now she had no choice but to do as the card required and answer all of his inquiries about it as truthfully as possible.

"Yes. I've masturbated to thoughts of us together."

He hummed in approval. "How often?"

"Often enough," she said with a growl, as she was obliged to speak the truth. "At least once a week since October last year."

"Only since October? What changed your mind about me then?"

"I saw you in your Quidditch robes after a game, and you were sweaty and-" She closed her eyes and fought the card's enforcement of the truth, but it was like fighting off one of Umbridge's Veritaserum-laced teas. Thankfully, Hermione had only been under that sort of influence the one time, and then only at the very beginning of the woman's tenure at the school, so she hadn't given away anything really important that had come later that year. It was the same feeling of having her throat close and her brain ache. "-you were kissing some sixth year witch up against the wall, and it...just hit me, out of the blue."

"What did?"

"L-lust." Just saying the word aloud nearly had her tongue turning itself inside-out. It was a foreign word, really. She'd only felt it a few times in her life, and it felt too bold to admit such a thing to someone who wasn't a friend, especially someone she could admit she was attracted to in a dangerous way. "I...I'd never thought of you like that, until then."

"Ever think of anyone else like that?"

She turned her head and met his eye. "That's not part of this card's secret, so I don't need to tell you that."

"Tell me anyway," he practically begged her.

"You'll use it against me."

"I won't."

"You will."

"What can I say to convince you?"

"Nothing."

He stared at her through a narrowed gaze, and in its depths she could read him turning the problem over in his head, looking for a means to get what he wanted while there was still time on the clock. Really, his Slytherin sneakiness was exhausting!

She sighed, just wanting this round to be over already.

"Fine, I suppose it's not really all that shocking," she caved. "Viktor Krum, Theodore Nott, and my friend, Adam. There, now will you stop asking me questions already?"
Purposefully, she'd omitted one specific name from that list, but for good reason: Ron didn't know about it, and she really didn't want him ever finding out. It had only been the one time, anyway, and long after she and Ron had called it quits. Still, it wouldn't be a kindness to him to learn the truth.

Malfyoy looked like she'd just kicked him in the gut, hard. "Not the Weasel King, Ronald?" he asked. "I thought you were, at one time, love birds."

He was going to pursue this to the ends of the earth, wasn't he?

"We did date last year, but it was more a case of a friendship confused as a deeper emotion, but more comfortable, not...lust."

"Like me and Pans," he murmured, and it was clear he hadn't meant for her to hear that.

Hermione shrugged. "I suppose. I don't know the details there."

"But you lusted after Krum, his hero."

She kept her mouth closed on that one. This wasn't part of her secret, and so it was up to her how much she wanted to divulge, and any discussion of Viktor Krum was one of those things it was better off not talking about to other men, she knew from experience. Her Bulgarian friend's stardom had a way of intimidating other men.

"And Theo."

Stubbornly silent, she could be when she wanted, and this was another one of those times. What she and Teddy had done was really best left in the past, forgotten. It certainly hadn't been one of her finer decision-making moments. She blamed it on hormones.

"Fine, but I thought you said you weren't interested in your childhood boy toy," Draco pointed out, sounding a touch bitter.

"No, I said he wasn't interested in me," she corrected him. "You're more his type, actually."

Malfyoy slowly straightened, and she glimpsed a moment where his face contorted with... Yes, no doubt about it this time. That was jealousy.

A second later, the look was replaced with a bland politeness.

He stepped back and held a hand out to her, volunteering to help her stand. Almost against her better judgment, she reached out and accepted the proffered help. "Thank you," she said with a civil tongue, hoping that was the end of the questions.

At the door, she slipped her heels back onto her feet, adjusting the straps, and reached for the door handle just as the chimes rang out to announce their time was up.

Malfyoy's hand and the weight of his arm pushing on the door kept her from opening it, however. "You might want to reconsider, Theo," he advised her. "He's got a...darker side to him, Granger. There's a part of him that seeks out pain, both physical and emotional. He'll hurt you."

"And you wouldn't?" she shot back at him.

Very tentatively, he reached for her, but stopped just shy of touching her to prevent a rules violation. His eyes were molten silver, like starlight mirrored upon a tempestuous ocean as they stared straight into her soul, however, scorching her with the heat of his desire for her.
"No, beautiful, I'd much rather make you cry out in pleasure."

He eased off the door and she fled, from his provocative comment, from the heated look in his eyes, and from the fact that she was incredibly attracted to him and could no longer deny it.

As she took her seat back on the couch, Hermione did her best to ignore the way her body had answered unspoken call of Malfoy's need. How was it the sly, pratty Prince of Slytherin House could turn her around as no other man had ever managed to do? Why was she both frightened of and drawn to him?

What was it about him that called to the deepest, darkest parts of her and made her both wary and excited?
"Better to be eaten by the sharks then to sink with the ship" = Meaning, it is better for a person to fight with their last breath and let the sharks at the surface of the water line get at you (in the hopes that you'll be rescued before that point or at least have made every effort to survive for as long as you could), than to allow yourself to give up and simply let the water take you under when the ship sinks beneath your feet.

Dog's Tooth Violet – (a.k.a. Katakuri Lily; Erythronium japonicum) Not a violet at all, but a member of the lily family. Endemic to Japan's islands. Each plant of the Japanese species has a pair of leaves, and bears a single mauve flower, with backward-flaring petals. Although it hangs its head downward, insects are quickly attracted to the nectar by following the eye-catching marks on the petals. In this fic, I simply made the flower a singing variety for fun.

'Those cunning folk use any means to achieve their ends': The Sorting Hat's song about Slytherin's attributes.
By the time Ginny crossed to the room she and Blaise had taken for their own, she had regained her wits and felt emotionally refortified.

Yes, her courage had been severely tested during the first action round, but after long minutes of silent, serious contemplation during this last question phase, she’d had time and some breathing space to turn things over in her head, including her options for the rest of the game. The conclusion she’d reached had been a rather simple one, actually: nothing had really changed.

Zabini was playing her.

Oh, he obviously wanted to bed her with the kind of relentless lust that every eighteen-year-old man felt, but according to his reputation around school, that didn't make her unique. He'd fuck anything that moved. Everyone said so.

Alright, yeah, he clearly fancied her, too—something that couldn't be said about any of his other partners, as far as the rumours went about him. But still… No, that thought didn't seem to want to stop turning over in her head long enough for her to consider anything else, actually. Like a needle stuck in a record's groove, her brain seemed glued to the idea that Zabini actually liked her…and a bit obsessively so, it seemed.

*He wants you,* a little niggling voice in the back of her head reminded her.
The slick arousal currently riding her thighs made it clear the feeling was more than mutual.

And the strange, giddy feelings rousing to life under her ribs were, too, weren't they?

Sitting across from him on the couch this last question round, she'd been hyper-aware of Blaise's concentrated focus upon her...and the longer he'd looked, the more she'd felt something stirring to life deep within her for the wizard she'd always thought of as her greatest rival. It wasn't at all as she'd expected, either: not hate, not revulsion, and not even a simple lust she could just brush aside as irrelevant. No, it was a dangerous attraction to his darker nature, to the thing that seemed to prowl behind his eyes as he watched her carefully. Its focus lured her in, made her want to discover more of her own darker desires as well...

Had what that bastard shade of Tom Riddle done to her really fucked her up that badly all those years ago? She'd thought she'd gotten over that, put it behind her, but as she'd lain across Blaise's lap and he'd alternated between spanking and caressing her, offering to make pleasurable for her the one thing that had haunted her nightmares for months after the incident in the Chamber of Secrets, all of those old fears and pains had been dredged to the surface. She'd been shocked and disturbed to feel arousal from such things, but the truth was, she'd almost come as his tongue had lapped so sensually over her arse.

Was that wrong? Was it sick? Did it make her sick to want it?

Until she had her answers, Blaise Zabini had to be off-limits...because if she wasn't careful, he'd drown her with his intense, frightening desires.

The door shut behind her with a loud click in the silent room, and curiously, she could feel her partner's magical aura gathering behind her. Her heart started pounding a moment later as his body settled so close into the curves of her back that the hairs on the nape of her neck stood on end.

Without a word, his arm came around in front, holding up his card so she could read it.

**DEED:** You get to blindfold your partner and they must guess three things that you let them touch correctly before the blindfold comes off.

Oh, just fecking wonderful! Would he do something really nasty, like make her put her hands in a bowl of live flobberworms? Boys did stupid things sometimes, especially to the girls they claimed to like. Was Zabini like that, too? Her intuition said, 'no', but then again, he'd body-checked her enough times out on the Quidditch pitch to give her a smidge of doubt as to how far he'd go to get her attention.

Sticking to the silent treatment, she held her card up over her shoulder for his perusal.

**FORFEIT:** Submit to a snog session with your partner. You can't touch them back, except to kiss.

Giving him a full minute to digest the ramifications, she tossed her card down to the floor and sighed. "Get it over with, then," she growled. "What's on the menu first? Fresh garden gnome intestines or will it be cold, slimy squid parts? I have six older brothers and they've all played far worse pranks on me, I can assure you."

Without a word, Blaise dropped his card, and into the empty hand popped a black satin blindfold, which he brought up and tied around her eyes.

Against her will, instant fear took flight in her breast. Going from having sight to losing it in a blink
was one of the most frightening experiences a human being could endure, for you were never quite sure what was coming at you, or whether your next step was going to make you plummet to your death. To do so with a man who she didn't really know and who had made it clear he had every intention of seducing her until she lost her mind was truly terrifying.

Ginny swallowed her trepidation, reminding herself over and over that the cards were spelled to prevent him from doing anything that would cause her serious harm and that she held the secret of his TWN, should things get really uncomfortable.

To her surprise, a gentle hand guided her across the room, and within a dozen steps, she was being lowered onto a mattress, flat on her back. Her arms were lifted and splayed out to either side so she lay in a 'T' shape. What the hell? Wasn't she supposed to sit in a chair or something? Before she could question her partner, her jacket was unbuttoned and opened, the hem of her dress slipped up to her neck, revealing her barely-there lingerie.

"What the hell are you doing, Zabini?" she demanded, shoring up her walls once more and putting on a brave front, just to be on the safe side. "It better not be anything truly awful! Even you wouldn't be so low as to force yourself on a girl, I'd hope."

She heard a zipper being taken down and the ruffling of discarded clothing.

No fucking way! Was he going to rape her?

He couldn't! The cards, they would stop him, right?

His big body was suddenly there, looming right over her, his aura palpable in her mouth. His knees rested on either side of her legs, and the palms of his hands beside her head. "We're going to perform your card at the same time as mine, kitten," he informed her in a lulling, deep voice that caressed her face with hot breath in its passing.

_Courage_, she reminded herself. _He can't hurt you. He can't hurt…_

Butterfly soft, very tentative lips touched down on hers in a sweet pull that had come and gone before she'd even realized their first kiss had happened. The second touchdown of pillowed gentleness followed, this time lingering a bit. Then, a third and fourth and fifth landed, and each time he lingered a moment longer before pulling away. Every kiss was filled with apprehension, the emotion passing between them in equal parts.

If anyone had told her that she would be kissing Blaise Zabini last week, she'd have laughed in their face. If they'd told her Zabini would give her the most beautiful series of kisses she'd ever received, so filled with tentative need, she'd have scoffed and thought them mad. If they'd said she would feel those kisses all the way down to her toes, that they would make her doubt her own resolve, and worse, that they would cause an eruption of nervous desire to flare in her belly, she'd have probably had them committed for life. Yet, his kisses had surpassed every possible expectation. They made her melt, as she'd feared would happen.

It was almost a relief when he changed the intensity and let his tongue slip into her mouth, fully claiming her lips with heat instead. Lust was familiar, and she could easily embrace it…keep her heart away from it.

Except her partner wouldn't let this be simply about his taking what he wanted. Oh no, Blaise Zabini was all about breaking down her will, making her a ready participant in this game of seduction he played with her. The man was genius at it, too. "You taste like honey and sunshine. So addictive and sweet," he softly murmured, dipping back in for another taste. His expert tongue swept through her
mouth, running over every surface, learning the curves and angles and spaces. "Give it back to me, my lioness. Torture me with your kiss."

She should just lie there and not respond. It would discourage him and force him to quickly get his part over with.

That was what she should have done…but she didn't.

Doubting her own sanity, Ginny did the unthinkable and met his tongue and lips with her own.

Golden light flashed beneath her eyelids as she finally kissed him back, and her whole body quivered in response.

As if he'd sensed her growing arousal shooting through her veins, Blaise responded. The groan that was torn from him rumbled through his chest. His hands thrust into her hair, tangling up in the long strands, holding her captive for his plundering of her mouth.

The intensity of their kissing grew into something wild and hot, wicked. It infused her senses, destroyed her self-control. She was the one moaning now, loud and uninhibited, and her nails were digging into his shoulders…

Abruptly, Zabini pulled away first. He rested his forehead on hers, tried to catch his breath the same as she did. It seemed they'd undone each other.

"Guess now. What was that?" he asked her.

It took a few seconds for Ginny to clear a path through the fog of desire that had swamped her brain to figure out that her companion had just asked her for the first of the three things she had to guess.

"A…really fantastic snog?" she hesitantly answered.

He chuckled.

"Not the answer I was looking for, but nice. Try again, though."

With that, he dove back in and fiercely reclaimed her lips, stirring the flames higher this time. He was almost relentless now in his sparring with her tongue, roughly feasting at her mouth, expertly stroking her pleasure with his tongue and lips until she was whispering pleas for him to never stop.

When she was once again gasping for air and ready to throw caution to the wind, he pulled away.

"Tell me, what was that, Ginevra?"

Thank Godric for the blindfold, for it allowed her a few moments to get her thoughts back into some semblance of order and for reason to return. If she'd had her sight right then… Needless to say, she and Zabini probably wouldn't be emerging from this room until long after the game was over.

"What was it?" he whispered, ghosting her lips with his own again. "Tell me, what did that kiss best represent?"

The answer came to her as naturally as breathing, but its implication made her heart stammer in her chest. "Us. That kiss was…us."

"That's right," he purred into her mouth as he licked her again. "Mutual desire meeting, and now finally unleashed."
Ginny swallowed, shivering. "It's just lust."

She had to believe that, because if not… Founders, if not she was in serious jeopardy of losing herself to Blaise Zabini's unspoken offer!

Once upon a time—up until five minutes ago, actually—she'd definitely desired such a thing. Passion, excitement, with the promise of being burned to a crisp at the end of a hot, flaming love affair…count her in! Despite the fact she was inordinately proud of her parents for their sticktoitiveness, she'd never wanted a marriage like they had, one that was comfortable, but unimaginative. It's why her brief relationship with Harry hadn't worked out. She'd wanted 'bad boy' and he'd been too nice, playing things safe and slow. Then she'd thought Seamus might be more her cuppa, especially given his rep—until it turned out he was only good for a one-off and never again. 

"Tis me rule, pet," he'd explained after turning her down for a second go-around.

But now she was thinking of Zabini's reputation around school, specifically about the number of partners it was rumoured he'd had, and it occurred to her that for some people, using passion as a weapon was a sport.

And Blaise was a Slytherin. They weren't known for their sincerity, either.

So it was better if she just thought on anything they did tonight as merely a case of teenage lust and not become at all attached. Keep him at arm's length and don't get suckered, she told herself. The last thing she needed was a case of the regrets, right?

"Just hormones," she reiterated.

Zabini's mouth glided across her cheek towards her ear. "I told you once already: lies don't become you, kitten," he whispered against the sensitive lobe. Nuzzling it, he forced her to turn her head to the side, giving him full access to the hollow of her throat. "I know lust, and this…this is more than that. This is soul deep. It's fate. You simply refuse to acknowledge that truth."

She shook her head. "No, you've always hated me-"

He nipped the skin over her pulse, making her gasp, effectively stopping her tirade before it could begin. "I told you already: I don't hate you, I never have."

"Then you want to hurt me," she argued, clenching her fists. "You're doing this now to humiliate me. It's some slimy Slytherin trick!"

His hands cupped her cheeks to hold her still, to force her not to turn away from him. "It's not," he said with a touch of anger. "Where you're concerned, I'm all out of tricks. You did that to me, Red."

"How?"

"You know how. You even know why, if you think about it."

*Because he wants you, wants to possess you, to own you,* a hissing voice whispered in her ear. *All men do with the women they desire.*

"Why can't you just leave me alone?" she growled, refusing to be some man's fuck puppet. "Let me go."

"I can't. I tried," he insisted. "For two years, I've attempted to fuck you out of my system. It's still only you I see when I close my eyes." His forehead dropped to hers again, and his tone became softer, almost anguished. "Don't you see? You've consumed me, Ginevra. I can't think for want of
you most days. This…obsession…it has to end. It's going to finish me if it doesn't end!"

He kissed her again then, and it was wicked and hot, and so good Ginny's whole body reacted against her will. Her hands were suddenly pulling at him, her nails digging into his shoulders, her tongue thrusting upwards to meet his. He dragged those full lips of his over hers, sucking on her tongue, and everything inside her went tight and wet with instant need.

Hell, had she just told him to let her go and walk away? Why would she say something that idiotic when his kiss was this good?

When their tongues met again, electric shocks ran up the length of her, and something deep inside her came partially awake, lazily stretched, and instinctively responded. Once more golden light flashed behind her closed eyelids, and the pulsing light traveled the length of her body like a lightning strike, igniting her desire all over again.

Above her, Blaise jerked as if struck and groaned with pleasure. His answering rumble was deep and resonant in his chest, like a rolling thunder across a dark sky.

Her partner was right: she wanted him, and this was more than mere lust.

Whatever it was, it both terrified and exhilarated Ginny. It was like flying and falling off her broom, both at the same time.

Well, hell, she'd wanted passion…

Eventually, Blaise freed a hand from the messy tangle of her hair and reached up to take her hand in his. Slowly, he slid her fingers down the length of his well-muscled torso until she was grabbing what she knew to be his thick, long prick. She gasped, shocked that he'd be so bold, but found it nearly impossible to let him go. Just holding him in her palm felt so…right.

"What's this?" he asked her, and it was clear he was using this bizarre first encounter with his most sensitive anatomy as one of his three things to touch.

"Um, your cock?" she replied as evenly as possible around a mouth suddenly too dry.

Gods, he was fecking huge! He easily rivaled Seamus.

Stroking their hands together gently up and down over his taut length, Zabini corrected her. "Try again."

Ginny had to admit: it was seriously erotic to be touching this man whom she considered explosively unsafe, much less learning his shape without sight. She let her fingers have their freedom and explored every inch of his silken, velvet length and the heavy weighted balls beneath them, all the while cataloguing her discoveries, memorizing them. During her exploration, Zabini moaned a few times, and every time she swiped up his length, his cock twitched against her hand.

"So, what is it, Ginevra?" he asked once more pressing his lips to hers, as he began thrusting his hips in time to her rhythmic stroking. "Tell me what it represents."

"Proof," Ginny breathlessly answered, her mouth watering, her mind already wondering naughty things about his taste. What would it be like having this monster thrusting away between her lips, reaching into her throat, shooting hot come across her tongue? "It's proof of your desire for me."

"Very good, my lioness," he praised her with a sinful chuckle as he gently removed her hand from its surveying and she let out an unhappy sigh. "You're quickly catching onto this game."
from the vee of her breastbone up to the bottom of her chin. "Tell me you aren't the tiniest bit curious as to how my cock would feel inside you."

Merlin help her, she was curious! She wondered what it would be like to be taken slowly, stretched and filled by someone of his size.

"You've definitely got my attention," she admitted.

"Do I?" he asked, deceptively mild, although she could feel his hand tremble against hers. "Is it enough of an interest for you to consent to sex with me now?"

Ginny licked her lips at the visual, barely holding her ground against her more reckless nature. "If we do it, you'll only use this chance to take what you want from me and not care about my needs."

He lowered himself until his chest touched hers and his mouth hovered above her lips again. "And if I promised to make it so good for you that you came the hardest you ever have—and multiple times, too, would that change your mind?"

Godric save her from her own stupidity, but Ginny so wanted to fuck Blaise now that she'd tasted his kiss and held the weight of his dick in her hand… Yet the price he was asking her to pay was steep, possibly quite devastating, in fact. Besides, she'd been raised to be no man's fool. There was no way she was ending up as just some man's cum sponge, thanks.

"And after?" she dared to ask. "What, you give me the best night of my life and then dump me flat and laugh about it with your friends behind my back?"

"I would never do that to you."

She scoffed. "You do know people gossip about your exploits all the time around this place, right? Someone talked about those hook-ups."

"It wasn't me. I don't discuss my partners with others."

"Except in this game."

He sighed. "You know my True Wizarding Name, Ginevra. You can mistreat me at any time, in or out of this room, tomorrow or ten years from now. I trusted you with such power over me. Trust me now with this. I would make our time good for both of us."

But she didn't trust him, and that was the whole point. Knowing Zabini's TWN was irrelevant; she'd never use it unless he meant to cause her or someone else harm, and they both knew it.

"Forget it," she said and throttled back on her arousal, reminding herself again that messing around with a Slytherin—this one, in particular—was a bad idea. The grapevine wagged constantly about the sheer number of female partners attributed to him. In truth, it was enough to turn her stomach and make her see red. "You'd use sex against me somehow, and I won't be abused by another man, not ever again." She cringed at the memory of Tom Riddle touching her and pushed against Zabini's tight, washboard abs, trying to get him to move away so she could get up, get dressed, and get out before she made an epic mistake with him. "Now get off me. You've performed both cards and we're done here."

Zabini refused to budge, however. "Who hurt you?" he growled instead, the anger in his voice a whiplash of vehemence she'd never heard from him before. It startled her. "That's the second time you've hinted that someone did something awful to you. Who hurt you?"
"Nobody, I-"

"Don't you dare lie to me again, Weasley! When I touched your arse last round, you were positively terrified. I want to know who the bastard was who raped you there!"

Ginny's heart went cold and her body still as her world narrowed down to two words: "raped you." No, that didn't fully describe what had been done to her. Add the words 'and tortured you' after that, and Blaise would be in the right neighborhood then. She thanked the heavens for the blindfold at that moment, because hot tears suddenly burned the backs of her closed lids. "Let me go," she calmly—more calm than she'd thought herself capable of at that moment—requested of him.

Her only security from the harsh reality of the world was abruptly ripped from her head and tossed to the side a moment later. Without the darkness and cover the blindfold provided, her sight was returned and with it, Ginny's ability to perceive the truth and to feel the pain it inflicted. Looking up into the face of her tormentor, she saw something then that she'd never thought she'd ever witness: Blaise Zabini, nearly undone.

"You were raped, weren't you?" he asked in a voice as shattered as his expression.

Oh, gods, he knew!

Unfortunately, curling up into a ball and hiding wasn't an option just then. All she could do was stare at him and try not to cry.

"Who hurt you, love? Tell me. I'll make him pay. I swear it!"

Ginny laughed at that, the sound as ugly and bitter as the truth of the matter. "You can't. He's already dead."

Her partner blinked, narrowed his eyes. "You killed him?"

"No, but I wish with my whole soul that I had."

"Who?" he demanded the name again.

"Why do you care?" She pressed him back just as hard as he was squeezing her for information. "It's not as if you haven't hurt me, too!"

Far above, the ceiling changed, becoming a mass of churning, nebulous, wispy dark grey formations that swirled around and around in growing anger. They were storm clouds. Had she unconsciously summoned them, or was this Blaise's doing? She didn't know who deserved the blame this time. A warm spring rain gently began to fall. Its savagery grew, however, as the seconds ticked by, swelling in intensity to match the rioting battle of emotions between Ginny and her partner. The room, it seemed, could reflect the emotional turmoil of its current occupants. At the moment, it was a squall, complete with sheets of rain, rumbling thunder, and flashes of lightning.

Neither she nor Zabini seemed to care about the downpour that drenched them, though, too lost in their fierce staring contest to notice.

"Give me his name," he commanded, his tone brooking no argument.

Ginny was no pushover, though. "I have a better idea: go take a giant leap over a short cliff."

Blaise's nose touched hers, and his dark eyes were incensed by her defiance. "You will tell me, my lioness. I want the name of the man who hurt you. Dead or alive, I would know it."
Exasperated to the point of violence, Ginny actually snarled at him behind her clenched teeth. "It doesn't fecking matter! I told you, the bastard is dead, and his sodding book was destroyed with him!"

"Book? What the hell does a book have to do with any of this?"

Oh, bloody hell, she'd said too much!

She clamped her lips together, refusing to give away anything else. Blaise stared hard at her, trying to decipher the riddle, but she knew he had no knowledge of what had transpired in her first year, as the story had been neatly covered up by Dumbledore.

A strange glint entered his eye then. "We'll make a deal: I'll tell you another secret if you tell me this one," he offered. "I promise you mine is as equally…disturbing…as yours, Weasley."

"Not bloody likely," she scoffed.

Zabini tilted his head, stared her down and bared another piece of his soul to her. "My first time, it was the end of third year, and I was raped in the showers by two seventh-years."

Ginny pulled a sour face. "Oh, how terrible for you, getting jumped by a couple of older, more experienced girls-"

"Lucian Bole and Peregrine Derrick," he corrected her. "I was thirteen. Bole Imperio'd me and made me suck his cock on my hands and knees while Derrick fucked me hard up the arse. Then they switched. Derrick didn't even have the decency to wash himself off before shoving his dick in my mouth. Bole commanded me to like it all, though, so I moaned in pleasure the whole time and came right along with them. They raped me for over an hour in every position you can think of, casting charms on themselves and me to get us all hard again and again. When they finally tired of me, they left me bloody, lying in a puddle of my own come, and threatened to kill me if I ever told anyone. You and Draco are the only two people who know, and he knows only because he was the one who found me. I'd have never told him otherwise."

He wasn't lying. There wasn't a smidge of untruth in what he'd just said.

She knew because only another survivor of brutality could relate to the haunted expression that she currently saw on his face. The glint of shame in his eyes was the same as the one she often saw in the mirror at home. It was followed quickly by the inevitable fury and sense of helplessness she also knew all-too-well.

Blaise had been raped, too. His innocence stolen as hers had been.

He'd been humiliated by his attackers just as she'd been by hers…

"Tom Riddle," she blurted, moved by his confession enough to offer her own.

The name obviously didn't register with him. "Who?"

Ginny felt her throat threatening to close, to seal away the truth once more, as it had done for years every time the subject of the Chamber came up. "That was his real name before he changed it…to Voldemort."

Zabini pulled away, ran a hand over his eyes, wiping away the tears that gathered at his lashes. "As in the Voldemort, the Dark Lord who died before either of us was ever born?"
"Yes."

Her partner threw her a dark, disbelieving look. "What the fuck, Weasley? I just bared my soul to you!"

"I'm not lying! I swear to you on my witch's powers that it's the truth," she insisted, putting her freed hand over his lips to shut down whatever scathing rebuke he would give her. "Listen, please. My first year, Malfoy's father sneaked Riddle's school diary into my bag when we bumped into him at Flourish & Blotts while getting school supplies. I don't know how the man obtained such a dark artifact, and I didn't know that he'd intentionally slipped it into my possession at the time, but when I got to school, I found it. The diary was magical. It...talked back to me when I wrote in it. I didn't know who Tom Riddle was at the time. I thought he was just a nice ghost haunting the pages, offering up a sympathetic ear. I told him all of my feelings, and he was kind and understanding."

Here, her voice faltered, became embittered. "He was using me. He gained control of my mind through my vulnerability. Do you recall all of the messages painted around the castle in blood about the Chamber of Secrets that one year?"

Blaise's gaze turned inward as he thought back, and slowly, he nodded as the memories returned.

"That was me, under Tom's influence. I had no memory of doing it, though," she explained. "He also used me to open the Chamber of Secrets and to let loose the Basilisk that was under the castle. That's why there were students who were found petrified. Remember that?"

Again, Blaise nodded.

"It was all Tom's doing. He used me to open the Chamber," she continued. "He wanted the Basilisk to roam free and kill. I was helpless to stop him, too much under his power by then. But it was the last time I opened the Chamber that Tom...got to me."

Here she faltered, never having told anyone, not even Madam Pomfrey, what Tom had done to her that night. This ugly secret had lain across her heart for years, tormenting her to tell it, to free it and be free of it, and yet she'd always stumbled right here, never able to get past this part of the tale.

"Tell me," Zabini coaxed.

He'd done as much for her, relaying intimate and horrible details of his own rape, laying himself bare for her to judge. The least she could do was show him the same respect, the same courage.

Taking a deep breath, she let it all out. "Near the end of the year, I was lured down to the Chamber to summon the Basilisk again. Riddle had been slowly using my life energy all year, and as a result, was able to manifest a form for himself, a new body that looked just as he had at the age of sixteen when he'd created the diary. He wasn't completely solid, but it was enough, especially after he'd rifled through my mind using Legilimency and discovered my TWN. Using my magic against me, he'd forced me to my knees and made me suck him off. He slammed his...thing...into my mouth. I gagged so many times, and when he came-"

She shuddered, clenching her back teeth at the memory. She could still smell his awful scent and taste his salty, bitter seed he'd shot into her mouth. Just the memory made her want to vomit. It took her several deep gulps of breath to hold down the gorge that rose in her throat, to come back into her own control, and to finish the story.

"He forced me to swallow it all. But that wasn't all. Afterward, he made me take my knickers off and crawl around for a bit, kissing his feet and groveling. He made me...he made me beg for him to fuck me, and then he-" A sob escaped her throat, and her sight went hot and wavy. "He said he wasn't
into girls, but he liked a nice piece of arse, so he took me that way. And…it hurt. *Oh, Godric, it hurt so much!* I screamed inside, begging him to stop, but I couldn't move. He controlled me with my TWN. He made me say his name over and over as he...as he thrust into me, and it burned like fire when he finally came inside me. I was only eleven-years-old, and he raped me!"

She pressed her hands over her eyes, ashamed, wishing right then to hide away in darkness forever and ever.

"He threw me to the ground, told me I'd been a good whore, and it was too bad he still needed my energy to make him whole or else he'd have kept me around to fuck. Harry killed him though. He destroyed the diary, and it killed Tom forever. After it was all over, Dumbledore took the diary, looked at it. He said it was ruined, its magic shattered and that Tom couldn't hurt me ever again, but he was wrong. He still haunts me in my head, and I'll...I'll never stop being afraid of being touched...there."

Her sobs were unstoppable now, as waves of agony and humiliation flooded every inch of her soul.

Blaise's big hands cupped her cheeks again, and his thumbs gently wiped the tears from them. "Look at me, Ginevra. Please, look at me, love."

She did look at him then and finally saw through the arrogance and past his Slytherin sorting to the man underneath. And what she saw astounded her: he was a survivor, too. He'd known the same pain she had and now he'd shared it with another as well, someone who was a rival by accident of House affiliation.

They had more in common than she'd ever guessed.

Gently, he took her hand in his warm grasp and led it to his bared left pectoral. He placed the palm against his heart and she noted its strong beat, and how powerful his body was under her fingertips.

"Tell me, what's this?"

"Your heart?" she whispered the guess.

Blaise shook his head very slowly. "Try again."

They locked gazes and at that moment, Ginny's greatest fear was realized: she couldn't hide anymore. Zabini had seen her, heard her, smelled her, felt her, tasted her. He'd reached inside and touched her heart. Something had awoken in her, come free of its cage, and now there was no turning it aside.

But this two-edged sword cut both ways, didn't it? He couldn't hide from her, either. They were equally exposed, equally frightened of the ramifications of these last few minutes.

Equal.

"My heart," she whispered the correct answer, and her partner solemnly nodded.

The idea was beautiful. It broke through the last of her icy resolve, filling her up with a flood of warmth and joy. This was what she'd been searching for—the passion she'd hoped to someday find! Hell of a thing that it happened to come from her greatest school rival.

Well, if Zabini was the one to take her down, then Ginny was going to burn in his arms...and she was going to make sure he got nice and singed from the flames, too. Grabbing her partner by the shoulders, she pulled him down on top of her, pressing their naked, willing bodies together. Her
hungry mouth found his a beat later, and then she sunk her claws and her tongue deep into him.

Blaise answered her need with one as equally ferocious, plunging his hands back into her hair and falling upon her like a man starved for love.

"Touch me," she begged him between wet, heated kisses. "Fill me. Make me forget anyone else's touch, Blaise."

"Ginny, I—"

She stopped him from denying her with another lush kiss. "I want you to be my memory of this place, too," she told him, rubbing her pussy up and down his hard, taut length.

A surrendering groan left his throat, and then his hands were everywhere—in her hair, pulling her clothes off, cupping her naked breasts, gripping her nude hips. When Blaise further parted her thighs and thrust hard into her tight, slick passage, Ginny cried out from the feeling of his heavy, straining shaft stretching her open, delving into her silken depths.

God, he was so big!

She whimpered as her internal muscles gripped him, milked and massaged his cock with uncontrollable pulsing as her body adjusted to his size, surrounding him in her wet, welcoming heat.

"Move, please," she begged, rolling her hips in a plea for more, for everything.

Her new lover held absolutely still though, seemingly content to stay seated within her like this forever. "Just this much," he promised her, holding her clasped to him, his burly arms enclosing her in safety and warmth, sheltering her from the heavy rain that still poured down upon them from the magical ceiling far above. "I won't ask for more than this."

Ginny dug her fingernails into his arms in a silent demand that he give in and fuck her until she was screaming like a wildcat in heat, but Blaise was as stubborn as she, it seemed, and refused to finish inside her. Instead, he remained still below the waist and kissed her with sweet, adoring nips and licks, brushing the hair from her eyes and calming her until she could feel their heart beats slow and sync.

"Just knowing you want me, too," he whispered between soft kisses, "Just to feel you around me once. It's enough for me."

The chimes rang out, signaling the end of this action round and breaking the poignancy of the moment. The tinkling sound cut through the thunder and pelting water with the same abrupt notice as glass breaking in a noisy room.

Pulling back onto his elbows, Blaise again smoothed the drenched hair from Ginny's face with a gentle touch. "I forfeit, my lioness. You've conquered me."

Bereft of his warmth, afraid that if he walked away now, it would be over for them, Ginny shook her head, desperate to keep him in the game. "You can't! I want this now. You made me want this, Zabini!" She clamped her thighs around his hips, and wrapped her arms around his neck to hold him in place. "Give me a chance to know you, the real you."

To enslave him to the idea, she began rocking her hips up and down.

Blaise groaned and his eyes rolled back into his head. "Stop, you'll make me… I'm too close as it is."
She didn't heed him, guiding him in and out of her body with insistent, slow pumping.

"All right, I'll stay!" he conceded, and abruptly pulled out of her to avoid further temptation.

Getting her first full look at his cock made Ginny's body ache to have him back inside. He was magnificent, hung long and heavy and thick…and dripping with desire, shiny from her juices.

Her stomach and throat both tightened with renewed desire.

"Stop looking at me like that or we're not leaving this room until we're both satisfied," he warned her with a gentle slap to her foot. Hopping off the soaked bed, he climbed to his feet and held his hand out for her. "Come, my lioness. I'll play the game, just for you."

She sighed in concession, but promised her buzzing, painfully aroused libido that it was going to be well-sated coming morning, no matter what.

Taking his hand, she let Blaise pull her up and once more into his embrace. As they stood naked and pressed in close, she stared up at him with hunger and need, not just for physical fulfillment, but emotional as well. "Don't burn me, Blaise. If this is just a game to you… If you hurt me, I swear on the Founders that I'll never forgive you."

He cupped her cheek and with slow deliberation, swiped his thumb across her kiss-swollen lips. "I'll give you whatever you want, Ginny. I'm yours."

Shaken to her core by the naked vulnerability in his eyes, Ginny pressed her face to his broad, bare chest and hugged him. He really did want her. And all these years she'd thought he'd hated her, when the exact opposite seemed to be true.

Well, shit, hadn't she just been the fool? Just think, she could have been doing this with him all along and saved herself the headache and heartache from Harry!

With a reluctant sigh, Zabini kissed her cheek. "We should go or we'll be late, and be counted out."

They broke apart at the same time, and she bent and retrieved her clothes from where her lover had discarded them. They both redressed with haste to beat the second chime. "We'll need a drying charm when we get back out to the couches," she stated the obvious as she wrinkled her nose while tugging the heavy weight of her wet velvet dress over her shoulders.

Blaise was already at the door, his outfit requiring little work to set to rights and looking positively too enticing in his purple shirt and form-fitting, black slacks for her sanity. Unwittingly, her eyes dropped to his crotch.

Merlin, he really was hung!

Her partner gave a sinful chuckle, reading her thoughts in her gaze, no doubt. He held his hand out to her. "Come, kitten, before we're both much too tempted to want to leave."

Blushing to the roots of her hair and the tips of her toes, Ginny coughed with embarrassment, and crossed the room to him. She slid her fingers through his as he opened the door for them and followed his lead as he led them back to the couches. Unrepentant about it, she openly watched his arse as they walked and was entranced by its strong curve.

Hell, Blaise Zabini was entirely too clever and too sexy for any witch to properly maintain her composure, she thought. He ought to come with a disclaimer around his neck, "WARNING: this wizard will make you forget the word 'no'."
This time, this fall…it was really going to hurt, wasn't it?

All she could do was pray that wouldn't be the case and put her faith in the game to start them off in the right direction.
Tracey looked about her as she stepped back into the room that she and Harry had previously occupied. Last round, he'd kindly changed the colours to a matching theme, hoping to put her at ease. It had been a sweet effort, but Slytherin green, silver, and black had never actually soothed her spirit. She hadn't wanted to ruin his gift, however.

Now she wanted to give back.

With a thought, the colour scheme changed to Gryffindor reds and oranges.

Closing the door behind her, Harry took one look around and laughed. "Nice, but a gold leather couch? I feel like I'm in a disco lounge."

"Dis-co?" Tracey asked, shaking her head, not recognizing the word. It must be a Muggle term. "What's that?"

Harry seemed to consider her for a moment, and then looked to the ceiling. Suddenly, the lights went down, and a strange, rotating ball of silvery mirrors appeared in the middle. It reflected bright shards of light as it moved, discombobulating her for a moment. The sound of strange music filled the air around them – music with a catchy beat that encouraged the body's natural inclination towards gyration.

Tracey felt a smile overtake her cheeks.

"Intriguing. I assume you're meant to dance to that… noise?"

Her partner chuckled and gave her a sheepish grin. "I'm afraid it was considered the perfect hook-up music at one time by Muggles. I think I prefer something quieter, myself."

She nodded. "Indeed." With a thought, the weird crystal ball and music were gone, and she replaced
them with soft instrumental lounge-jazz.

Harry's eyebrows shot up in surprise and he grinned. "Nice." He held up his card then. "So, what did you get this time around?"

Tracey sighed and read her card:

**FORFEIT: Stand up now and tell the whole group something true about you that is a secret – one no one else knows.**

"Everyone ran out before I could think up something good," she shrugged. "I'll have to try after, I suppose."

Harry gave her a rather serious assessment, then. He lifted a hand as if to adjust his non-existent glasses, stopped at the last second as he remembered he wasn't wearing his spectacles, and switched his intended action, rubbing the back of his neck instead. "Well, I suppose you could tell me here for practice, if you wanted. I don't mind if you don't."

Tracey blushed and looked down at her feet. There was only a small handful of secrets that she kept close to her heart, and of them all, there was only one that she felt she could confess right here and now in front of this man without having him think too badly of her. But would he think it too… queer? Maybe a tad stalker-ish, even?

Now that the idea had taken root in her brain, the compulsion to tell him the secret became overwhelming. She assumed it to be the spell upon the cards, as she'd been warned by Malfoy earlier that they could compel you to be truthful.

Struggling for a moment to come up with the right way to say it, so it didn't sound too odd, she pursed her lips and practiced the declaration in her head first.

"Or not," Harry generously offered when it was clear she wasn't quite ready to fess up yet. "You don't have to. I don't want to push you."

Oh, dear. He'd misunderstood her silence. One of Tracey's biggest perceived flaws was her inadequacy in conveying her thoughts in a timely and proper fashion. It seemed she'd have to correct that misconception.

"No, no, I don't mind telling you my secret. I was just thinking of a good way to say it so you wouldn't think me… well… strange."

"Want to sit? Might make it easier," he suggested, indicating the couch with a sweep of his hand.

Tracey nodded and headed for the sofa, resuming her previous seat. Harry took the cushion next to her. With a silent command, the hearth lit up once more, casting magical shadows across both of them.

She took a moment more to gather her thoughts. Could she really do this? She swallowed down her trepidation. "All right, but you have to promise not to think me… mad."

Harry put his right hand over his heart, and held the other up at his side, palm towards her. "I swear I will not think you a candidate for the nuthouse."
A giggle bubbled up and burst from between her lips before she could stop it.

How was it that this wizard could always make her smile, even when she was under pressure?

"Okay, well… you see… that is to say…" she stammered, "I wasn't supposed to be sorted into Slytherin House."

The shocked silence that greeted that pronouncement lasted all of two seconds.

"Why not?" her partner asked.

Oh, Merlin, here it came.

"Well, um… I asked the Sorting Hat to…" She stalled, putting a hand over her eyes in mortification. "Oh, I can't say it! You're going to think me totally weird! Oooh, why did I pick this secret?"

"You want one of mine instead? I've got a pocketful of them," Harry teased, and this caused her to peek through her fingers at him. At the goofy look on his face, she burst into nervous giggles again.

He reached into his trouser pocket and pretended to extract something, holding it out to her. "This one here, it's going to tell you that I've always hated the whole 'Boy Who Lived' reputation, that I never felt I'd measure up to it, and that all I ever wanted was to be normal."

He feigned depositing the secret into her lap, then reached into the opposite pocket and pulling out another. "This one will tell you that I don't really want to go to the dance next Friday night with my ex-girlfriend, Ginny. Don't get me wrong – she's a fantastic girl, but… I only asked her because she was 'safe' and familiar, and I'm sure she knows that, too. It makes me feel like I'm using her, but I don't want to go alone, either. I don't like myself for being so cowardly like that."

Again, he turned over into her care this private information, and reached back into his left pocket for yet another confidential moment. "This one, it'll tell you that I hold back when I cast spells, because I'm afraid of hurting someone." He looked at her solemnly now, all teasing aside. "I've got darkness in me, Tracey. Every time I lift my wand to cast an offensive spell in D.A.D.A., I feel it fighting to get out. It takes willpower not to give in." This time, he closed his hand around the "secret," not releasing it to her, as if symbolically afraid of it tainting her somehow with just its revelation.

With more courage than she'd thought possible, Tracey reached out and gently grabbed his wrist in both hands, prying open his fingers. "I'm not afraid of that secret, Harry. You can share it with me. I promise to treat it with respect, and not to judge you for it."

Grass-green eyes measured her sincerity. To her surprise, they contained a vulnerability she hadn't expected, and a wariness that went soul deep. Her heart thumped hard in her chest in response to seeing such guardedness.

Swallowing her pride, Tracey decided then and there that she would not let him be the only one emotionally exposed tonight. He'd given up something painful, so it was her turn to reciprocate. She could do this!

"My secret is that I asked the Sorting Hat to put me in whatever House you were going to be assigned."

His lids flared, and his mouth dropped open in astonishment. "Me? Why?"

Feeling the heat crawl up her face, she looked down at their still-connected hands. "It has to do with how we met. See, before school began in first year, we bumped into each other in Diagon Alley. I
don't know if you remember that?"

He shook his head.

"That's okay. I remember enough for the both of us."

She smiled at the recollection as she called up the memory, letting her fingernail trace over the palm of his hand in nonsensical patterns in an effort to soothe him. "You were coming out of Ollivander's, your new wand in hand, and you were focused on it with so much happiness. I was just getting ready to go in, but had paused at the bottom step. I was afraid to go in, because, well... I was worried that no wand would want me." She tsk'd. "Oh, I know it's silly to think that now, in retrospect, but at the time, my magical ability wasn't all that great, honestly, and I thought that no wand would possibly want to be owned by such a pathetic witch." She glanced up at him through her lashes. "But the look on your face... you were so enraptured with your gift, Harry, like it was the most amazing thing ever. I suddenly wanted to know that feeling, too. I wondered if being the owner of a wand would, somehow, make me a better magic user." She patted his hand. "Without meaning to, it was you who encouraged me to take that first step into the shop, Harry."

"Really?" He seemed amazed at the revelation.

She chuckled softly in amusement, her smile widening as she saw he was intrigued by her story. "Yes, really. You didn't even see me standing in your path when you walked right into me, you know. It was one of those moments easily forgiven and forgotten as two people pass each other. Only... I didn't forget. It was an important moment in my life, because that was when I first finally accepted that I could be a witch, if I wanted it enough."

"You asked the Sorting Hat to put you in my House because of that?" he asked, somewhat awed.

Trailing her gaze up his arm to his shoulder to his throat, following the curve of his neck to his jaw and then to his eyes – those eyes she'd fallen into time and again without his knowledge – she felt her bravado bolstered. "No, not just for that. I saw you again on the platform for the train later, and watched you run through the wall to get to the right place. Again, I was afraid to do it, it being my first time, but when I saw you try it despite your obvious trepidation, it was like the wand shop all over again. I thought to myself, 'I can do that, too!' So, I ran at the wall the same as you, and when I came out the other side, there was the Hogwarts Express waiting for me!"

She shook her head in wonder. "That was twice you'd leant me your courage, Harry, and we hadn't even been properly introduced."

With a teasing grin, Tracey let him go, sitting back into the couch, leaning her cheek against the cushion. "I didn't know who you were until I heard Malfoy announce your name once we got to the school, though. I admit I was a bit starstruck. You were cute, had been something of an inspiration to me, and you seemed so nice and courageous, sticking up for Ronald Weasley like you did, and in the face of someone like Draco Malfoy, who had already established himself the alpha of our year on-board the train. I realized then that I wanted to be your friend. I thought that maybe you could teach me how to be braver, like you."

She sighed somewhat sadly, as she comprehended that she'd never actually learned that lesson throughout all their formative years. Being as daring and fearless as a Gryffindor seemed a bit out of reach for her in general, even though she'd desperately wanted to be that way in her heart.

"That's why, when my name was called by Professor McGonagall, and I went up to the Hat before you, I was really nervous. I didn't know what House you'd be sorted into, so I asked it to put me wherever you were going to be sent. It wanted to send me to Hufflepuff based on my own merits,
but I insisted on being sent with you." She frowned. "I was confused and upset when it sent me to Slytherin, because I knew you'd most likely go to Gryffindor. You were brave, not sneaky. At the time, I thought the Hat sent me to the opposite House as a way of punishing me for being so insistent on getting my way."

To her surprise, Harry shook his head. "The Hat was trying to send me to Slytherin," he admitted. "And I would have gone there, except I did the same thing you did, and insisted that the Hat send me to any House other than Slytherin. I knew Voldemort" -Tracey cringed, hearing the cursed name- "had come from there, and didn't want to go to the same House. I wanted to go wherever my parents had been placed." He rubbed the back of his head and sighed disconsolately. "But I think the Hat was right. There's a part of me that belongs in Slytherin. If I'd kept my mouth shut, I know I would have been sent there."

He looked at her, an apology in his gaze. "I'm sorry you ended up in the wrong House."

Tracey considered his words and her past situation, coming to a startling revelation in that moment. "It wasn't your fault, Harry. I think, maybe, the Hat might have gotten it right. After all, if I hadn't been sent to Slytherin then, I wouldn't have been invited to play this game with you now, and we wouldn't have this opportunity to know each other better."

She smiled at him, as the truth finally hit her: yes, this was destiny.

His return smile was gentle. Slowly, he reached out for her hand, as it lay limply on the couch between them. Holding her hand firmly as he regained his feet, he pulled her up with him, stepping into her at the same time as he drew her forward. Tracey's heart slammed under her ribs as she found herself suddenly face-to-face with her wizard.

"Dance with me again," he bid, a teasing smile inching up his face. "Before you get to tie me up and feed me dessert."

Tracey nodded at the same time as another giggle burst from between her lips. "Is that what your card is this turn?"

He nodded, reciting his card for her verbatim from memory:

**FORFEIT: Let your partner feed you the dessert of your choice. You must be tied up during the feeding.**

They both laughed and Tracey inched her arms up and around Harry's neck. "Oh, my, I'm going to need to borrow that courage of yours again, I think."

Hesitantly, as if he were unsure of the action, Harry's fingers caressed her cheek. "Any time."

She considered that offer, grabbed a hold of it. "Okay, then… I'm going to choose the song this time," she decided with a measure of boldness.

Harry acquiesced easily with a slight nod.

With a single thought - she knew just the right song - a sultry beat and bass guitar, accompanied by a lyrical, crooning woman's voice, mimicking the early 60's R&B romantic classics, began as one of Tracey's favorite romantic songs, "The Nightingale," as sung by Julee Cruise, played from the ether.
Harry's hands smoothed up her arms, over her shoulders, and then followed the path back down, barely touching the curve of the outsides of her breasts as they glided to her waist.

"Hold me closer this time," she whispered to him, reaching for her 'inner lioness' - the one she had run from for far too many years.

Her partner didn't reply, but he did lick his lips, and the action drew her attention, made her aware of how close they stood as his fingers splayed around her back and pulled her into intimate contact with his rock-hard body. They fit perfectly, nearly nose-to-nose.

Tracey felt she could have died in that moment a very happy witch.

He said, "One day, I'll meet you. Our hearts will fly with the nightingale."

The nightingale, he told me one day you will be with me.

"How is it that we never met before?" he murmured the question against her cheek as he leaned forward and let his nose brush alongside hers.

"I was too shy," she replied in a hushed tone. "But I always knew you were there, Harry. From the very start, I saw you."

The nightingale said he knew that your love would find my love one day.

My heart flies with the nightingale, through the night, all across the world.

"You joined this game for me, didn't you?" he asked, pulling back a bit, his piercing emerald eyes staring into her very soul, tearing away all her defensive walls with ease.

Tracey's cheeks grew hot, and she looked down, unable to take the intensity of his knowing stare. "Yes." She swallowed in nervousness and closed her eyes. "I admit that I hoped so much… that
before we left here… that you would see me, too. Just once."

\[
I \text{ long to see you…}
\]
\[
to \text{ touch you…}
\]
\[
to \text{ love you…}
\]
\[
forever \text{ more.}
\]

A hand left her hip, and she despaired. He was going to step away from her now. She'd said too much. He thought her a weird stalker now, didn't he? Just as she'd always feared, she'd ruined this chance by not being more reserved like a Slytherin…

Two fingers lifted her chin, forcing her not to cower. Opening her eyes to face the music, she was shocked to see Harry's face hovering closer. "I see you now, Tracey," he whispered. His mouth buzzed just above hers, and their eyelashes both feathered down at the same time. "May I kiss you?"

"Yes," she sighed happily, her heart fluttering with joy.

His lips landed softly down upon hers, so chaste, gentle, and sweet. It was her very first kiss, and it was perfect.

When he pulled back almost immediately, she followed, unwilling to let this end, wanting more of him. "Don't stop," she pleaded on a whisper, unsure where she was getting the mettle, but grabbing on desperately to such reckless courage. "Kiss me again, Harry."

\[
The \text{ nightingale said he knew}
\]
\[
that your love would find my love one day.
\]
\[
My \text{ heart flies with the nightingale,}
\]
\[
through the night, all across the world.
\]

\[
I \text{ long to see you…}
\]
\[
to \text{ touch you…}
\]
\[
to \text{ love you…}
\]
\[
forever \text{ more.}
\]

His arms wrapped around her, pulled them together until there was no space for the light to pass, and his mouth bent to hers again. This time the kiss was open-mouthed and filled with enticing fire. Tracey lost herself to it and him, and they moved with a natural grace together, not awkward in the slightest, both giving and taking beautifully as if this were something they had practiced together a thousand times.

It felt so right.

Harry groaned, and the sound vibrated through his chest and passed into hers, bringing a shivering thrill that caused goosebumps to stand out on her arms and her belly to quiver with anticipation. She moaned in response, and this caused an instant reaction in him, making him go hard against her
abdomen through his trousers. It felt wickedly delicious to feel the weight of his... thing... rubbing the satin of her dress against the skin of her tummy.

When he French kissed her, she started, but then melted into this new sensation, too. Tentatively, she met his tongue with her own, caressing lightly, testing, and learning his flavour. As he swept into her mouth and sampled every corner, she moaned and pressed the entire length of her body against his. His tongue tangled up with hers, twining and pulling apart in an erotic dance that left her weak-kneed.

"Oh, Merlin," he mumbled against her lips. "You taste so sweet, like honeysuckle."

Tracey's head was whirling, swirling, dizzied as her world tipped end over end. She thrust her hands into Harry's hair and held tight, kissing him with every bit of feeling that she had for him in her heart, holding nothing of herself back.

His hands were suddenly on her hips, slowly dragging and bunching her dress up, as he pressed her core against his erection and rubbed them together.

Her startled gasp seemed to break through the haze of passion and return a bit of sanity to the moment.

"Merlin, Tracey, you're bringing me to my knees here," he told her, pulling back, breaking their kiss. Panting huffs of hot air blasted against her throat as he rubbed his forehead against her shoulder. "We need to stop. I'm losing control."

But Tracey didn't want to stop. She wanted it all. She wanted to give this man everything she had. But she understood, too, that they were moving incredibly fast. She wanted this thing between them to unfold slowly over the course of the coming hours, so they could cherish every revelation of each other before getting down to making love.

Clearly, they were as chemically compatible as she'd always hoped, though. That was a huge relief. She'd harbored a secret fear that he wouldn't want her with the same intensity as she felt for him, but apparently, that wouldn't be a problem. Thank Slytherin. Or Merlin. Or whoever was responsible.

Nuzzling her nose into his neck – his cologne smelled like dark spices and the woods, enchanting her – Tracey let out a small sigh of contentment.

Her wizard lifted his head and stared down at her, a lopsided, embarrassed grin touching his cheeks. "Sorry. I didn't mean to push but-" He shook his head in amazement. "Witch, you certainly know how to kiss a bloke so that he forgets his own name! Wow."

The hidden siren within Tracey stretched and sat up in satisfaction at the compliment to her new skill. He thought she kissed well!

Her shyness returned a moment later, though as humility took over. "Um… shall I tie you up now?"

Harry froze, clearly taken aback. "Wh-what?"

Tracey realized how her question sounded and felt a flush of embarrassment roll over her. Putting her hands on her cheeks, she closed her eyes. "Oh, I meant… I didn't mean… Your card!"

Gods, could she have made any bigger a mess of that one?

Stupid, stupid!, she silently berated herself.
Her partner's chuckle was dark and rather wicked as he caught onto her meaning in a quick minute. He closed the distance between them again and captured her hands, pulling them away. Bending to her lips again, he murmured, "You can certainly tie me up now. I wouldn't mind." He kissed her again, a quick, chaste peck. "I like treacle tarts best."

*I know,* she thought.

He relinquished his hold on her, giving her space to breathe, and with a mental thought, a small café table with two chairs appeared in front of the fire, replacing the sofa. On its top sat a small, covered plate containing a small pile of his favourite dessert pastry, a fork, a napkin… and what looked like white velvet rope. Harry practically glided into one of the chairs and held his wrists out to her, hands fisted together.

Tracey nearly had a heart attack at the visual of what she was about to do to him. Could she really tie him up? A nervous giggle overtook her, and slipped from her lips as she reached for the rope. "I can't believe I'm going to do this," she muttered, feeling her blood rush through every vein in her body with heat.

"You mean you've never tied a partner up before?" he asked, a little amazed.

Heat… rising…

Was it possible to faint from blushing too much?

"Um, no," she admitted quite honestly. "Is there some sort of special way to do this?"

Harry shook his head. "Just make a normal knot, but not too tight."

As Tracey began winding the rope about his wrists, once, twice, three times and then tied it off in a bow, he laughed.

"What? It's okay, isn't it?" she asked, self-conscious. It was, after all, her first time lashing a man down.

"It's fine. The bow's a cute touch, though."

Oh, well, it *was* a tad childish, wasn't it?

"Want me to do it over?" she offered. "Or I could tie you to the chair, instead, if you want."

Her partner's laugh came out as half choked. "Uh, no. This is fine." He looked up at her and shook his head, giving her a goofy grin. "I think I've created a monster."

Now he was making fun of her.

She huffed at that, looking at him through narrowed lids, and took her seat next to him, lifting the cover on the plate. "Keep laughing at me, and I might accidentally drop a tart into your lap, you know."

Harry busted out laughing, full and long, his face turning an interesting shade of red. "Yeah, definitely a monster," he gasped between breaths.

It took Tracey a second to catch the double *entendre* in her previous words. Tart… lap. Oh, Merlin, she really was green!

Lifting the fork, she realized that cutting the tarts would be difficult, because of the shortbread crust.
So, instead, she just lifted one with her fingers, hoping Harry wouldn't mind, and headed for his mouth. "Oh, do quit laughing at my naiveté and open up."

Her wizard gazed at her through mirthful, green eyes and smirked, "Yes, ma'am." He opened up and she gently fed him his favourite treat, catching the crumbs in his napkin, which she lifted under his chin. She watched with delight as his eyes lit up with pleasure and his smile shifted from playfully mocking to blissfully gratified. He let out a small moan in happiness. "Merlin, I love this stuff!"

Whichever player had invented this *Forfeits* card, Tracey was infinitely thankful to him or her in that moment.

She held out a second helping for him, and as he made quick work of it, he gave her a devilish waggle of his eyebrows. "Wanna try some, too?"

Tracey looked at the half-bitten tart in her hand. "I suppose so."

She started raising the dessert to her lips, but his bound hands stopped her. "That's not what I meant," he clarified, leaning forward and kissing her, slipping his tongue into her mouth again, sharing the residual sugary decadence of the delicacy with her. As he pulled back, he gave her a smoldering look. "That's more like it. Every time you feed me, I'd like you to kiss me, so I can share this with you."

Tracey's whole body was thrumming, her heart rabbiting behind her ribs. "Okay," she agree on a shaky breath.

They finished off the dessert just like that: her feeding him with her fingers, then leaning forward to swipe her tongue over his lips to taste the lingering buttery-ginger taste that was left behind. Twice he grabbed her fingers between his lips and held on, sucking with light pressure. At some point in the middle, he reached for her and coerced her onto his lap so that they could actually cuddle - after getting her permission, of course.

When the chimes rang out not too long after, signaling the end of their time together, they'd gotten though four tarts, a long series of sticky, delicious kisses, and he even ran his fingers over her knees. For Tracey, it had been an incredibly erotic and romantic experience overall.

As she got off his lap and untied him, Harry rose to his full height and moved in on her before she could react. He thrust his strong hands into her long hair, pulling her into his embrace once more. "Oh, man, I'm gonna fall for you, aren't I?" he asked just before his lips touched down on hers again. Although she knew it had been a rhetorical question, Tracey answered him anyway as soon as he pulled away. "Then we'd be even," she whispered, her voice trembling upon her admission.

"Oh, hell… I am so going to fall for you," he stated rather decisively and lunged back in for another spine-tingling, breath-stealing snog.

In between kisses, she reminded him of their time limit. Harry grunted in understanding, but couldn't be bothered to stop kissing her. Instead, he simply picked her up in those powerful arms of his and walked them to the door. Tracey held on for dear life. He set her back on her feet to reach for the door handle, but didn't stop kissing her even as he opened the portal out of their private chambers. He smooched her as she stepped back and out of the room, and immediately, he pushed her into the wall on the other side, never breaking physical contact.

It wasn't until they heard Ron and Pansy laughing as the two escaped their quarters down the way that her partner pulled his head up. Tracey's heart beat fiercely with joy and desire, threatening to
burst sunshine rays of happiness all over the place. What had she ever done that was so good in her life to deserve this chance? It was like a magical miracle - a fairytale come true.

"Snogging on a second date is okay, right?" he asked, breathless.

Tracey thought her face would crack from all the smiling she was doing. "Yes, definitely. Kissing me goodbye at the door was a nice touch. A perfect ending to this date."

Harry kissed her yet again, then pulled back and rested his forehead against hers. "Good. So… see you for our third date in a few minutes, then?"

She nodded eagerly and clasped his fingers in hers, giving them a light squeeze. "Absolutely."

Inside her chest, her heart twirled and danced.
Daphne exercises some of her new power over her obedient, sexy submissive, Theodore Nott...

CHAPTER REVISED: 1 March, 2017

CONTEST WINNER THIS CHAPTER: User CeriseAnouk recommended the song, "I Get Off" by Halestorm for Theodore & Daphne this go around. It perfectly reflects Daphne's thoughts here. So, this chapter is dedicated to CeriseAnouk - congratulations!

Daphne could feel Theo's angry stare burning into her as she headed for their private room. Her stomach twisted in response, making her feel positively ill.

The truth was she'd thrown this last round of questions because Theo had promised to give her his card this round. He did not understand that, however, and in the way of Slytherins, she was not about to volunteer such information in front of others. So, she had held her tongue on the matter, awaiting the opportunity for them to be alone before divulging all to her partner.

It was what happened between those two points that had her tied up in knots.

As she crossed over the threshold and into their room, Daphne turned and silently waited for Theo to catch up. In her mind, she repeated the lessons she had learned while in Italy the summer before, allowing the mantras to serve as a balm for her nerves:

*The outer is a reflection of the inner.*

*A firm command and a patient hand.*

*Mine is the will that moves his heart.*

Affecting an indifferent expression, she watched as Theo followed her into the room and shut the door behind him. Leaning his back against it, he turned a hardened gaze towards her.

Grabbing her courage, Daphne crossed to him and held out her hand for his card.

Would he really give it to her, or had those just been words said in the heat of the moment? Would he renege now that he was truly angry with her, or would he hold to his promise, despite his feelings?

She waited, anxious to see where he would go next.

Theo looked at her outstretched palm, seemed to consider the same questions she had, but then, to
her relief, he lifted his arm and dropped his card into her waiting hand.

Not bothering to look at the gift he had just presented her, she instead glanced up at him, concerned by his continued silence. Confusion, frustration, and ire reflected in equal parts in his expression, and there, in the depths of his baby blues, she read the hurt she had put there, too. Obviously, Theo had seen her unwillingness to answer the game's question as a rejection of him, and if there was one thing Daphne knew about Theo, it was that he did not take such a thing well.

And why should he, really? His whole life had been one big rejection: first, by his elderly father, who had not wanted children at all, and then by his mother, who had never thought she would get pregnant so late and life and had resented her son for it. Only Slytherin house had ever really given him a sense of acceptance and belonging…but even then, there had been years when he had been outside Draco and Blaise's circle, hovering on the edges. Alone.

She would correct his misunderstanding immediately, knowing that otherwise his volatile temper could exacerbate the issue and drive a wedge between them before they had even really gotten off the ground.

"Now that we are effectively dissociated from the others, my Theo, I will deign to answer the previous Interrogations question for you," she stated, going for poised and unruffled. Inside, her heart was pounding, however. A Dom never explained themselves to their sub. Obedience was all that was required in such a relationship, at least according to her tutors on the subject. In this case, however, they had not put enough history behind them for her to demand such trust from him, and he had not the experience to understand what a good submissive should accept. That could only come with time…something they would not have if she failed to earn his trust now. "You are my answer. I would desire to have you."

Theo seemed taken aback by her forthright statement. "But…the card said you had to name three to five people."

Shaking her head, she made her intentions as clear as possible. "No others, just you. You are all I desire tonight."

_For all nights._

"Y-you're serious," he said, as if he couldn't believe his fortune. "You'd want only me? W-why?"

Her heart broke a little at that.

It also made her angry at the people who should have loved him enough, for he should never have had to ask such a thing of another.

"It is not your place to question me, Theo," she replied, resuming the role of his Dominant. Knowing it would take more than a command to convince him, however, she wrapped herself in the act of the tigress on the prowl and stalked across the room towards him. With a swing in her hips, she sauntered up to him and built a cage around him of her arms. "I believe I have made my desires more than evident to you, however. I have decided I want you…every delicious inch of you. I want you in me, on me, and around me. I want to walk out of here tonight thoroughly satisfied by you, not just in the pleasure you bring me, but in that which I bring you."

Theo's eyes darkened with lust and his body trembled against her.

Knowing she—the middle daughter of a minor pure-blood household, and the least attractive of the children to boot—could draw such need and want from the gorgeous heir to the Nott legacy made
Daphne felt powerful and beautiful. It made her believe that the mantras she regularly spoke in her head could be a reality, if she played her cards right. Most importantly, it gave her the confidence she needed to follow through with her plans.

I will own all of you, my beloved, she silently promised him. And you will own all of me.

"I would open your mind and body to the thrill of continuous, multiple orgasms without ejaculation," she continued, nodding at his confounded expression. "Oh, yes, my Theo, it is quite possible for a man to achieve such with the proper training. I have witnessed it with my own eyes." She threw him her wickedest smirk and leaned into him, so their bodies aligned just right, barely touching. "I would also teach you the intense ecstasy and intimacy of tantric sex, and the wonders of submission. In order to achieve such lofty goals, however, I must first teach you the burning ache that is nurtured under the heavy hands of patience, honesty, and restraint—three skills you fundamentally lack. It is this that holds you back from being a fantastic lover, my Theo."

She let her gaze linger on his lips while licking her own in a suggestive manner.

Theo's erection was suddenly pressing against her inner thigh.

"Would you like me to instruct you in such things, my beloved?" she whispered, and slowly brought her leg upwards, gently rubbing against his hardened length with it.

He nodded and licked his own lips. "Yes, teach me everything you know, Daphne! Teach me how to… how to…"

"Make love?" she offered.

He seemed startled by her offer at first, but then his gaze softened and the stiffness in his shoulders relaxed, as if her words had freed him in some manner.

"Yes."

Softly, on tiptoe, she leaned up and very lightly brushed her mouth against his.

"I will," she promised him, and just like that, their contract was made. "Now, I need you to say aloud that you will let me touch you anyway I wish tonight, with my hands or mouth or with toys." She stepped back and held his card out to him so he could take it back from her. He did, but his fingers shook in the trade-off. "Agree that this same proviso lasts until the end of the game, so we will not need to repeat it each round."

He nodded, seeming much more at ease now. The anger he had carried into the room with him was now gone, and in its place stood a young man ready to accept the gift of love she wanted to bestow upon him. "I allow you, Daphne Greengrass, to touch me in any way you want for the remainder of this game. I am yours to do with as you wish."

Despite the lack of magical or oratory fanfare to accompany his claim, Daphne knew that the cards would now respect Theo's declaration.

"Excellent, my Theo. Now, let us play."

He smiled like she had just offered him the moon.

As she read his card aloud for them both one more time, she could not help but think that this game had been the best idea her housemate, Draco Malfoy, had ever conceived.
**DEED: Tie up your partner and paddle them lightly.**

She then read her card aloud to him:

**FORFEIT: Your partner gets to lick any part on your body of their choice. You cannot touch them.**

Theo's eyes lit up. "Fucking awesome!" he cheered. "Your wish is my command, My Queen!" He got down on his knees before her and bent his head in supplication.

'My Queen,' he'd said, not 'Your Majesty.'

Slytherin's soul, she loved this man! She really did.

With a thought, Daphne conjured what she'd need for the paddling session to come first. She had just the right thing in mind… It appeared on a small table next to the Tantra Chair. "Stand Theo, and take your clothes off for me once more," she commanded.

"Yes, My Queen," he humbly offered and did as she had asked.

As he removed his shirt, she walked around him in a predatory circle. "Every action round, you will come to this room and immediately remove all of your clothes for me," she instructed.

"Yes, My Queen."

His belt dropped atop his shirt, even as he kicked his shoes and toed off his socks.

She walked over to the chair and stood beside it. "You will then come to this chair and sit on the smaller hump and wait for me to join you."

"Yes, My Queen. Anything you desire."

His trousers and pants hit his ankles and he stepped out of them without hesitation, and then he made his way towards her, undiminished by his nudity. Daphne's mouth watered at the sight of his hard, thick cock bobbing with every step he took towards her.

Sitting on the chair as she required, Theo kept his head down and his mouth shut.

"This will be your starting point every time we enter this room together," she told him. "Regardless of whether either one of us holds a Deeds card or a Forfeits card that round, you will always present yourself to me in this fashion, until I instruct you otherwise."

"As you will it, My Queen, I obey."

He was being such a good boy, so respectfully submissive. She was going to reward him for it, she decided.

Moving to the small table, she picked up a small bottle of clear lubrication. "Stand for me, my Theo."
"Yes, My Queen."

He was on his feet in a flat second.

Pouring some of the water-based lubrication into her hands, she put the bottle back down and approached him. "Do not touch me, my Theo. Allow me to reward you for your trust thus far."

He was just beginning to reply, but then she took his cock in hand. His reply of, "Yes, My Queen" quickly transformed mid-sentence into, "Shit, yes!" At his sides, his fists clenched, and he tossed his head back, revealing the long line of his throat to her. A deep moan escaped him. "Oh, Daphne…"

Hearing Theo call out to her in such lusty tones made Daphne shiver from head to toe. Her body went tight with need, her heart pounded. She guided her hot, greedy hands all over his thick, hard expanse, working every inch of him, and then she cupped his bollocks and played with those, too.

When he was straining and began pumping his hips rhythmically in time with her hand in an unspoken demand that she finish him, Daphne pulled away. In doing so, she was establishing to him that a good submissive never coerced anything from their Dom, including the need for release. Their pleasure belonged to the Dom alone, and it was she who decided when a sub could have fulfillment. Of course, a good Dom also understood a sub's desires and attempted to give them what they needed, when they needed it. The relationship was a two-way street, with the power dynamic eventually, after a long time and much work, flipping on its head once the sub and Dom had reached that level of perfected harmony with one another's needs. In the end, it was the Dom who became the sub's love slave.

Trust was at the centre of it all, though, and its guiding hands were patience and honesty.

These were the lessons Daphne wanted Theo to learn. Unfortunately, it would have to be a crash course tonight, since they were out of time now that the end of school was here, and her future was already established elsewhere…

Theo let out a grunt of displeasure at her withdrawal, but to her satisfaction, he bit back on any complaint. It seemed he was learning, after all. She gave him a kiss on the cheek in reward, and then commanded him to bend over the larger hump of the Tantra chair and stick his hind in the air. As he did so, she reached for the paddle lying across the table. It was a small, flat board covered with smooth, black leather on both sides.

"I am going to change up the rules of the card, my Theo," she informed him. "Instead of tying you up and spanking you without purpose, I am going to allow you a certain freedom of choice. I will ask you ten personal questions. If you choose to answer any of them, you must do so honestly and completely. For every question you answer, I will caress your shaft two times. For every question you refuse to answer, however, I will spank you five times with this paddle in my hand." She showed it to him. "Do you agree to play with me like this, Theo?"

He nodded. "Yes, My Queen. Hell, yes!"

"Excellent," Daphne purred next to his ear, leaning her head down to reward him with another tiny kiss to his cheek. "Then let us begin. Question one: what is your middle name?"

Daphne already knew this answer, but was testing his veracity.

"Darek."

He had told the truth, so Daphne gently moved her hand around his waist and softly stroked his
length up and down twice. He groaned and his cock twitched in her hand, but she let him go immediately, not wanting him to get too close to the point of no return.

"Question two: with how many girls have you experimented sexually, in sum total?"

"Um, do you mean how many people have I had sex with, or do the ones I only kissed and touched a bit count, too?" he asked.

Daphne became annoyed that there had to be a distinction. Just how many girls had Theo touched in such a manner? "All of the above," she decided.

"Uh, well…"

She roll-tapped her nails over the paddle's handle as she waited for him to count it up, repeating the mantras in her head to try to tone down the jealous whispers in her head.

"Ten. No, wait, eleven. But, uh, most of them were just fooling around. You know, snogging, getting a feel, getting head, that kind of thing. I've only had sex with a few girls."

Daphne swiped her hand over him two more times and as she did so, she nuzzled the hairline at the nape of his neck, making him shiver. "Eleven people," she cooed. "My, you have been busy making the rounds, have you not?"

Did that sound too bitchy?

She took her hand off of him fast and fought back the green-eyed demon that was riding her hard. He must not know yet that she harbored such deep feelings for him, or the dynamics between them would change, and that could ruin everything.

Steeling her voice, she continued. "Question three: in what position did you take the first girl with whom you had sex?"

He paused, seemed to consider an appropriate response. "I didn't take her. She took me the first time, her on top, riding me. After that, we fucked like rabbits all over the place in a variety of positions."

Ah, that explained why he was enjoying the idea of being submissive once more. A person's first sexual encounter was said to set the tone for their preferences in the bedroom throughout most of their lives.

His hips bucked as she stroked his prick again in reward. She moved slowly this time, taking a few moments to acquaint herself with this part of his anatomy. Having yearned for years to see and touch him just like this, now here he was in the palm of her hand, literally, just as she had always fantasized, and she was breathless with the need to take him into her mouth and taste his perfection. The thick, silken flesh was slicked with his pre-cum, and the head of him was engorged with blood and straining against her fingers. He was beautifully shaped and incredibly responsive, and she was dying to feel him inside her in every way.

Moving her hand away took an effort of supreme will on her part.

Theo actually growled low in his throat as their eyes met and he read her desires. The desperate sound made her smile.

"Question four," she said, putting them both back on track. "What sexual positions have you attempted?"
He tilted his head and his eyes grew distant as he sifted through his memories. "The only time a girl rode me was my first time. I usually prefer me on top, or having her from behind on her knees. I've done it once where she was bent over at the waist and I was standing up, fucking her from behind, and another time we were both standing up against a wall, her back to my chest. That's it, though."

Interesting. He had allowed no other woman to ride him, despite secretly enjoying being dominated by a female partner. Daphne wondered the reason, even as her fingers tightened around his cock once more and guided him towards ecstasy.

"Gods, Daphne, I need to fuck you!" he panted. "Please, please!"

Daphne stroked a gentle hand up his spine and massaged the back of his head, scratching her nails against his scalp. "Patience, my Theo. The more you want it, the sweeter it will be." She bent over and pressed a kiss to his temple, before stepping back once more, returning them both to the game. "Question five: have you ever had sex with a man, or ejaculated to the fantasy of such a thing?"

Here, Theo stalled, and Daphne felt an odd, sinking feeling in her stomach that told her she might have stepped on the Exploding Snap this time; perhaps she should not want to know the answer to this one.

Theo sighed with resignation. "Paddle me."

Well, that clearly settled the matter, did it not? Theo either knew the touch of a man or had touched himself to the idea a time or two. From what she knew of him and recalled of his reaction to Blaise's revelation of his bi-sexuality, she began to suspect that the two of them had done more than simply share a dorm room.

Not that such a thing turned her off. Daphne had seen two men together before, as well as a threesome involving two men and a woman. It had been educational, to say the least. Not to mention highly erotic.

Despite that, the fact was Theo had not answered the question. Although Daphne loathed having to punish him for that refusal, she also knew that in this type of game, following through with promises was important to assuring that the players both understood and reinforced the boundaries. Deviation could irreconcilably damage the trust of Dom/sub that she was nurturing if she didn't follow through. Therefore, gritting her teeth and steeling her nerves, she raised the paddle, recalling what she'd learned about proper striking technique.

"Very well. Five strikes."

Each full, measured hit against Theo's flesh was loud in the quiet room, and accompanied by him exhaling hard through his nose, rather than crying out in pain. It would seem that he either had a high tolerance for such abuse, or he had been the victim of such in the past. Perhaps one of his former lovers had spanked him a time or two? Or had it been done under more nefarious circumstances?

By the fifth hard smack, Theo grunted softly, but that was all the complaint he made.

Relieved that the chastisement was over for the moment, there was silence between them for a few minutes as Daphne properly let the punishment sink in. Theo's bum was rosy, but she restrained her impulse to rub a soothing apology over it, knowing that to do so would undermine the message she'd had to impart. This was a contest of dominance, after all.

When she felt it was appropriate to move on, Daphne asked her next query: "Question six: if I were to fulfill your greatest wish here tonight, what would it be?"
Her partner's face turned the same sunrise colour as his arse. "Um… You sure you want to know this?"

"Of course," she stated, suddenly curious to know just how far he would take this one. "Tell me your deepest, most secret fantasy."

He looked up at her as she came around the chair to face him, and in his eyes, she saw a darkness she hadn't expected.

"It's been basically the same one for the last couple of months, ever since I watched you reading in the common room one afternoon. I kidnap you from your bed in the middle of night. I tie you up using magic, and Silence you, so you can't scream. I drag you back to my room at my family's home. See, I've got this ceiling to floor mirror in there, and I tie you up in front of it. You're crying, mouthing pleas for me to let you go, but I can't. I want you too much."

He licked his lips, as if just speaking the fantasy was making him hungry, and the expression on his face made Daphne's body clench, partly in fear and partly in arousal.

"I remove the Silencing spell, but I gag you instead. I want to hear your moans. I cut your clothes off you slowly, using a careful Slicing Hex, and when you're naked for me, I make you watch in the mirror as I drop to my knees and eat your pussy out. I make you come over and over again just like that, until your legs are shaking and you're trying to talk around the gag, begging me to stop because you're too sensitive."

Daphne glanced down and noticed he'd gone iron hard and was trying to find some relief by rubbing against the chair. He left a sticky trail of pre-cum all over its soft leather hide.

"I circle around behind you, pry your legs apart, and make you watch in the mirror as I fuck you then. I use you hard, and when I come, it's a lot. It drips out of you when I pull out. After, I leave you like that and go about my business. I ignore you, and that forces you to look at yourself in the mirror. You see your cunt and thighs are wet from your orgasms and my seed. You see the evidence of what I can do to you, remember how I can make you feel, and the longer you stare, the more you become aroused. Finally, when I know you're dying for another go, I come back and I remove the gag. I ask you if you want me then, and you say, 'yes'. I cut you down, remove the bonds, and we fuck right there, in front of the mirror again. This time, you want it just as much as I do. We watch together, and you let me fill you with come over and over again until we're both too tired to go on. After, we just lay there in each other's arms, looking in the mirror at each other. We both know we've met our match."

Daphne tightened her grip on the paddle to keep her fingers from moving towards her pussy to rub herself some relief from the pulsing ache that had suddenly taken root there.

"So what do you think, My Queen?" He gave her a dark smile. "Do you like my fantasy? Or does it frighten you?"

Yes, it frightened her, but not the kidnapping, not the bondage, not even the sex part. It scared her because at the end of his fantasy, what he wanted from her was a long-term relationship, and they only had tonight. He would have never agreed to such a thing with her if he knew what awaited her after graduation…

Clearing her throat, Daphne decided that the best way to handle Theo's question was not to answer it. Instead, she asked one of her own.

"Question seven: how would you describe me, Theo? How do you see me?"
Theo's disappointment was palpable. His expression shifted, and the darkness retreated, but his letdown was there in his face. Clearly, he had expected her to reveal a bit of her soul to him, as he was baring himself to her...but that was not the way Dom/sub relationships worked, and she was still Slytherin underneath it all as well. Daphne's instincts in both positions told her that revealing too much to him now would tip the delicate balance of power out of her favour. It would give him the impression that he could question her as he liked, and then from there, it would be a short hop and a jump to disobedience.

They did not have time for such games. Tonight was all they had, and if she was to be the first to show him what love was all about—self-sacrifice and giving, not taking—she had to be the one in charge. Theo was too desperate and selfish to get them there on his own.

"Please answer the question or request I paddle you," she added when he had still not replied.

"You wanna know what I think of you? I like a challenge, and you give it...in spades," he finally admitted. "How do I see you? You're like...like one of Draco's fancy birthday cakes, with all those layers. On the outside, everything looks sweet and makes your mouth water, but you don't know what you're gonna get until you take a bite. When you do, it doesn't matter what it's made of because you get addicted right away. After that, you don't worry about the next layer, because you want it so much that you'd risk anything to have it. It could be poison and you wouldn't care. Still, you trust it's not, because...it's too pretty a thing and too bloody delicious to kill you. You hope." His gaze followed the line of her body, and there was a bit of returning heat in it. "That's who you are to me, what you've become, Daphne. You scare and thrill me in equal parts."

Daphne was floored by Theo's insightful and deep metaphorical exploration of her character. And it was the most honest she had ever known a Slytherin wizard to be. Usually, they were all innuendo and sleight-of-hand, but not her Theo. He was ambitious for affection, not for power.

Rewarding him for such a lovely compliment seemed the least she could do.

"Merlin almighty," Theo gasped, as she stroked slowly over his hard length, "your hands are quickly becoming my other favorite part of you, My Queen!"

When she released him, he actually whimpered.

"Do not fret, my Theo. You will have your release soon," she whispered in his ear. "And you still have your card to perform, as you will recall." Pulling back once more, she continued her interrogation. "Question eight: have you ever been in love?"

Theo answered without hesitation. "No."

Strangely, this revelation brought Daphne great relief, as that meant she would not be competing tonight with the ghost of another woman for Theo's affections.

Pressing close to him from the side, she leaned her mouth towards his ear as her fingers very slowly and with increased pressure jerked him off twice. "You are doing well, my beloved. I appreciate you being so direct with me. It is...oddlly arousing."

Theo groaned, turning so they were pressed together cheek-to-cheek and began rubbing against her like a cat seeking affection. "I find I don't want to lie to you, My Queen."

"I appreciate that, my Theo. Please continue."

His smile was enchanting. "Yes, My Queen."
She gave his prick an extra swipe in reward, eliciting from him a pleasure-filled gasp. Then, she took her hand away and stepped back, twirling the paddle's handle back and forth in her other palm.

"Question nine: have you ever sexually taken a person against their will?"

She assumed the answer would be negative, but one never knew what lay in the deepest, darkest hearts of others.

"NO!" her partner shouted, seemingly shocked that she would ask such a thing. "No, I wouldn't!"

She believed him, for there had been none of the telltale signs of a lie in his facial features. That, at least, was a relief. Consensual violence was acceptable, but non-consensual was one of the unforgivable sins against a woman.

"Question ten," she began, preparing herself for the one question that had burned in her mind for years. "How old were you when you lost your virginity and to whom did you give it?"

She had always wondered this fact, but had never been able to discern the truth of it. She believed it had to have been someone outside of Hogwarts, for the rumours around the castle had made it clear that he had seemed rather proficient.

To her surprise, Theo stalled in his reply. "I… Daphne, I don't want to answer this one. You'll be very angry with me if I tell you. You won't understand."

She rested the paddle against his bottom in silent warning as to the consequences should he choose not to reply, but did not attempt to further persuade him, as this was an issue of Theo learning to open up, not to force such compliance from him. She already knew some of the things he'd done to other girls this last year, so why would the secret of his first initiation into adulthood change her mind about him that much? Would it destroy her feelings for him?

"If you wish, you may explain it so I will understand," she tried for a compromise. "I promise to listen and will reserve judgment for after you have finished your tale."

Theo hung his head and let out a deep, resigned breath. "Bloody hell, just…just paddle me instead."

Daphne was truly taken aback by his unwillingness to discuss this subject. Was it really that bad a secret? "You would truly take a punishment instead? I do not understand. It has been my experience that many men enjoy the bragging rights of their initial sexual conquest."

Theo looked at her over his shoulder. "Not in this case. I'd rather you hurt me than I hurt you."

She measured his sincerity, believed it to be true, and considered her options.

There were none. She had established the rules of this little game, and now she had to live with that choice. She was going to have to spank him again…and the one burning question she had had for years would remain unsatisfied.

Inside her head, Daphne let out a string of expletives.

She followed it up with a round of her mantras.

"I apologize for attempting to persuade you, when clearly you were not comfortable with the discussion," she said, once she had regained control of her anger. "This is your secret to keep. I understand and respect that, Theo." She held the paddle up and touched his hind with it.

"Unfortunately, you did not answer, so I must punish you now."
Theo nodded, accepting her sentence without complaint, and he waited for his punishment to commence. His beautiful body tensed up once more in anticipation of the pain to come. I will make this up to you, my beloved, she promised, and proceeded to hit the paddle against his flesh five times.

Having been on the receiving end of this particularly unpleasant circumstance herself, Daphne knew that the initial blow felt like someone was taking a bite out of your fleshy parts, but that it faded rather quickly. It was the heat it left behind that took some getting used to.

Theo finally made a noise on the last strike, a groan of pain, and she immediately dropped the paddle and used her cool hands to soothe his nettled skin.

"Do not move. Allow me to ease your pain."

Theo did as she bade with an automatic, "Yes, My Queen."

Daphne mentally summoned a chilled washcloth and placed it upon his burning flesh. He jerked a bit as the temperature differences shocked his system at first, but then eased down as she used the extremely soft, damp cloth to massage away his hurt.

When she felt he was in less discomfort, she instructed him to stand up and take a step back, so there was some space for her to squeeze between his body and the larger hump on the chair. As she passed the table, she grabbed the lubricant once more, and finally positioned herself in front of him.

Theo's erection was only at half-mast now, his pain taking away from his arousal. She rubbed some of the non-greasy substance onto her hands again and then setting it aside, she gently took his beautiful cock in her hands and stroked him back to life.

"Hands at your sides," she commanded in a soft voice. "Allow me to provide you release."

"Yes, My Queen."

Running her slick fingers over him, she took him in a firm grip and began stroking up and down. Within moments, the head of his cock had swelled, turning an aroused shade of purple-red as it filled with blood, and all along the sides, small veins appeared, creating friction as she moved over them. Theo moaned in pleasure and his eye lashes fluttered.

"Control your need, my Theo. Deep breath in, and back out," she coaxed him when his chest began working harder. "Enjoy this. Pleasure is a journey, not a race."

Theo's body quaked under her caressing hands as he struggled to do as she bade. She could feel how he fought his natural inclinations off, putting all his mental effort into experiencing this new, different technique, all to please her.

His skin grew hot and his expression pained as she stroked him with a steady, rhythmic hand.

"Daphne," he warned in a panicked voice, staring at the floor with a mortified expression on his face. "I…I can't…"

She stopped and pressed her thumb to the base of his cock.

"Theo, look at me."

Hesitantly, he did as she asked.

"Keep your eyes on me. Do not look away. Match my breathing to your own."
He did, and a few minutes passed that way, with him slowly regaining control. He'd deflated a bit in her hand, but their breaths were in synch when she began stroking him again.

"Stay in the moment with me," she whispered. "Not in the fantasy in your head. Become aware of my every breath, of how the light looks reflected in my eyes, of the way my pulse beats against my throat. Be aware of how my pleasuring you affects me, not you."

He took a deep breath…and in that second, she knew that it clicked for him. His eyes widened with sudden enlightenment.

"I've served once before," he admitted as she began gently stroking him again. "I mean, I thought it was serving, but I know now it wasn't that. I was just…pretending to submit while waiting for my turn. I wasn't on my knees for them. I was there for me. What you're doing, though, it isn't about that at all, is it?"

"No, my Theo, it is not," she agreed. "And I am pleased that you have discerned that lesson so quickly." She cupped his heavy sac and rolled it in her fingers, making him tremble against her. "What we do in this room to each other is not about taking—not by either of us. It is about giving. It is about setting each other free, finding that our own pleasure comes in service to each other."

Theo bent his mouth to her ear and whispered, "Tell me how I may do that, My Queen. Teach me."

"I am," she told him, and proceeded to stroke him until he was on the edge and ready to spill all over her hand. "Come now, my Theo. Let go and give us both the pleasure of witnessing you doing so."

With a cry of her name, Theo tossed his head back and thrust his hips upwards. His body tensed and released as his climax splashed in waves across his skin, saturating the dark trail of hair that led from his bellybutton downwards.

"For you," he said, as he came down from his high, shivering from head to toe. "I come for you."

"Yes, my Theo." With a non-verbal spell, Daphne magicked away the mess upon his quivering muscles, and then took her beloved in her arms and guided him down onto the Tantra Chair. He lay back against the middle hump, naked and sated and a little sweaty. "And I give you that euphoria, because I care for you."

He stared at her for a long while in silence, eyes heavy lidded with satiation, but sparkling with deeper thoughts.

"We haven't performed your card yet," he finally told her.

Daphne met his eye, noted the naughty gleam in it.

"Do you wish to taste me?" she asked.

His gaze dropped to her hips and his lips quirked as he fought a triumphant smirk. "If that is your wish, My Queen."

His impertinence made her laugh. "You have learned your lesson a bit too well, it seems." Conjuring a towel, she wiped her hands of his sticky residue and then leaned against the Tantra chair's larger hump. Skimming her dress up and over her waist, she presented her body for his use. "Come, lick my cunt, Theo. Please your Mistress and earn her favour."

Theo wasted no time, slipping her panties from her legs and tossing them aside. As she leaned further back onto the chair's padded curve, he made room for his body between her split thighs and parted
her lower lips with his thumbs. "You're so beautiful," he sighed with longing as he looked upon her for the first time, and leaned forward to place a small kiss on her mons. "I want to please you so much, sweetheart."

"You will," she assured him, and closed her eyes as he took his first taste of her.

Gently, his tongue met her damp flesh, delving inside.

They both moaned.

Daphne had been eaten before as part of her training, but this was one of her particularly favourite things to have done to her, and the fact that it was her Theo finally doing it to her now only made the sensations even more exquisite.

Lying fully back upon the chair's swell, she let her head tip back and imagined how sexy a picture she and Theo made in such a position. She pinched the nipple of one breast as he suckled softly upon her clit. "Ooh," she sighed in response to the lovely feeling, and Theo hummed, pleased by her response. The deep, resonating vibration shot up her body, making her shiver.

She bent her leg and placed a bare foot upon his shoulder, and he shifted to his knees and drew her closer with a hand on her hip. "Do I please you?" he whispered as he placed open-mouthed kisses to her slick, naked flesh. "Do you want me as much as I want you, My Queen?"

"Yes, yes!" she chanted as he thrust his tongue deep into her, rhythmically fucking her with it. "Oh, Theo!"

A shattered cry left her mouth as she peaked swiftly, and her thighs quaked with the force of her unexpected climax. It had come upon her faster than she had ever experienced before, and Daphne was left gasping for oxygen and a little dizzy in the aftermath.

Staring up at the white ceiling far above, she marveled at the experiences of this round. So much had changed between them, and in such a short time. He had come to understand what it was she was attempting to give them both tonight, and he had accepted her offer.

Could they sustain this emotional symmetry, however, when they had no control over the direction of the cards?

Her lover continued to enjoy his fill from between her legs, lapping slowly and gently through her folds like a great cat. His attentions were more relaxed, almost lazy as he took his time to really savour her. Daphne allowed it, until the chimes rang out, announcing the end of the round.

Without being commanded, Theo helped her back into her knickers, and from there into a sitting position. Stroking his cheek softly, she smiled at him. "That was truly wondrous, my Theo. You are quite gifted with your tongue. Thank you."

He smiled and his expression was one of deep contentment. "I'm happy to serve you, My Queen."

She helped him to redress, and then they headed for the door together, hand in hand. Before they left, he stopped her at the door. "May I kiss you now, My Queen? Just a quick kiss on the cheek, I promise."

Daphne smiled at such a charming offer. "I would like that very much, beloved."

When his lips brushed her cheek, somehow that felt more intimate and romantic a gesture than the whole last fifty minutes between them, and it left Daphne with a warm flutter in her belly. She
returned the gesture, and then they wasted another few moments silently staring into each other's eyes.

Finally, Theo opened the door for them, and indicated she should go before him, as was proper. "After you, sweetheart."

Turning from him reluctantly to walk back towards the couches, Daphne felt a sweet tugging in her heart, and knew that deep inside, at just that precise moment, another piece of her soul became the property of one Theodore Nott.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE 3rd QUESTION

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, Scotland

Room of Requirement

Saturday, June 13, 1998 (9:30pm)

Hermione and her partner were the first ones out to the couches this time around, which made her decidedly nervous. There would be a lot of dead air between them until someone else put in an appearance. Maybe she should say something?

"Thank you again," she offered, feeling the heat crawling up her cheeks. "For the meal. It really was quite lovely. And the beach scene was a nice touch."

Malfoy crossed his legs casually, European style, and leaned back into the cushions of the sofa, staring at her with those enigmatic grey eyes of his. In her chest, her heart thumped extra hard in response. "You're welcome, Granger. I liked sharing that with you."

She raised an eyebrow. "Really? Because I got the impression that you'd have liked a more... physical... action card."

His smirk was automatic, not in the least bit chagrined that she had surmised the truth. "Maybe we'll get lucky this round, hmmm?"

She felt her cheeks flame to life, and cleared her throat behind a closed fist. "Yes, well, so far, I've been enjoying myself." She narrowed her eyes at him. "I hope you don't plan to spoil it by getting raunchy."

Teeth showed now as his grin expanded, and one golden eyebrow twitched up. "You don't like raunchy? So, I take it vulgar, crude, and bawdy are also off the list as well?"

Now he was teasing her. Hermione found herself grinning at his words, despite her earlier
misgivings. She shook her head, amused, and declared, "You really are undisciplined and perverse."

Draco didn't seem in the least bit offended by her assessment, nor did he seem ready to let this matter rest, either. "Not even bawdy, then? Hmmm… How about arousing, provocative or sensual instead? Could I do anything of that sort to you and still be considered a gentleman later?"

Hermione's core temperature rose by several degrees, she was sure, and she felt a fluttering in her stomach again as they stared at each other in silence for long heartbeats. "Perhaps," she allowed, knowing that establishing such a mood in advance would only encourage him. However, if she could set the tone for their future private sessions now, perhaps it would keep him from doing anything truly uncomfortable to her later when they were alone. If he knew she would be interested in anything sexual between them being gentle and tender, he might just give her that instead of a "wham-bam-thank you-Quidditch-fan" series of liaisons.

Malfoy seemed decidedly interested, as his gaze smoldered behind half-lids and his smile fell back into something less jesting, more enticing.

Before they could talk more, Harry and Tracey came out of their room… climbing all over each other right outside their door! They were snogging passionately, their lips locked together fiercely, as if breathing was a mere luxury, not a necessity.

Well, wasn't that just… odd. Her best male friend was usually the epitome of chivalry and courtesy with women. Pawing all over a girl in public was something he considered… well, gauche… yet, there he stood, his mitts thrust into Tracey's hair as he kissed her like it was his last opportunity in all the world. It seemed terribly out of character for him, and made Hermione wonder just what had happened behind closed doors in the last fifty minutes to make such a drastic change possible in her friend's behavior.

Seamus and Lavender came out next (Harry and Tracey didn't even come up for air to notice), hesitantly holding hands as they exited their private room – which looked vaguely like a replica of the Gryffindor Common Room from the brief glimpse Hermione caught before the door closed - and made their way silently towards the couches. Holy Horklumps, they'd either shagged or come close; it was obvious by the guilty look on her roommate's features. Didn't Lavender still harbor resentment towards Seamus for hurting her years ago when he'd taken her virginity? (Living in the same dorm room meant there was a lot of such gossip to be heard, and their other roommate, Pavarti, had filled in Hermione on the quick and ugly version of what had happened that night.) Yet, somehow it seemed Brown and her ex- had made amends – at least, enough for both of them to be touching and to appear fashionably rumpled, anyway (her hair was a bit disarranged and she was missing her silver heart charm bracelet, and he was no longer wearing his jacket and vest, and his shirt had distinct creases). They took their seats on the end of the couch, continuing to hold hands silently. She noted Seamus' thumb brush absently up and down against Lavender's, as if he were nervous that what they were doing was going to be taken away at any minute. It was charming, if not a little strange.

A very boisterously laughing Parkinson and Ron ran out of their room and raced for the sofas next (this caught Harry's attention finally, as he lifted his mouth off of Tracey's – although he continued to whisper softly to her, their faces very close). Pansy tagged the edge of the couches first, but it was obvious her partner let her get there before him (he did have the longer stride, after all). "I win!" Slytherin's Queen boasted and gave Hermione's ex-boyfriend an impish grin. "You owe me again, Weasley!"

Picking her up and twirling her around, making her squeal in delight, the ginger-haired wizard laughed. "You can collect any time you want, baby!" he teased, waggling his eyebrows at her and
caressing her bum lovingly.

Hermione's jaw dropped. What had happened to the undemonstrative in bed, fumbling, sexually uneasy and boorish Ron she'd known? He hadn't changed that much when he'd been with Lavender (again, according to the gossip), preferring to let his partner take control in bed. Surely, Pansy Parkinson couldn't be the reason he'd morphed into this fun-loving, sexually domineering, exuberant man before her… could she?

Putting her forehead against Ron's, Pansy smirked wickedly at her partner. "I'll remember you said that," she vowed, then pressed a small kiss to his lips and squirmed out of his embrace, racing around the couch to take her spot. "Beat you again!" she sing-songed, as he made his way around to his side of the 'arena,' stretching happily and whistling.

Bloody hell. That was just… too strange.

Hermione sank back into the sofa and tried not to sulk, intentionally sneaking a peek in Malfoy's direction to see his reaction. Ah, good, he was just as astonished over her ex's behavior as she was. Apparently, she wasn't the only one who was flabbergasted to the point of nausea. Well, at least misery would have company in this case.

Theo and Daphne were trading mysterious smiles as they took their seats at about the same time as Ron and Pansy, although their entrance had been decidedly less obvious. It wasn't until Nott came around the front of the couch, though, that she noted that he was barefoot and beltless, and his shirt was loose. Greengrass' hair was nicely mussed and her necklace was a bit crooked as well. Well, clearly they'd gotten it on, too.

Was there anyone here excepting her that wasn't getting any?

Oh, that's right, Malfoy wasn't that lucky either. Not that she wanted him to be – not at all!

…

Still, a little snogging might not hurt. It wasn't like she wasn't attracted to him. He was quite an impressive-looking specimen, after all. If they kissed, he'd probably look even better as his mouth would be shut.

…

Actually, that wasn't fair. These last two rounds, he'd been absolutely fascinating to talk with.

That thought disturbed her more than the idea of kissing him had, and she pondered it in silence, as Zabini and Gin finally put in their appearance. The two rivals were also holding hands (sure, why not fit right in with the current motif?) and strangely, they were soaked to the bone. Her friend's face was also a brilliant red and she was walking a little funny, which could only mean one thing… Merlin's left testicle! Had her friend really fucked Zabini?

"Hurricane come through when I wasn't looking, sis?" Ron asked, grinning and shaking his head.

Gin flipped him off with her free hand. "You're just jealous you're not wet," she countered and snickered at the double meaning. To Hermione's absolute shock, though, her ex- glanced across the aisle at his new partner and winked at her, but didn't reply. Pansy threw him an air kiss back and grinned.

Holy cat-a-moli, could she expect to see Satan skiing to work this evening, too?
Although, it pained Hermione to even think the idea, obviously Ron had either shagged or come really close to shagging Pansy Parkinson already - and apparently, they'd both liked whatever it was they'd done so far.

What was happening to the world? Had she entered some sort of warped parallel dimension where her ex-boyfriend and her best guy friend were really repressed slavering, adept sex gods, finally coming out of the closet?

"Is it really hot in here, or is it just me?" she asked fanning herself with her hand suddenly. "Because, I could swear the heat is on. Malfoy, go check," she shoo'd him with one hand.

Her partner threw her an exasperated look. "Granger, the Room of Requirement is set to the ideal temperature." He gave her a lascivious look. "If you're hot, take something off."

"Bite me," she automatically replied, only to wince, realizing she'd left him the perfect opening. "Forget it. I take it back."

Malfoy's grin was shark-like, all pointed teeth and evil. "The cards are starting to get you to open up to your real desires, I see."

"You wish," she mouthed to him in a very soft whisper that she knew he could still hear across the short distance.

He waggled his eyebrows. "Yeah, so?" he mouthed back.

With a snarl of frustration, she sat back in the sofa cushions and folded her arms over her chest, refusing to look at her partner or talk to him again. She crossed her legs at the knee and began jiggling one leg in annoyance.

As she and Malfoy bantered, Hermione noted from the corner of her eye that Zabini silently Accio'd his wand to his hand from the table in the center and cast a drying charm on Ginny first (making sure to get her hair combed out nicely at the same time), then himself. As she focused more of her attention on them (so she could ignore Ferret-Face), to her shock and awe, the tall, dark, and very sexy wizard took her best girl friend's hand in his and kissed the back of the knuckles before letting her take her seat next to Hermione.

Wait… weren't those two fighting just last round? Oh, that's right, they'd had sex so now everything was a-okay.

That was the last straw. Hermione was officially vomiting at any moment.

"Harry, do you think we could start now that everyone's here?" she yelled across the room at her best guy friend, who had stopped to snog Davis one more time before taking her hand and leading her to the couches.

"Yeah, Potter, any lifetime now," Malfoy shot over his shoulder, then turned his attention back to her. "Some of us are eager for the next action round." He cast a knowing smirk her direction, and Hermione did something terribly childish then – she stuck out her tongue at him and turned up her nose. Slytherin's Prince let out a dark, rich chuckle that made things inside her guts churn like butter, but she resolutely refused to rise to the bait.

Harry escorted Tracey to her spot at the sofa, seemingly reluctant to let her go, and then rushed to his side of the couch and threw his arse down rather cheerfully. "Your turn to navigate, Draco," he chirpily informed, crossing his legs American-style, placing an ankle on one knee.
Malfoy looked annoyed that Harry would dare to use his given name so freely.

"Oh, wait!" Tracey chimed in, holding up her card. "You all left before I could perform my card. It requires me to do so in front of the group." Theo wolf-whistled playfully and every girl in the group rolled her eyes, knowing that's what you could expect from Nott. Undeterred, Davis continued. "It says that I have to tell you a secret about myself," the pretty blonde explained, then put her card down on the table before her. "All right, my secret is that I asked the Sorting Hat to put me in whatever House Harry Potter was going to be sent to. That's how I ended up in Slytherin. The Hat wanted to put me in Hufflepuff instead."

"I KNEW IT!" Pansy screeched, pointing at her girl friend. "Didn't I always say your heart was too sweet for Slytherin?"

Malfoy uncrossed his legs and leaned forward slowly, as if coming to a conclusion that wasn't palatable in the least. "That makes no sense. You should have ended up in Gryffindor, unless…" He went silent, his gaze zeroing in on Harry and narrowing as he understood the unspoken implication of Tracey's secret. "No fucking way."

Everyone was looking at Harry then, Hermione included. "Harry…"

Her friend shook his head, keeping his eyes on Tracey. He didn't seem angry in the least that something this personal had been unwittingly revealed about him; in fact, he seemed almost relieved. "No discussion over the cards," he reminded them. "Tracey was required to tell you her secret and she did. Her card's fulfilled."

To everyone's amazement, the card magically picked itself up and whipped back into the Forfeits deck, when then reshuffled itself in front of them.

"Wicked," Ron breathed in awe.

Hermione had seen a lot of interesting magic in her day, but the spell on these cards went beyond anything she'd ever heard of before. The deck itself seemed almost sentient – and apparently able to override Gamp's Law. Food was one of the few commodities wizards and witches couldn't bespell into existence (the others being money, life, love and knowledge), and yet this last round, she'd shared an entire meal with Malfoy. How was that possible? She puzzled it through her head, staring at the cards as Slytherin's Captain instructed Daphne to pick up the third Interrogations card of the game and begin.

Greengrass adjusted her glasses on the bridge of her nose to read the card:

"If you had to be submissive in bed because your partner wanted it, would you have the courage to submit to their every whim without crying foul or making any complaint?"

Play began with Blaise.

He said only one word, with firm emphasis: "Absolutely."

He reached for a Deeds card as his gaze connected with his partner's across the way.

Hermione felt Ginny's tension, as they sat only inches from each other, but couldn't decipher whether it was fear or nervous anxiety that had set her small shoulders rigid. Would her friend be all right?
Zabini was still dangerous for all his earlier charm, wasn't he?

Davis was speaking then, so she turned her attention back to the game. "... don't think I feel comfortable with this question, either. I'll forfeit answering again." She reached for a blue card.

Oh, joy of joys, it was Malfoy's turn again.

Reluctantly, she swung her eyes in his direction, and was not surprised to see them turned heatedly upon her. "Ahh, one of my questions," he grinned sinfully. "So, let me see here...would I be submissive in every way if you wanted me to be, Granger? Hmmm..." He pretended to consider the issue, tapping one long, perfectly manicured finger on his knee. "Would I get down on my knees and worship you if you wanted me to? Would I let you undress me and put a collar on me if it would make you happy? Would I bathe every inch of your skin slowly with a sponge if it would bring you pleasure? Would I cook gourmet meals for you and give you full body oil massages to help ease your tension? Would I fuck you for hours, in every position you demanded until we both passed out from exhaustion?" His finger suddenly stopped tapping, and he went very still. His gaze smoldered with blatant lust. "Hell. Yes."

As he reached for a red card, Hermione wondered if anyone had ever considered the possibility of patenting a miniature air conditioner for one's knickers – one with tiny electrodes that could wirelessly tell the temp of your clit from five meters so it could activate itself in case of emergencies like this one.

Mentally, she conjured a fan instead, and the Room provided for her. Malfoy belted out a rich laugh and Hermione's face lit up like a Filibuster firework as she fanned herself off furiously.

Play moved on to Seamus without further ado, despite the curses Hermione was throwing at her partner inside her head.

"Well, I ain't as loquacious as our Slytherin Capt'n here, but I would definitely be yer sub if ya wanted that o' me, sweet angel," Finnigan spoke quietly for Lavender only. His free hand reached out and tipped her chin up, forcing her to meet his gaze. The look he gave Hermione's roommate was... wow... why couldn't a man look at her like that? "If ya ever want ta try, yeah?"

From her angle, Hermione couldn't see Lavender's expression, but she did see the girl's open hand reach out and place itself on top of their entwined fingers.

"Take a card, Finnigan," Malfoy reminded him dryly.

Seamus reached for a Deeds card.

Lavender spoke quickly, looking down. "I'm more comfortable being a Dom, honestly, but...I could learn, I suppose. I don't think I'd flinch."

"Good enough for me," Harry ruled, looking at Malfoy for a judge's call. "You can't expect a person to know for sure how they'd act if they've never done something before. A best guess is fine, I think."

Malfoy considered it, and nodded in agreement. "Brown, take a red card."

The girl did as bade, and then it was Ron's turn. He was already leaning far back in the cushions, his gaze locked onto Pansy's across the way, his booted ankles crossed, and his head resting comfortably on his entwined hands.

"Oh, definitely. I'd love to service your every desire, baby," he answered without pause. "Your wish
is my command."

He was grinning like a fool.

Pansy shook her head and smiled, but Hermione could tell the woman was very pleased with the answer. Maybe she'd been wrong about her ex- and Slytherin's femme fatale. They seemed to genuinely like each other…or, maybe they just liked the sex. Who the fuck knew anymore?

"Granger, your turn," Malfoy informed her, looking a little annoyed with her distraction as he drew her out of her thoughts. "Weasley just took an action card."

Her turn? Oh!

She cleared her throat behind her hand. "Well…I suppose…"

"Just take the forfeit, so play can move on," her partner sardonically mused. He was back to tapping that finger on his knee again.

Hermione's knickers got into a twist at the sarcastic, deprecating tone he used with her. "Are you insinuating that I don't have the guts to answer this question, Malfoy?"

Her partner looked at her with mocking amusement and snorted indelicately. "Please. You didn't answer the last one, and that was in the same 'alternative lifestyle' ballpark. Do us all a favor and don't front."

Clenching her jaw, she narrowed her eyes and reached for a red card. "For your information, Mr. Smarmy Pants, I wouldn't be a bit afraid of being a sub to the right person. You are not he, though. I know you'd totally take advantage of me, and I don't relish the idea of kneeling at your feet and puffing up your arrogance."

Malfoy stared at her hard at first, but then broke into a grin. "Mr. Smarmy Pants? You come up with that one all on your own, Granger, or did you borrow that from some first year witchy-poo in Hufflepuff?"

"Chauvinistic prat," she threw out.

"Frigid school marm," he shot back with no heat, all play. "Hit the mark that time, did I?" he continued to rile her, crossing his legs again and thoroughly enjoying the verbal sparring.

Hermione opened her mouth to chew Malfoy a new arse when Harry brought her up short. "Enough you two, please. No discussion – and that includes trading insults," her friend cut in, ending the name-calling session.

Deprived of her come back, Hermione satisfied herself with glaring across the space at her blonde-haired, rodent-faced partner instead.

He wasn't fazed in the least, however, much to her consternation.

That was okay, she'd just get the toad-faced chode back in their private room later.

Ginny was answering next, looking earnestly across the coffee table at Zabini, her hands playing with the hem of her fancy, embroidered jacket nervously. "I don't think I'd like to be anyone's sub. You know why." Her partner nodded once in acceptance, his face carefully shielded from giving away any emotion. "I'm sorry."
Blaise shook his head with easy capitulation. "Don't be."

Some sort of silent message passed between them, and then Ginny nodded in what appeared to be thanks, as she reached for a red card.

Harry squinted and squinched his nose up, as if he were trying to adjust invisible glasses on his face without his hands, and then he reached for a blue card. "Same reason as you," he informed his partner on the other couch. Tracey smiled in a shared understanding with him.

Theo looked around Pansy at Daphne then. "I think we both already know the answer to this one," he smirked ridiculously, and reached for a red card. "Unequivocally, yes."

Parkinson looked across at Ron, and there seemed to be a silent conversation going on between the two of them. Ron looked at the piles of cards, the same as she did, and then nudged his chin almost imperceptibly towards the *Forfeits* deck.

"I…think I don't want to answer," she announced with a grin and grabbed a blue card.

Harry and Malfoy traded a look that seemed to agree that they understood what Parkinson and Ron had just done, but it was allowed by the rules. If Pansy didn't want to answer, she didn't have to. Anyone could "throw" a round if they wanted to at any time, as long as they understood a forfeit action card was attached to that decision.

Play finally came to rest on Greengrass again. The beautiful blonde re-adjusted her glasses, put the *Interrogations* card down on the table, and reached for a *Forfeits* card. She glanced over at Theo as she leaned back into the sofa, and whatever it was they shared, he seemed agreeable as he nodded in acceptance. There was no angry explosion from him this time, no resentful sulking. Apparently, they'd come to an understanding in private of what had happened last round's questioning, because Nott seemed content to let Daphne's refusal to answer slide.

Boy, there sure was a lot of silent communication going on between partners this round. Since when did everyone get so bloody close that they could engage in such intimate exchanges anyway? It was only the third round of questions! The way people were acting, you'd think they'd been seeing each other for a few weeks, at least.

Weird.

The *Interrogations* card that Daphne had read magically erased itself, as that card was now completed. The letters faded away into oblivion, leaving only a cream-colored, blank template for the next game's players to use, Hermione noted.

She wondered who those people would be…

Malfoy stood up. "Everyone read your cards now. If you need to perform an action to the group, say it before we break up in a minute."

Hermione turned her card over and read it. Oh…well…that didn't sound so bad! In fact, it seemed downright wonderful! Thank goodness! She looked up at her partner just as he finished reading his card. When his eyes met hers, a devilish smirk crawled up his cheek and his eyes flattened out like a predator on the prowl.

Shit, what did *that* mean?

She begged to the cosmos that he hadn't gotten a card that forced her to do something truly humiliating. What if he was allowed to strip her clothes off her? Or worse, what if she had to perform
oral sex on him?

Oh please, oh please, oh please - NO!

He waggled his eyebrows at her mischievously, as if sensing her internal panic.

Bloody hell! Was there no justice in the universe? Hadn't she racked up enough good karma points from knitting all those tiny house elf hats? Oh, Goddess, what if this was anti-karma for all the times she did Ron's homework for him? Oh, Merlin, had she cancelled out all of her good deeds by helping that git ex-boyfriend of hers?

"I have to go to the bathroom!" she announced the excuse, jumping to her feet, needing to get away from her partner's reptilian ogling, even if just for a few minutes.

"Me, too," Gin piped in from the side.

Lavender nodded and gained her feet. "We'll go together."

Hermione groaned. She'd wanted to be alone so she could throw a tiny tissy fit in privacy before being forced to deal with her situation. Sometimes she did that just before exams; it always seemed to help her focus better.

"We should all go," Pansy announced, standing too.

Oh, great. The Slytherins were joining the field trip. Why not invite a gaggle of Cornish pixies to come join the fun while they were at it? She was sure Lockhart had left some behind all those years ago…


Draco nodded, summoning Dobby, who had agreed to help tonight at Harry's request. On the other side of the room, two doors appeared: one with the universal symbol for girls, the other for boys. Hermione grabbed her wand from the table and didn't even look back as she took off for the women's.

To her surprise, the loo looked a lot like any of the others to be found around the castle: green-painted stalls, utilitarian mirrors, a row of white, ceramic sinks, clean, white towels on circular racks next to each mirror. The six women filed into the room together and all of them went for a stall. As the doors shut and the sounds of peeing could be heard, Pansy started talking.

"I'm loving this game," she announced cheerfully. "Who knew Weasley was so fucking hot?"

"Ewww," Gin called from the stall next to Hermione's. "Gross! T.M.I."

Pansy *tsk'd*. "Sorry. Seriously, though, your brother is totally wicked!"

"Is he really?" Hermione asked without thought, and then slapped a hand over her mouth.

What the hell was she saying? She didn't want to know what Parkinson and her ex- were doing behind closed doors.

Quickly finishing up her business, she flushed and made her way out to the sinks to wash her hands. Taking a look in the mirror, she used her wand to adjust her make-up and hair, setting it back perfectly, smoothing her dress down as well. Pansy was at her side in a moment, washing up and primping, too.
"Well, yeah, I've never known a man so into a woman's pleasure," the witch carried on without concern, smiling like the cat that ate the canary.

Lavender took the sink to Hermione's right. "That's odd. I always found Ron to be rather submissive in bed."

Hermione nodded. "Me, too." She turned to Parkinson. "Looks like you brought out the lion in him or something." She shrugged outwardly while mentally gagging on the visual internally.

Pansy stopped and looked in the mirror, but it was obvious her mind was a million miles away. She smiled gently, her dark eyes shimmering with softness. "Did I?"

Hermione looked at the other woman's reflection. Pansy seemed totally sincere. "Do you really like Ron? I thought you hated him before this game started. You've done nothing but antagonize each other for seven years."

Blinking out of her reverie, Slytherin's Queen considered her words, matching her stare in the reflective surface. "It's funny, isn't it? But you know, now that I think about it, I was just letting House prejudice get in the way. I mean, Weasley's really rather handsome, he's fit, and he definitely knows how to use that body."

She apologized quickly as Ginny came up alongside and pulled a face at the thought.

"It's just that, well, he was a Gryffindor," the dark-haired witch continued. "For that reason, it was open season on him at any chance, you know?" Pansy looked down at her hands running under the cool water, her face suddenly a little sad. "It's too bad I let twisted rivalry between our Houses keep me from knowing him sooner. I wish…"

She didn't finish the thought as she turned the faucet off and reached for a towel to dry her hands. Her eyes met Hermione's in the mirror again.

"And what about you and Drake? It's the same story, isn't it?"

Hermione blinked, taken aback. "What about Malfoy and me?" Putting her back up, she bristled. "There's absolutely nothing going on between me and that slimy, git snake! I'm hoping the cards will keep it that way, too, and I can get out of here with nothing worse than maybe a grope or two."

Daphne joined them, followed by Tracey. Both blondes made for the empty sinks on the end. "The lady doth protest too much, methinks," Greengrass quoted Hamlet, washing her hands well with soap.

"I do not," Hermione objected, and immediately stopped, having proved Greengrass' point. "Whatever. I'm in the game to win. I'm not looking for a one-off, much less a boyfriend. And I am not attracted to Draco Ferret-Face Malfoy."

Pansy smirked knowingly. "That fan work for you, Granger? Because I still haven't cooled down from Malfoy's offer to let the woman of his dreams collar him, much less him fuck her for hours and pleasure her in every way possible." She pretend shivered. "The imagery alone makes me sweaty." She stepped closer, lowered her voice as if imparting a wicked secret. "His cock is amazingly beautiful, and he knows how to use it, I promise you."

Hermione swallowed, feeling things low in her belly clench. "How…how do you know?"

Parkinson smirked nefariously. "He broke me in. It hurt so good. I begged him for more."
I will not be intimidated, Hermione determined, holding Pansy’s knowing, dark stare. "Good for you," she managed to sound unaffected. Bully for her.

Tracey giggled. "Oh, stop, Pans. Let her figure it out on her own. That's the fun part."

Parkinson pointed at Davis. "And you – I knew you smelled like one of those hedgehogs."

"Hufflepuff's insignia is a badger, actually." Daphne pointed out, adjusting her glasses, using her wand to adjust her own skin and hair applications as well.

"And snogging Potter like that!" the brunette continued to tease. "That was some hot lip-lock, witch! Tell me, was he good in bed?"

Tracey blushed. "We've only kissed," she admitted. "Although this round…" She tilted her head and smiled guiltily. "I can't wait!"

"Oooh, you've got it bad," Lavender piped in, shocked. "I recognize the signs."

Ginny elbowed her gently. "You're one to talk. Is Seamus a la mode back on the menu?"

Lavender looked down at her toes. "I…suppose. I'm giving him a chance to make it up to me."

"Make what up?" Davis asked, her eyes as clear and trusting as a doe's.

She really wasn't Slytherin material at all, was she? Everything about the girl screamed 'innocent.' Given that, it surprised Hermione to think that Tracey had joined a game like this one; she didn't seem a bit 'worldly' about sexual matters, so why had she been chosen for Slytherin's team?

Lavender shrugged. "We dated once, two years ago. It didn't work out. It was a bad break-up. He says he wants to win my heart back, though."

Tracey positively gushed, and she practically bounced over to Brown's side, her hands pressed together over her heart. "Oh, that is so romantic! He really loves you, then?"

Before Lavender could answer, Daphne took a step closer, whispering conspiratorily. "I have heard rumors about Mr. Finnegan's…well-known endowment…from the female students of my House. His is supposedly the longest and widest penis in school. I have heard it described as 'enormous' in fact."

"It is," Ginny, Lavender, and Pansy all confirmed unanimously, and then looked at each other in shock.

Ginny broke into giggles. "Oh, dear. Well."

"Blaise is no small joke, either, you know," Pansy knowingly threw Gin the hint.

Ginny's face reddened and an angry glint came to her eye. Was that…jealousy? She turned away to control her temper. "Yeah, well…we'll see, I guess."

Hermione thought she knew better, but took that as a good place for the conversation to end. There had been entirely too much sharing and probing for her comfort. "We're probably up on the twenty minutes by now. Everyone ready?"

"Oh! Pregnancy and disease charms!" Pansy reminded them, and every girl cast the proper spell on themselves.
"Thanks," Hermione said. Gods, if Malfoy did have a sex card this time…

Once they were ready, the ladies exited back into the main room. The men were waiting for them, some of them sitting on the couches, others standing around talking, hands in pockets or arms crossed.

"Clock's ticking, witches," Malfoy reminded them. "Water and snacks on the table, if you want them." The women moved about helping themselves, as Slytherin's team leader kept talking. "So, does anyone have an action to perform before the group? Last chance." Shaking heads all around indicated they were free to move on. "Time, Potter?" Slytherin's leader asked.

"It's a minute past ten," Gryffindor's Captain replied, replacing his fob in his pocket.

"You've got until ten fifty-one, folks. Have fun," Malfoy grinned wickedly. "I know I will."

With that, he turned on his heel and made for the room he and Hermione had claimed as their own, not looking back once.

"What an unbelievable git," Gin sighed from where she stood at Hermione's shoulder. She placed a hand on her arm. "Good luck, 'Mione."

As her friend made her way to Zabini's side, she raised a glass of water to her lips as she walked and took his outstretched fingers in her free hand, Hermione exhaled deeply, trying to calm her suddenly racing heart. "You, too, Gin. Luck to us both."

Grabbing her own glass, not hungry in the slightest, she made her way to her private chambers where Draco was already waiting.

Chapter End Notes

I realise some of our readers are foreign speakers, and have been asked to translate some of Seamus' accented speech for them, so I'll endeavour to do so from now on when new words/phrases are introduced that might be difficult for non-native English speakers to interpret:

Seamus speak key:

ain't = aren't

Capt'n = Captain

o' = of

ya = you

ta = to
With a thought, the private room Blaise shared with his partner was purged of all moisture and the storm dissipated, leaving behind a blank, white ceiling. With a second, the room's décor morphed. The furniture, walls, and accessories all remained the same, but they were suddenly displaying a vibrant array of blues and whites, colours that were neither Slytherin or Gryffindor and which Blaise hoped would interject an ocean of calm into an otherwise tempestuous situation.

He also added a few more pillows to the bed for good measure, since it was a foregone conclusion that they would end up there again soon.

Ginny had remained mute since the end of this last question round, and she gripped her water glass a little too tightly, he noted. Obviously, she was nervous as to where they went from here.

She wasn't the only one.

He shut the door behind them and led her to the bed to sit. Taking her glass from her hand and placing it on the floor by their feet, he then sat next to her.

"Are you sure you want to continue, Ginevra? My card's very sexual."

He read it to her:

**DEED: Lick any one part on your partner's body. Your choice.**

His lioness took a deep breath, let it out nice and slow, and then read her own card to him:

**DEED: Caress every inch of your partner's naked body, on the outside.**

"I think we're pretty even this round," she replied, biting her bottom lip in clear consternation and lowering her eyes to the floor. A pretty blush highlighted her freckles upon the bridge of her nose.

Gods, she was lovely!

Didn't she realise yet how much he worshiped her, and that he would never hurt her purposefully?
Hadn't he made it clear to her during this last round of questioning that he would get on his knees to prove it? How could she be at all afraid of him, when all he'd ever wanted was to serve her pleasure and thus sate his own?

The spanking she'd received from him must be why. It had been the wrong move, setting them off on the wrong foot. He'd just been so angry at her continued refusal to even consider him because of his Slytherin sorting, and he'd been jealous as all fucking hell at her obvious attraction to her teammate, Finnigan. That she'd admitted she'd been hoping for the Irish for her partner tonight had set him off, and that had made him meaner than he'd ever wanted to be with her.

Then he'd done worse the last action round: he'd blindfolded her, taken away her sight, and expected her to trust him, the man who had roughed up her bum less than an hour earlier. Yes, he'd been gentle, but he'd also coerced their first kiss, taken it with dubious consent. Like the Slytherin he'd been trained to be, he'd put her in a defenseless, exposed position and then had ruthlessly exploited her emotional vulnerability to gain her physical interest and glean her darkest secrets.

But she was Gryffindor, not a member of his House, and his manipulations wouldn't garner him any grudging respect from her. They would make her wary of trusting him, though.

He'd approached this all wrong, hadn't he?

With two fingers under her chin, Blaise tilted her face up, forcing her to meet his eyes and decided upon honesty. She seemed to react well to that. "Perhaps we should start over. Would you prefer we try that?"

"No."

Her answer startled him and he dropped his hand. "No?"

She frowned. "I mean, I don't want to pretend that last round didn't happen. I liked it."

His chest went tight... as did his trousers.

Fuck, she could kill him with the simplest words.

"Then what do you want? Do you want us to play out our cards this round or quit and see where things take us naturally?"

"What do you want?" she asked while looking up at him through the fringe of her long lashes.

Blaise shook his head. "I asked you first. You decide this round, as last round was mine. I'll do as you wish."

Her dark gaze reflected a myriad of emotions in response to his offer, including a brief moment of doubt, but behind it all was curiosity and the familiar gleam of lust. Patiently, he waited for her decision. This one was all on her, and he had to let it happen naturally, or risk her slipping through his fingers, or worse, resenting him.

Shoring up her courage, Ginny finally said, "I want to know more about you, Blaise Alessandro Zabini. And I want you to touch me. Preferably, both at the same time, if possible. Because I really want your hands and mouth on me again. In fact, I think I'll die if you don't kiss me soon."

Bloody hell, but that brassy mouth of hers never failed to arouse, astound, and amuse him!

"Then, I'd like to perform my card first," he explained as he turned to her and undid the buttons on
her overcoat once more. "I want your pleasure, Ginevra. I'll find mine through yours."

Trembling with what he sensed was both nervousness and anticipation, his fiery partner allowed him to make her naked again, all except her stockings, which were too time-consuming to keep removing, and then he followed her into the middle of the bed as she crawled backward, lying flat. Looming over her, he paused slightly to take in her open, hopeful expression. It was clear she was frightened, but the fear wasn't for him so much as the fact that she was once more in a physically vulnerable position under him.

"I won't hurt you."

"I'm counting on that promise," she said with a wry smirk. "Besides, I can always TWN your arse all over this school if you do."

He chuckled. "You're a wicked woman, Red."

"Yeah, well, I think you like me for that."

"I think you're right." He reached up and ran a hand slowly just above her skin, careful not to touch her yet. "If you're serious about anything happening between us, however, I need your permission to freely touch you everywhere, as the cards are specific about that point. Will you grant me that privilege, my lioness?"

Without hesitation, she nodded. "God, yes, touch me! I mean, I give you official, formal permission to touch me and use your mouth on me, from now until the end of the game."

Talk about shockers! That was definitely showing him unearned trust. He'd have to be equally as generous, so she wouldn't feel so exposed.

"And I give you official, formal permission to touch me and use your mouth on me, from now until the end of the game as well, Ginevra."

He felt her relieved exhale of hot breath against his skin and heard her mumbled, "thank Godric" in reply, and laughed at her insane amount of courage.

"You won't be chuckling in a minute," she told him as her lids lowered and a sultry glint entered her eyes. She licked her lips and purred, "Take your clothes off and join me."

Sorely tempted, Blaise had to mentally put the iron shackles on that idea, because he knew the minute his trousers came off, he'd be up inside her, fucking her as hard as she was begging him to do to her. He'd made a commitment to earning the trust she'd just given him so freely, and the only way to do that was to show her how much he cherished her.

"Not yet, Ginevra."

Denying her was a difficult thing, especially when she looked up at him with that adorable, sullen expression on her face. He leaned down and kissed her pouting lips as sweetly as possible, though, to make up for it.

And all the while, he was fighting off the little devil on his shoulder egging him on to just do what she'd wanted.

"Let me show you how much I…care…for you," he murmured against her mouth. "I want you to enjoy being with me, to forget everything else we've done to each other before this moment and to know this, right here, is our beginning."
Tears filled her beautiful, brown eyes as she stared up at him in wonder.

"Okay," she agreed in a ragged whisper.

When he kissed her this time, it was with his whole love for her in his mouth. He knew it would overwhelm her, and yet as she'd always done with him, she didn't back down. She gave back as good as she got, her response passionate and honest.

Once more, a golden light flashed behind his eyelids, the same as had happened the last action round. Following it came a wave of arousal that swept him up and pulled him under its spell.

Until tonight, that had never happened to him. The closest had been when his inner beast had awoken that first time in the boy's showers, the afternoon Bole and Derrick had given him his first sexual experiences, and then again after, in his bed with Theo... That day, it had been a gleaming silver light bathing him in its radiance, followed by an uncontrollable and animalistic need to come over and over again and to feed on the strength from his partners climaxing right along with him. That had been pure lust, sharp and hungry and angry for fulfillment. This golden wave of desire was a different feeling, though. It was warmer, brighter, filled with joy and the promise of satisfaction.

There was something about Ginny that was different...

His lips caressed hers with soft takings and his tongue swept into the crevasse of her mouth to feast upon her rich flavour. Gods, she was so sweet! Drowning in her taste at the same time as burning up in her arms, Blaise struggled to maintain control, to be careful, to hold tight to the leash of the beast within to keep that darker side of his nature from hurting her. With more patience than he'd ever shown a lover before, he took his time licking, nipping, coaxing Ginny into giving up her control so he could slowly begin to bring down the barriers that still existed between them. Perhaps trusting him with her body was key to gaining access to her heart.

And he wanted that access so very much, he was finding out.

"You're so beautiful," he whispered around kisses, loving the way her body felt beneath his, all soft and willing. Slipping his fingers through the silken curtain of her hair he grabbed hold, never wanting to let go. "So spirited, so sexy." He gently worried her bottom lip with his teeth, then kissed it to soothe away any possible ache he'd made. "You're my kind of trouble, Ginevra."

She chuckled. "I could say the same, Zabini."

"Blaise," he bade her call him. Zabini was also Lorenzo's last name, after all, and he would not share even that much of her with his brother. Or anyone else, really. "Say my name again, as you did earlier."

She sighed in pleasure as he lightly rubbed his lips over hers, teasing and daring her to speak his name aloud again, testing her. "Blaise Alessandro," she finally whispered, kneading her fingernails into his shoulders like a contented kitten. "Blasius."

"Cyne Sovrano," he coaxed her to continue, feeling his magical aura tighten up and prepare for lockdown as she said his TWN again. She could force him to heel if she continued and said the rest. Would she do it? Gambling his freedom and will against her silly Gryffindor honour was playing with fire, and yet there was only one way to really know for sure whether or not he needed to take steps now to protect himself in the future. Besotted with his little lioness he might be, but Blaise couldn't afford anyone ever taking control of him again. "Say it, and you could command me to serve you with every pleasure tonight."
To his relief, she refused to play the game, clearly unwilling to wield his True Wizarding Name against him. Instead, she pulled him in even tighter and kissed him, attempting to seduce him the old-fashioned way. "You will anyway," she told him with a sly grin against his mouth when they finally came up for air. "That is if the cards are in my favour."

Tricky witch! She'd dodged the jinx with a cleverly considered charm.

"You're amazing," he told her with some measure of real awe.

Her hand smoothed down his chest, rounded his hip, and possessively grabbed his arse, however, startling him. "And you have the most luscious bum I've ever seen on a man. I swear, everything about you was made to tempt a girl."

She had no idea.

"You have your own charms, Ginevra," he pointed out, sliding a hand up the side of her waist to cup her breast. He rubbed a thumb over one soft, cherry-red nipple and felt it harden. She trembled against him, and he went from a state of lazy arousal to a hot, throbbing need just like that. "And I want to taste them. All of them. Now."

He ducked his head and without further ado, wrapped his lips around the erect little nipple and claimed it as his own. Such a perfect, lush breast, so sensitive... Ginny gasped in pleasure and arched her back to give him better access, for once surrendering to his desires without a fight or fear. She writhed under him, encouraging him not to stop, to take and tease harder. He licked and sucked and tugged at the tiny bud with blunted teeth, driving them both mad with want.

"Blaise," she sighed with pleasure, silently pleading for more, and he suddenly needed to taste every inch of her, driven on by her siren's call to serve her every need.

She clutched him to her as he worked a path back towards her mouth, pausing under her chin to nip and place open-mouthed kisses along the jawline. At her soft, pale throat, he licked like a cat over the place where her blood ran closest to the surface, his gums tingling as he clamped down on the flesh there and sucked, leaving an obvious love bite behind.

"Yes," she cried and tilted her head back and to the side, offering him more, trusting him with everything. The small concession had Blaise running fever-hot with need. Some of his infamous control slipped, and he bit down harder at her throat, the move instinctual and undeniable.

In the back of his head, somewhere where reason still lingered, he knew he was marking her. Not hurting her, but making it clear to all in a way that was semi-permanent that she was his.

A tiny whimper escaped her swollen, red lips and suddenly Blaise needed her kiss more than air. He recaptured it, swallowed her gasp as he pinched the neglected breast's hard, peaked tip.

"Oh, god," she gasped, arching even further into him. "I can't...think."

"Don't", he said, his voice low and growling as he bent his mouth to that ripe, little nipple and engulfed it in the heat of his mouth. If he was going to burn up from want, he was taking her with him.

Her thighs rose off the bed, wrapping around his hips, cradling him against her core and Blaise felt how slick she'd become from just this little bit of attention. She was as exquisitely receptive to him as he'd always dreamed.

Sneaking a hand between them, he touched all that glorious, wet heat, petted and caressed her soft,
damp flesh until she was on the edge of bliss. With shiny eyes and red cheeks, she looked up at him like he was both her saviour and her greatest tormentor as Blaise gently rubbed her small, swollen clit.

"Will you come for me like this?"

She bit her bottom lip. "I need you inside me."

He slid a long finger deep into her, then a second. He curled them, found that perfect spot and teased it.

"Your mouth," she implored. "I need your kiss."

"As my lady commands."

He slipped down her body and pressed his lips to her sex, kissing the soft, pink flesh while thrusting his fingers deep into her again and again. Her thighs fell open, offering him everything and he gratefully accepted, licking the juice-laden slit and suckling upon her little clit.

"Oh, my god!" she cried out as he tasted his fill and relentlessly drove her towards climax with his hands and tongue.

"Look down," he sinfully purred up at her. "Watch."

Ginny sat up on her elbows to take in the view of him feasting upon her with wide, dark eyes.

"You taste like the sweetest pleasure," he told her. "Like temptation and sin, and everything a man could ever want."

Her lips parted at that and her chest worked hard as she suddenly fought for air. Her nipples pebbled. Blaise felt her inner depths trembling, tightening, going molten hot.

"Come, love," he breathed against her perfect flesh. "Come for me."

The muscles in her thighs quaked as she tumbled over the edge of reason. With a scream of pleasure, she threw her head back and let go, soaring for the heavens, diving straight into the storm.

From between her legs, Blaise looked up...and thought her the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen at that moment.

He wasn't going to stop. He was going to have her tonight, again and again, until they were both too sore to move, too sated to do more than sleep. He was going to make her his, and to hell with the consequences tomorrow. But not yet. There was still so much he wanted to do to her, and she looked rather exhausted all of the sudden. He'd need her rejuvenated and relaxed enough for them to come together because he knew that when it finally happened, she was going to be right there with him, leaping into the firestorm at his side.

Coaxing her into laying back down, he lapped up her juices, letting his tongue wander down to rim the tiny rosette below as well. He felt her go tense, but softly petted her pussy and kept his touches light so as not to scare her. Eventually, she relaxed a bit, until he'd decided she'd had enough and returned to kissing her sweet, wet cunt.

"I've dreamed of making you come like that," he murmured against the gently throbbing flesh, slowly working his way back up her body. "Thank you."
She tiredly laughed. "I should be thanking you. I've never come that hard in my life, not even with my own hand. My head's still spinning."

Blaise chuckled and rimmed her belly button with his tongue. "Don't cry ill now, my lioness. We've only just begun."

Weakly, she pulled at him to come back up so they were even once more. He followed her lead. "My card said I get to touch you everywhere next," she told him.

"If you want."

She flashed him a naughty grin. "I want."

With nimble fingers, she had his shirt unbuttoned and off his shoulders quicker than he'd expected, given her state of post-orgasm bliss. A few adjustments and it was on the floor next to her clothes. Next, her hands tore at his belt, flipping it open. She unbuttoned his slacks and unzipped his fly, tearing at his trousers and pants, jerking them down. "Off," she commanded, pulling them past his hips. "All the way off."

He sat up and removed the remainder of his clothes, tossing them aside without care.

"We're not going to fuck, not yet," he warned her and she actually pouted at that. Brushing the hair back from her face again, he tenderly told her, "There's more to sex than intercourse. I want to seduce you, Ginevra, to show you depths of sensuality you've never even guessed existed."

Again, she looked up at him with a bit of trepidation, and that concerned him. He knew the trust thing was still fragile, still being earned, but he had the nagging feeling that her fear had little to do with him, and more to do with what had happened to her in the past. He kissed her, gently, pulling her onto his lap. She straddled him, and it was hell feeling her wet core slide up against his hard, overly-eager cock. Cupping her bum, he held her still right there, with them pressed together, and he looked into her dark, shimmery eyes.

"You're never going to forget tonight," he told her, very assured of that fact. He intended to imprint himself and their night together on her memory for all time. "I won't let you."

With a careful hand, she traced over his lips, and in those silent moments, he'd have given anything to know her thoughts.

Finally, she met his eye again. "I think you're right."

They kissed, letting the moment wash over them and past, and then she was all business again. "But I want to make you come, too," she told him and rocked her hips so her pussy slid against his aching length.

He let her go and leaned back on his hands. "Then take me in your hand and bring me relief."

That wicked gleam entered her eye again and she slid off his lap. "Spread your knees," she told him and he did. "Wider."

Demanding little thing, wasn't she?

He inched his knees further apart, giving her unfettered access, just as she had him.

Again, with a careful touch, she told hold of him. "Geez, I can barely get my fingers around you," she whispered with awe as she slowly stroked up and down the taut length, and Blaise felt a bit of
masculine pride at that. He knew he was hung, had won the prize there, and fortunately, he'd been well-trained how to use it, too. That Ginny clearly liked it was a bene. He couldn't wait to show her all the ways he could use it to bring her unrivaled pleasure, too.

Her focus was wholly riveted on what was happening at his hips as pre-cum beaded at the tip and wept down the side. He watched her lick her lips as if she was trying to decide whether to continue stroking or begin tasting. Anticipation for either built inside him, had him growing thicker, his abs trembling.

Gods, she'd hardly touched him and he was so swollen and hard... It wasn't going to take long at this rate.

"Ginny, I want to come like this, with you watching."

She sucked her bottom lip into her mouth. "I want to taste you."

"Next round," he promised her. "I want you to see how just your touch can set me off. Think of it as empowering you," he teased and then gasped as she gave him a hard swipe up and down. "Oh, fuck, that's so good. What you do to me, woman!"

She reached down and cupped his balls with her other hand and rolled them in her palm and Blaise groaned from the pleasure. His thighs strained, bunched as she sped up her hand's movements, and he began thrusting his hips upwards into the tight, velvet grip of her hand, reaching for that satisfying ending. "Harder," he begged her. "Just a little harder. I like the edge."

Her fingernails lightly scratched his sensitive sac, making them pulse and his hips kick uncontrollably. "I'm... Merda, I'm close!"

"Come on me," she offered and arranged her body and his cock so the angle would allow him to spill all over her abdomen and breasts.

"Oh, fucking hell, yes," he swore, as the visual of that seared itself into his brain and behind his eyelids. His hot cum, dripping off her nipples... With a roar, he released, thrusting his hips out to ensure his climax hit her square where they both wanted. He watched as spurt after hot spurt covered her, painting her beautiful, pale, freckled skin in his essence.

Something possessive and animalistic grabbed a hold of him and shook him hard, then. Before he could stop himself, he had Ginny on her back once more, his mouth latched onto her throat, his still releasing cock sliding between her smooth pussy lips. His hands gripped her hips, his body's width split her thighs wide, and it was only with the last bit of mental will that he avoided impaling her on his dick and fucking her into the mattress.

Breathing hard into her throat, he slid their wet, slick bodies together, knowing it was his cum being rubbed into her skin. His scent covered her, was saturating into her, and soon...very soon, it would fill her as well.

"Fuck me," she murmured the temptation into his ear. "God, I need you to fuck me!"

Blaise shook from head to toe, but with greater strength than he knew he had, he held still again and forced his jaw to release its hold upon her throat. "Not yet," he growled, fighting the thing inside him for possession. It seemed really out of control tonight, despite all he'd done in preparation for this game to assure that part of him would remain on lockdown for the duration. Yet here he was, hovering bare inches from losing all restraint. If he gave in to its demands now, he feared he could really hurt Red, whom he now could admit he loved beyond measure. He didn't want to lose her, not
now that they were so close...

_Calm down, calm down._

Beneath him, Ginny whimpered. "Blaise?"

_Deep breath. Again._

He kissed her throat with soft reverence. "So good," he whispered and petted her hair, letting the action calm him down as well. "You made me feel so good, my lioness. You made me nearly lose control. Do you see what you do to me?"

_What you've always done to me?_

They were quiet for a bit after that, just holding onto each other. Finally, he put some space between them, lifting his heavier body off hers to prevent crushing her. Staring into her caramel-coloured eyes, he asked, "Did I hurt you?"

She shook her head and gave him a small, hesitant smile. "I thought I might have hurt you."

He reassured her with a grin. "If that's your version of pain, kitten, sign me up."

They shared a laugh and that broke the ice, moving them past the awkwardness.

Carefully, Blaise sat up. Ginny's belly and chest glistened with his cum, where their rubbing bodies had slathered it all over her. The beast inside Blaise purred at seeing that mark upon her. "Sorry," he said, because it was the thing to say, not because he actually meant it. The fact was he was pleased to see his jizz all over her, too. He conjured a towel and cleaned her up nonetheless. "Let me."

"I don't mind," she admitted as he wiped her down.

"You'll need a shower."

She shrugged. "You'll just have to soap me up and rinse me off, then."

"Shall I do it on my knees?"

"Of course."

He chuckled at her audacity. "I can do that for you if you wish."

With a sultry, lazy stretch, she moved towards him, pushing the towel aside and taking his mouth like it was her due. "Thank you for...caring...for me, Blaise, and for making me feel so good." She nibbled her way down his chin, stopping over his pulse to give it a warm, open-mouthed kiss. He gasped as tiny electric shocks raced up his spine where her lips and tongue were pressed. "Also, for letting me see you lose control."

"Thank you for the same," he said as she pulled away, reluctant to let her go. He wanted her mouth back on him, wanted her marking his throat as he'd marked hers. He had given her quite the love bite, it seemed...

The beast inside him curled up and smiled in satisfaction at that.

Unable to restrain the impulse, he reached for her and pulled her back into his arms, dragging her into his lap. For the remaining few minutes, they held each other in silence, touching each other with gentle, slow, exploratory fingers. It was a sweet learning that profoundly moved Blaise's heart. The
depth of his feelings for Ginevra left him floating on an unfathomable sea of emotion.

This, whatever it was, it transcended love. He would give her anything she desired, he would hold nothing back from her.

*I am yours*, he spoke to her with his soul.

The chimes rang just then. Without a word, they moved to re-dress, helping each other. When they were both properly attired again, they held hands as they walked to the exit, smiling shyly at each other. Ginny opened the door, and they headed for the couches. As she made to let him go to take her seat, Blaise felt a momentary stab in his chest, as if letting her go even for a few minutes was too long. Tugging her back into his arms, he lowered his lips and collected her kiss again, uncaring of any voyeurs.

*Mine*, a voice in his head triumphantly declared.

He would never let her go.
Theo practically skipped into the private room he shared with Daphne, immediately dragging his shirt over his head and tossing it onto the white-on-white bedspread nearby even before his partner had closed the door behind her. He hurriedly unbuttoned and unzipped his slacks, and scrambled to drag them and his pants down at the same time, kicking them off and leaving them where they lay on the floor while hurriedly making his way over to the Tantra Chair (he had to get one of these things for his flat once he moved into his own place this August). Sitting in the position his lover wanted, Theo waited, head bowed, hands resting on his thighs, his action card held securely under his left palm, face-down against his skin.

Daphne’s soft slippered feet approached from the side, and instantly, Theo’s erection hardened in anticipation. He didn’t even try to hide it, knowing from the glimmer in her eye last round that she thought his cock was good meat. And it was. Not that he was boasting (okay, maybe a little), but he’d compared himself to others in the showers (what bloke didn’t?), and he knew where he stood – above average length and width, nice looking foreskin and tip, tight balls, not too hairy. Yeah, he was quite happy with his boy… and he could tell Daphne liked it as well.

"Stand, Theo, and recite the text on your card for me," his sexy witch commanded him in a soft voice.

"Yes, My Queen."

He got his feet under him and turned the red card over.

**DEED: Your partner must list out loud at least 10 good things about you.**

"Personally, I was hoping for an oral sex one," he grinned, shrugging. "But this could be fun, too. Or would you rather take my card this round as well? I don't mind."

Daphne straddled the chair behind him, wrapping her arms about him lovingly. "Your gift is again very generous, beloved. I accept it. In reward, you'll have this to look forward to." She brought her card up so he could read it himself:
FORFEIT: Kiss your partner as if they were your whole world. Put your entire experience, heart and soul into the effort.

Theo's heart did a little jig.

Oh, yeah, they were going to hardcore snog finally! He'd been looking forward to that since the beginning of last round, when Daphne had admitted to him in private that she'd wanted him as her partner in bed and no other.

"Your heart is beating faster, my Theo," she purred in his ear seductively. "Are you looking forward to our kiss then?"

He nodded enthusiastically and tilted his head back so that he lay against her soft shoulder. "Hell, yeah, My Queen. I want your lips all over me. Your hands, too." He shut his eyes and sighed in longing. "I want you to tear into me, Daphne. I want you."

"Do you?" She nuzzled his temple with her nose. "And why is that, precisely? Expound upon your analysis, as your card requires."

Inhaling deeply, letting himself fall back fully into her embrace, Theo relaxed and thought of all the reasons why he wanted this witch for his own. "To start, you have the most entrancing eyes, My Queen."

Her lips rested upon the shell of his ear. "In what way?" she whispered the question, making electric tingles race up and down his spine.

Theo hummed in pleasure at the sensation and let his inner poet peek out for a bit (sure, even he could be romantic at times - when he could be bothered to try). "They're not quite grey, not perfectly blue, but something in between, like...the waters of the lake outside the castle. They're mysterious and deep. Sometimes I wonder what goes on behind them."

His Queen's fingers drew light circles over the skin on his bared pecks. The sensation was lulling and comfortable. "I was not aware that you were acutely attentive to such small physical nuances, Theo," his partner admitted.

"I'm Slytherin," he replied nonchalantly. "I do notice things - like you staring at me all this last week when you didn't think I was looking."

Daphne hummed in consideration. "I see I have underestimated you. Interesting. That's one down; however, and you still have nine more to go," she reminded him in a playfully sultry tone.

"You're dedicated and meticulous to detail," he pointed out with a grin, purposefully picking a learned skill to counter her innate physical beauty. "I don't know how you can perform all of the duties of a Prefect, and help to plan the various dances and events for the students on top of studying for N.E.W.T.s and helping to tutor your sister. I'm surprised you're not mental from such a busy schedule and such pressure."

He felt Daphne's slender shoulder shrug. "It is no different from your learning a surfeit of Quidditch tactical maneuvers, perfecting them, training your body for long hours to assure you are in peak physical shape, as well as studying for your N.E.W.T.s – all of which you accomplished this year, Theo."

He frowned slightly. He'd never thought of anything he'd had to do for Quidditch as work. It had
always just been fun. Now that he thought about it, though, he realized it could be seen in such a light. On average, he'd spent ten hours a week on the back of his broom, zooming about the pitch with the team. And he, Malfoy, and Zabini went to the weight room to work-out every other night for two hours at a time, spotting each other at weights, and challenging each other in crunches, pulls, and fast rope skipping.

"All right, that one kind of fizzled. How about this: you've got the sexiest vocabulary I've ever encountered," he grinned cheekily, glancing at her over his shoulder. "I think you're the smartest girl in school, honestly - even more so than Granger. That dictionary you carry around in your head and spout out in normal conversation makes me super hard for you."

His partner's laugh was elated. "Indeed? Then you may consider that I perform for your auditory pleasure, if it further amplifies your fascination in my person."

Theo shut his eyes again and moaned. "That's what I'm talking about!" He gripped his cock in his hand and began stroking slowly up and down. "See what you do to me, My Queen? Just your voice…" He hissed and opened his eyes, watching his fingers glide over his length expertly. "You make me want to come just listening to you, Daphne."

A gentle kiss touched his cheek, and her eyelashes tickled him softly in passing. "I will give you permission to bring yourself, my Theo…but only after you have concluded your inventory of my attributes." He hummed a small, frustrated, defeated sigh and let go of himself, only to have Daphne's hand wrap around his and brought them together back to his dick a moment later. "You may continue stroking your cock, my lovely wizard. I am a natural voyeur for your activities, as you well know."

"Ahhh…thank you, My beautiful, luscious Queen," he sighed in deep satisfaction, allowing his hand to caress back over his length leisurely, careful not to build up his excitement too fast, for he had a list to finish first. Daphne let him go, her arms returning to cradle him, to gently glide over the flesh of his hard abs and chest.

"Pray, continue," she dictated authoritatively, and Theo couldn't help the smirk that crawled up his face at her imperious tone. Gods, he could seriously fall for this woman!

He considered all he knew of Daphne from watching her on and off for the last few months. "You move more gracefully than any woman I've ever known. When you crossed the room to me last round, you just seemed to glide, and your hips…" He shook his head in amazement. "Fucking sexy, My Queen."

"Mmmm… I like that observation in particular," his lover purred, stroking over his nipples, causing the heat in his balls to burn. "Do go on."

Swiping his thumb over his crown to smear some of the pre-cum up and down, making his stroking easier, Theo settled back even more heavily into his woman. "Your perfume is exotic and tempts me to want to get closer. Every time I smell it, I just want to press my nose into your throat and inhale while fucking you nice and slow against the wall in a dark corner."

Her lips inched around his cheek, placing soft kisses. "Perhaps I will give you that opportunity during this game, my Theo."

His hand on his todger unconsciously tightened and he shoved through his fingers, urged on by a surge of his hips. "Oh, yeah, I'd love to shag you just like that once in my life. I'd go nice and deep inside you…" He moaned and watched himself wanking, building up slowly.
"Focus, my sexy wizard," Daphne reminded him, tapping his heart with a fingernail. "Six more compliments are due."

Theo chuckled. "Sorry, My Queen. I'm aching to get off. I'll try to do better to control myself."

"Yes, Theo, impulse control is a skill you will perfect during this game," she submitted matter-of-factly, putting her hand back over his, slowing his rhythm down to a crawl. "This is your first lesson. Take your time fostering your orgasm. Enjoy every petite sensation, experience it fully. It will make the culmination all the sweeter, I promise."

He grunted. "This is the longest I've gone with wood without taking care of it. It's difficult."

Her lips were back at his ear, coaxing with that husky, sexy voice of hers, her hand continuing to move right along with his. "Your partner will believe you to be the most tender and fantastic lover in the universe if you can sustain yourself within the confines of her welcoming pussy. You could bring her multiple times in a single session, as well as yourself, if you follow the rule of patience and restraint. Sex will be wholly, unreservedly fulfilling if you have faith in my instruction in this matter. Do you entrust your education to me, my Theo?"

Swallowing hard, Theo tried to picture making a woman orgasm multiple times for him. He'd never accomplished it, usually too fast to find his own release. He'd love to reach that level of control and nodded earnestly. "I trust you, My Queen. I'll do whatever you want."

Her hand allowed a few more mutual passes over his length before it removed itself again, returning to its previous resting spot. "Continue with your accolades of my qualities, and do not increase the pace of your stroking. I command it."

Shit, hearing her say it that way made sweat break out on his upper lip. He loved when she bossed him around!

Focusing on his list, he tried to ignore what his hand was doing (could he ask for anything more impossible to accomplish?), and came up with his next flattery. "Hell, your sexual knowledge is unprecedented. How in Merlin's mystery did you learn this stuff? I read PlayWitch, and I've never even heard of tantric sex or multiple orgasms for a bloke!"

"Perhaps I will have an opportunity to enlighten you on the subject during this game, if the cards allow," she furtively answered.

"I hope so," he grinned. "I'd love to go to whatever school you went to for this stuff. Maybe you could take me there sometime?"

When she didn't say anything in return, an awkward silence ensued, and it finally occurred to him that he'd just made an offer for them to have something outside of the game... something she'd been crystal clear about not wanting to pursue from the beginning. That thought pained him some, making his erection droop a bit. As if sensing his sudden distress, Daphne's hand moved purposefully to wrap about his once more, helping him to regain what he'd lost. Focusing on the motion of her tiny fingers around his cock, trying to force his attention back to the here and now, to enjoy what he could get from her, Theo attempted to shut out everything else for the moment. He shut his eyes, tilting his neck back, and sighed forlornly.

"Daphne..."

"What other worth do I hold in your eyes, beloved?" she asked quickly, trying to bring them back to the topic and avoid a discussion of the subject, he knew.
Giving in for the moment, he thought up another item. "You're the most self-possessed woman I've ever met. You know what you want and aren't afraid to ask for it. That confidence is bloody sexy." Opening his eyes, chewing his bottom lip as they stroked together a little faster and his erection was fully renewed, hard and ready, he thought up another one. "You're magically powerful. I've seen you cast hexes in D.A.D.A. and Charms that amaze me with your strength. I think this one and your confidence go hand-in-hand actually."

Out of the corner of his eyes, Daphne adjusted her glasses with her free hand, then replaced it immediately over his peck and swirled her fingers lazily over his nipple. "They do. The secret to being a powerful witch or wizard is having the utmost confidence that the spell you will cast is going to perform exceptionally well. This is especially true for wandless magic. Most practitioners fail to master such spells because they feel the loss of their wand, and forget that the magic comes from within them. The wand is merely a focus, endowed with properties to aid in the centering of one's energies, but one's hand can perform the same service just as easily with practice."

He glanced up over his shoulder at her. "No shit?"

Daphne's smirk became positively wicked. The hand on his cock stilled, her fingers wiggled and sotto voce, she murmured a spell. Instantly, Theo's dick tingled with gentle warmth that caused his bollocks to tighten and his dick to weep pre-semenal fluid. "Oh, fuck!" he moaned in bliss. "What was that?"

"A lust spell," she evenly informed him. "Would you like me to nullify it?"

Bloody hell, his cock was throbbing with the need to reach its completion. "I thought you wanted me to learn self-control and restraint," he panted, taking both of their hands off of his prick. "I can't learn that if you make me jizz everywhere so quickly. So...yeah, reverse it quick or I'm going to come any second."

Daphne kissed his sweaty forehead. "You have pleased me exceedingly with your response, beloved." Wiggling her fingers again, his partner invalidated the spell upon him, and immediately, Theo's urgency to climax eased back. He was still painfully hard, but not on the edge any longer, much to his relief. "Your willingness to master this test makes me want to reward you. When you are ready to ejaculate, I will recast the spell. Your orgasm will be amazingly delicious." Her hand aided his in once more returning to gripping his cock and stroking. "Finish your final admirations and I will set you free, my dearest."

Enjoying their joint fondling of his privates immensely, Theo bit back on the longing to increase their pace, wanting to learn the secrets to being a good lover. He planned on cramming as many of Daphne's lessons into his brain as he could during the next several hours, and to perfect as many of them as possible so he could use them on her later when he tried to convince her that they belonged together.

He had firmly decided to pursue her when this game was over, regardless of his previous promise, because now that he knew her better, he found that he really dug on her. Greengrass was an awesome catch – smart, beautiful, of good stock, sexually adventuresome, and he intuitively knew that she had a sleeve full of tricks to keep him interested for a long time.

Yep, she was the girl for him - hands down. No fighting it anymore.

Now, he only needed to convince her to allow his suit...

Closing his eyes again, he grit his teeth, ignoring the building burn at the base of his shaft. "We'd make cute, pure-blood Slytherin babies. My snobby family would heartily approve. I think yours
would, too."

Her hand faltered a bit. "Theo…"

A first warning.

Knowing he was in trouble, Theo cut off the inevitable chastisement with his final veneration: "You, My Queen, are extremely caring. Remember how stressed Astoria was during her O.W.L examinations? That small bouquet of wildflowers you conjured for her on the fly to cheer her up...it was lovely. That was one of my most favorite uses of magic, ever."

Daphne's hands on him completely stilled and her voice was strangely soft, almost hesitant. "One of your favorites? Truly?"

It was the first time he'd ever heard Daphne Greengrass sound less than confident. He paused in his self-pleasuring to consider that and looked again over his shoulder to meet her eye. "Yes. It really was quite a thoughtful and beautiful display of magic. Most people use magic for selfish reasons – to get something done they don't want to do, or to fix a mistake they've made, or to give them some sort of advantage. You used it simply out of love for your sister."

Assessing cornflower-colored eyes measured his sincerity, even as two blooms of red blossomed in Daphne's cheeks. "Thank you...for saying that."

Her voice strove to be even and controlled, but at the end, there was a slight trembling vulnerability in the tone.

Something shifted between them in that moment and Theo felt emboldened to take advantage. Turning completely around in his seat, dislodging her hands from his body in the process, he reached up to remove Daphne's glasses.

"Theo..." she warned a second time on a growl, her features tightening up with shocked anger, but he silenced her with a finger across her lips, dropping her lenses carefully to the white carpeted floor.

"I want that kiss now, My Queen. Your card says you have to do it, and I want it."

Grabbing the undersides of her legs, he yanked her forward and onto his lap, wrapping his arms about her securely. The hem of her dress rode up, and with one hand, he skimmed it up even further, gripping her rounded hip. He pulled her a little roughly into intimate contact with his body. Separated only by the satin of her knickers, Theo's cock begged for instantaneous fulfillment.

"Call it my belated birthday gift," he breathed, buzzing her lips, staring her in the eyes through a half-lidded gaze. He had turned eighteen just this last month.

Huffing quick breaths against her cheek, he watched her carefully, waiting. Her card was specific – she had to initiate the kissing part - but she seemed frozen between her justified anger at him and the lust for him that he could feel burning through him in her stare.

"Slap me now if you need to," he offered in a pleading voice, hoping to override her ire with a little begging. "Hate me for forcing this, punish me later, but I've got to have you, Daphne. Please, give me your kiss."

It took half a minute more before his witch made her choice not to walk out the door on him, much to his HUGE relief! It had been touch and go there for those long, nerve-wracking seconds, but when her frown gradually transformed, tilting upwards at the edges with grudging approval and admiration for his audacity, Theo knew he'd won her over. Relenting fully to his impudent request, her hands
smoothed up his chest, over his shoulders, and her fingers tangled in his hair instead. Gripping tightly, causing his blood to rush through him from head to toe, she regained her confident command of the situation, staring him down with wicked determination.

"Happy Birthday, beloved."

With that, she closed her eyes and sealed the miniscule distance between them.

The kiss was the most perfect Theo had ever received. It was hot, demanding, wet and wanton. It held nothing back, gave and took all, and impossibly promised even more with every pull of lips. He gasped into Daphne's mouth, his mouth smacking against hers with fierce, wild desire. Her tongue thrust crazily in between the gap and tangled up with his, possessing him, boldly declaring that he was hers, that she would rock his world inside out, and at the same time, stated unequivocally that he was her whole world back.

He whimpered, tightening his arms about her, and slamming his fingers through her long, soft hair, holding on.

Her fingers wiggled against his skull and she whispered something a second before a volcano erupted through his blood, shooting straight through his center. Throwing his head back as his whole body arched from the currents of electricity firing down his spine, Theo shouted Daphne's name as his cock exploded with pleasure. His come burst out of him in pulse after pulse of hot, throbbing gushes that saturated the front of her panties and her lower abdomen, staining her dress. He could hardly breathe from the pressure as his chest squeezed tightly and behind his eyelids, fireworks exploded in a myriad of colors.

It took at least ten seconds for him to come down off the initial high, and then another half a minute for his body to stop squirting seed everywhere. His balls ached.

"Daphne… oh, God, Daphne…"

He clung to her, pressing his nose into her neck, inhaling her sexy, sultry perfume just as he'd wanted. His lungs felt grated, his throat raw.

"Sweetheart…"

He dragged his mouth over her skin, slamming it down over hers again, kissing her with passion and need.

They kissed for a long time – well, long for Theo, who had never spent more than a few minutes on foreplay of any kind with a woman. The act itself was physically and emotionally satisfying, and he realized in those moments what he'd been missing, craving in his sexual conquests for so long: a connection. He'd found it with Daphne.

Pulling back, he touched her cheeks softly and gave her his most melting smile. "You were right: amazingly delicious."

Looking down at his flaccid, tired member, and the mess he'd made all over them both, he couldn't help but grin wide. "Oops."

Daphne laughed again, and it was a pretty sound, drawing his attention back to her face. Her eyebrow was arched. "You have an astounding ability to assert the obvious with a concision of words, Theo."

He waggled his eyebrows back at her. "And you do just the opposite, My Queen."

"Impudent man," she chided gently, and stood, shucking her dress and undergarments and
shoes, heading towards the opposite wall of the room where there appeared a shower. She looked over her shoulder at him as the water began falling over her body. "Surely, you do not intend to present yourself to the group looking so bedraggled, beloved? Come, join me. We have ten minutes remaining until call."

Jumping up like a puppy after an enticing squeaky toy, Theo joined his witch under the shower, allowing her to clean him off with a soft cloth and body soap that was scented the same as his cologne.

As she finished washing him down, switching to a soap that carried her own scent (gods, he loved this room!), he sniffed both small bottles of the liquid soaps and looked at her with curiosity.

"Your cologne is exotic, Theo, and tempts me to want to get closer," she used his words back at him with a naughty, enticing smile. "Every time I smell it, I just want to press my nose into your throat and inhale while fucking you nice and slow against the wall in a dark corner."

He gave her a slow, evil smile in return. "Perhaps I will give you that opportunity during this game, sweetheart."

With that, they hopped out and dried each other off. Theo threw on his clothes quickly and ran out into the common area just as the chimes rang, grabbed his wand off the table and returned to his private room to Scourgify the mess off from Daphne's clothes, and drying both of their hair with a quick spell.

When she was re-dressed, he boldly took her hand and guided her out into the main room, asserting in public his claim over Daphne by kissing her quickly before sitting back into the sofa. To his wonder, she blushed while readjusting her glasses, apparently forgetting to give him his third warning for daring to step over the line again.
As soon as they'd hopped up from the sofas and met again, Harry had taken a hold of Tracey's hand and dragged her back into their private room. Shutting the door quickly, he spun on her, amped to touch her again.

"Say it's okay to hug and kiss you again," he begged, his heart leaping madly in his chest.

Tracey's beautiful smile lit up her face. "It's okay to hug and kiss me again," she parroted him, stepping closer to him. "Now you say the same," she bid.

Harry nodded excitedly. "Heck, yes! Hug and kiss me!"

His girl's arms wrapped about his waist and their bodies collided as she melted into him. Dropping his card to the floor and thrusting his hands into her hair, Harry bent his head to capture her affection again.

There was no gentleness this time; he started out strong with intention. His tongue licked over hers, stroking at her lips boldly, possessively. Tracey gasped, tipped herself closer, encouraging his ravaging hunger for her taste. As her confidence in their melding grew, her mouth fought for more of his kiss, and Harry felt his witch's carefully contained wildness spilling out in the grip of her hands through his hair and the passion of her response. The little whimpers escaping her throat between the pulling of their lips and the writhing of her lithe body against his drove him mad, made his higher brain fuzz out as instinct took over. She was so soft, pliable, and as eager as he...

As they came up for air finally, Harry's heart was beating madly in his chest. He pressed his cheek to Tracey's and rubbed gently against her. "I really like doing this with you," he confessed. "I don't even know you all that well, but I feel like..." He nuzzled into her throat. "This is a good thing we have going here. Do you feel the same?"

"Yes," she whispered softly in his ear as she turned her head and nestled closer. Her fingers caressed him over his shirt, causing tingles to run up and down his spine. "Harry, I really like you a lot."

His stomach turning somersaults in giddiness, Harry swallowed heavily against the emotion that crept up his throat. All his young life, he'd been alone. Yes, he had excellent, loyal, companionable friends and a godfather who doted on him, and they had all filled the role of his lost family, but he still felt the distinct lack of a deeper, more elusive and meaningful connection.
From the moment he'd first known the truth about his parents' relationship, his greatest wish had been for his heart to be filled up with the kind of love James and Lily Potter had had for each other. To be cared about for the man he had grown into, to prove that he was worthy of such a gift, to give of himself fully and without reservation to someone who could accept him with equal feeling – that was his most profound desire.

Had he found it at last in this witch? Was this where his heart could truly lie?

There was only one way to find out; he would play this game through with courage and honesty, and allow himself to hope.

"Are you thirsty or hungry?" he asked, pulling back slightly, keeping his arms about her, still needing that important contact.

Tracey shook her head. "I'm good for now. Thank you." Shyly, she brought her arms around and up between them to play with the collar and top buttons of his shirt. "Perhaps, though, we should begin? I don't want us to lose the game because we forgot to perform our cards." Her teasing smile was adorable, and lit up her hazel eyes with glimmers of mischief.

Harry cleared his throat, having read his card earlier and feeling a tad nervous about her reaction. "My card this turn is a bit, um…well…you're going to laugh at me," he admitted, reciting from memory his action this round:

**FORFEIT: You must sing a romantic song to your partner.**

Tracey gave a tinkling, sweet laugh. "That sounds like fun, actually!"

Feeling the heat crawl up his cheeks, Harry shook his head. "Good thing we all invested in earmuffs for Sprout's class, because you're going to need them this round. I sound like a juvenile Mandrake when I sing."

Leaning up on tiptoes, Tracey gave him a small, quick kiss with her eyes locked onto his. "You said your dancing was terrible, too, but I found it to be rather enjoyable."

Ooh, boy. Yep, he was definitely losing the argument between his heart and mind to take things slowly.

There was no denying it; a few more innocent remarks and kisses like that and he was going to be head over heels in love.

"So, um, what about your card?" he asked, trying to keep the conversation rolling.

Now it was his partner's turn to blush, but the smile she tried to hide by pursing her lips made things in his belly crawl about with eagerness. Apparently, her card was either going to be completely silly like his or…

Pulling herself from his arms and stooping to pick up the card she, too, had let fall to the floor when they'd embraced, she read it to him:
**FORFEIT:** Your partner gets to lick any part on your body of their choice. You cannot touch them.

His tongue on her body…anywhere he wanted?

Harry's 'friend' in his pants jerked awake.

Bloody hell, he really should have wanked before coming to the game, like Ron had suggested. It had been weeks since he'd been with a woman, and now he was here with this irresistible, very attractive witch (who smelled entirely too tempting, and smiled with her whole being, and made him feel alive), and the first blatantly sexual act between them was going to probably make him come in his pants.

Darn, he had better control than this!

Maybe.

He hoped.

Tracey stepped away from him and drifted towards the couch. Harry suddenly felt worried by her reaction. He hurried to her side, took a seat next to her on the sofa and took her hand in his. "We don't have to do this if you don't want," he offered, his heart slamming under his ribs in anxiety. "We can trade cards, or…I'll forfeit. I don't want to push you into something you're not comfortable with."

His partner looked up at him with wide, surprised eyes. "What makes you think I don't want your mouth on me?"

Harry's jaw dropped open.

Holy lords above, did she really just say that?

Realizing how bawdy she'd just sounded, Tracey tried to backtrack. "I…I mean…I like your tongue. It's a nice tongue," she stammered, her face positively radiating crimson.

He couldn't help it – Harry started laughing. "Well, I'm glad we've established that," he finally managed. "So, it's okay for me to perform my card on you then?"

Tracey nodded. "I'd like that… For you to lick me…" As if realizing after the fact how sexual that sounded, she slapped her knee with her free hand. "Oh, foot! You know what I mean!" She shut her eyes and sighed deeply, shaking her head in frustration. "Why are you the only person on the planet I find myself tongue-tied around?"

Tenderness welled in Harry's heart, even as a wide grin overtook his face. Cupping her jaw, he turned her towards him and her eyelids fluttered open to zero in on his again. "Tell you what, I'll put my mouth on you only where you want. You tell me, okay?"

Her hand in his, still resting on her lap, trembled slightly, but she nodded. "Okay. But…can you go first? I think…I'm a little too nervous right this second."

Leaning forward, Harry placed a gentle kiss on her lips. "All right." He sat back and let her hand go, tugging at the collar of his shirt, uneasy with the idea of belting out a song for her. Recalling a trip he'd taken last summer into Muggle Soho for a night of wacky fun with Fred, George, Charlie, Ron and Hermione, an idea suddenly struck him. "Hey, do you know what Karaoke is?"
Tracey shook her head. "A Muggle invention, I'm guessing?"

He nodded. "It's interactive music that you can sing a song to. The words appear on a television screen – remember what that is from Muggle Studies?"

Tracey lit up. "Yes, I'm half-blood, remember? My mother was Muggle-born. We had an old black and white telly in my house when I was a child, but it kept breaking because of the magical interference from Mum's spells." She frowned suddenly. "How are you going to make it work here?"

Harry, who had the idea already forming in his head as to how to make it work, waggled his eyebrows at her. "Watch the wizard work his magic," he joked, then concentrated on what he wanted to appear on the far wall.

A giant movie picture screen unfolded, the canvas flopping to the ground.

With another thought, he had the couch rotating to face the screen. Tracey laughed in surprise and lifted her legs as the sofa righted itself.

Next, he conjured a karaoke projector, commanding that the item be able to work magically. Hey, if the fireplace could do it, why not this? Maybe he'd even just invented something new!

He summoned a microphone and surround-sound speakers to sit all about the room to work with the projector.

Last, he considered the musical selection. Something fun, but romantic…

Ah, a little Harry Connick Jr. would do the trick!

"Don't laugh," he warned his date as the sound of a jazz piano began, followed by a full big band orchestra. On the screen before them in black letters against a light blue backdrop, a series of words appeared. As the words changed colour to cue him, Harry began singing.

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**A little bit of me and a whole lot of you.**
Add a dash of starlight and a dozen roses, too.
Then let it rise for a hundred years or two,
And that's the recipe for making love.

*It doesn't need sugar 'cause it's already sweet.*
*It doesn't need an oven 'cause it's got a lot of heat.*
*Just add a dash of kisses to make it all complete,*
*And that's the recipe for making love.*

*And if you've made it right you'll know it…* 
*It's not like anything you've made before.* 
*And if you've made it wrong you'll know it…*
*'Cause it won't keep you coming back for more.*

*I didn't get it from my grandma's book upon the shelf.*
*I didn't get it from a magical and culinary elf.*
*No, a little birdie told me you can't make it by yourself.*
*And that's the recipe for making love.*
During the interlude, Tracey nudged him with her shoulder. "Liar! You sing really well!"

Harry cleared his throat, feeling the stifling heat rise up his cheeks again, and finished up the song.

_It's not like anything you've made before…_

_No, 'cause it won't keep you coming back for more…_

_No, I didn't get it from my grandma's book upon the shelf._

_Didn't get it from a magical and culinary elf._

_No, a little birdie told me that you can't make it by yourself._

_And that's the recipe…_

_Ooh, that's the recipe…_

_And that's the recipe for making love!_

Tracey clapped enthusiastically at the end and threw her arms about his neck, kissing him soundly on the lips. "That was marvelous!"

Harry's face heated up; even his ears felt hot. "Uh, thanks." To cover his momentary ineptitude, he leaned forward and kissed Tracey back. "Want to give it a try?" he offered her the mic.

Tracey bit her lip. "I…don't know too many Muggle songs."

Harry shrugged. "Just pick something you do know and might be able to sing without sounding like a croaking toad, and then laugh about it afterwards." He winked at her and gave her a cheesy grin. "That's the secret to getting through karaoke."

Tracey hesitantly took the microphone. "I just sing into this?" she asked, bringing it to her lips and jerking back as her voice echoed loudly throughout the room. "Oh, well, this seems easy. Okay, a song… Oh! I know!"

She gave him a sly look from the corner of her eye, her lids lowering to half-mast and a wicked smile illuminating her features, making Harry's prick stand up and take serious notice again.

"So, do I just tell the machine to play the song I want and ask for the lyrics to appear on the screen then?"

He swallowed and nodded, wondering what she was up to. His partner looked, in that moment, like the cat that had swallowed the proverbial canary.

"All right then, you asked for it…” she warned.

A jazz trumpet began, and when the words immediately appeared on the screen before them, Harry nearly fell over in astonishment, a hearty laugh bubbling forth from his lips even as Tracey began singing:
I am here to state...
I'm here to relate...
To explain...
and make it plain that:

I'm just wild about Harry,
and Harry's wild about me!
The heavenly blisses of his kisses
fill me with ecstasy.

He's sweet like chocolate candy,
and just like honey from a bee!
Oh, I'm just wild about Harry,
and he's just wild about me!

Oh, I'm just wild about Harry,
and he's just wild about...
Cannot do without...
He's just wild about me!

Tracey joined in the laughter as soon as the last note hit, her face practically glowing from embarrassment.

Harry applauded, shaking his head and continuing to chuckle. "Brava! You sounded just like Judy Garland, too!" He leaned over and kissed her smiling cheek.

"Can we do it again?" she asked, her eyes positively radiant.

How could Harry possibly say 'no' to that? "Want to go or shall I?"

Tracey handed the mic back. "Your turn. Sing something fun to me, señor."

Considering his next song already, he took the proffered device and mock-bowed. "As you command, mistress mine."

He sang "I Saw Her Standing There" by The Beatles to her next, turning it into something totally silly by intentionally singing it campy. To his delight, Tracey knew this song, and she even half-danced in her seat, bopping back and forth and snapping and clapping in time to the beat.

On her turn, she sang Lesley Gore's version of "Sunshine, Lollipops and Rainbows" to him. She was such an amazingly good singer, even better than the original artist in his opinion, her melodic voice turning even a fast-paced, fun song into something adorably sultry. It made him want to throw her into the couch and snog her senseless.

They ended the set with a slow, romantic tune of Harry's choosing - one of his favourite songs from the previous decade: "I Want To Know What Love Is" by Foreigner. It seemed like that song perfectly reflected his feelings for her in that moment, and he wanted to share this with her, knowing she probably hadn't ever heard this song before, since her knowledge of Muggle music seemed to end with the 1960's. Grabbing her hand, he stood and pulled her up into his embrace.

Harry slow-danced with her again, softly singing along with the original vocalist, Lou Gramm, in her ear as he held her close.
I gotta take a little time…
A little time to think things over.
I better read between the lines,
In case I need it when I'm older.

Now this mountain I must climb,
Feels like the world upon my shoulders.
And through the clouds I see love shine…
It keeps me warm as life grows colder.

In my life there's been heartache and pain,
I don't know if I can face it again...
Can't stop now - I've traveled so far
To change this lonely life.

I wanna know what love is,
I want you to show me.
I wanna feel what love is,
I know you can show me.

Pressing kisses against her ear, moving down her throat, Harry decided that now would be the perfect time to perform her card.

Suckling a little hard against her pulse, he began his seduction of her senses, whispering the words to the song at each parting of his lips from her skin.

I'm gonna take a little time,
A little time to look around me.
I've got nowhere left to hide…
It looks like love has finally found me.

Tracey melted into him, turning her neck fully, giving him complete, unfettered access, trusting him to guide her through this moment. Her fingernails scraped through his hair as he nibbled and licked, running his tongue all up and down her throat.

In my life there's been heartache and pain,
I don't know if I can face it again…
I can't stop now - I've traveled so far
To change this lonely life.

Gripping her hips tightly, Harry held her still as he let his mouth explore the skin of her neck and the
dip of her shoulder thoroughly.

"So sweet," he murmured in her ear as he took her lobe between his teeth, nipping it.

I wanna know what love is,
I want you to show me.
I wanna feel what love is,
I know you can show me.
I wanna know what love is,
I want you to show me.
And I wanna feel, I want to feel what love is,
And I know, I know you can show me.

His witch moaned and gasped, pressing her body into his completely, her left leg running slowly up the outside of his.

Smoothing his hand down her hip, around the curve of her bum, down her leg, he gripped her under her knee and pulled the leg up, wrapping it around his thigh, groaning as her sweet spot pressed and rubbed against his throbbing erection.

Let's talk about love…
(I wanna know what love is) The love that you feel inside.
(I want you to show me) I'm feeling so much love.
(I wanna feel what love is) No, you just cannot hide.
(I know you can show me)

Harry ravished Tracey's lips, slipping his tongue into the slit of her mouth and teased hers into playing with him again. They lapped at each other, kissed with wet, fierce emotion, equal in their shared ardor and passion.

Merlin Almighty, he wanted this girl!

I wanna know what love is, let's talk about love…
(I want you to show me) I wanna feel it too.
(I wanna feel what love is) I wanna feel it too.
And I know, and I know, I know you can show me.
Show me what is real,
Yeah, I know.

Grabbing his witch's long, soft hair and lightly tugging, he tilted her neck all the way back, and traced the curve of her chin with the tip of his tongue, over her bared throat, down to the heart-shaped centre of her collarbone, continuing further until his lips and tongue fell into the valley of her
breasts. She cried out in a husky moan as his mouth circled her left nipple through her dress and bra.

(I wanna know what love is) Hey I wanna know what love is.
(I want you to show me) I wanna know, I wanna know, want to know…
(I wanna feel what love is) Hey, I wanna feel love.
I know you can show me.

It occurred to him that things were moving really fast as the last notes of the song faded out.

He pulled back slightly, ran his mouth back up her throat to her ear. "Is this okay?" he murmured, not wanting to scare her off with his need to have her, but desperate for just a little more. She’d become his tempting Eve, with her perfectly shaped body, and her alluring, sincere eyes, and those painted lips of hers that tasted like sweet, summer melon. "Can I touch you like this with my hands and my mouth?"

He felt himself drowning in her scent, seduced by her heat.

Nuzzling against her hairline, he pressed wet lips to the shell of her ear. "Will you let me lick your nipples, Tracey? Let me taste you?"

Against his cheek, he felt Tracey's heart pounding as fiercely as his own, the erratic beat exciting the blood in his veins to a fierce tempo. She nodded to his request. "Yes," she sighed, her fingernails pressing into his shoulders. "Put your mouth on me anywhere you want, Harry."

His lower abdomen clenched tight at her daring, carte blanche offer, and Harry had to remind himself to take it slow; not to rush headlong into the sensations that recklessly pounded through his blood.

With slightly trembling fingers, he hooked his fingers under one shoulder strap of her dress and slid it down her arm, along with her bra, dropping it as far as it could go. Gliding across the fabric, he found and cupped her breast, pushing up gently, his mouth latching back onto the pulse of her neck and biting softly at the same time. Tracey moaned again in that same low, longing tone, and Harry felt her rising desire in her hitching breath, heard her softly elicited, mewling demands for more of the bliss he was providing, and a wave of scorching heat passed through him, slamming into his gut. Her need drove him onward, overrode his control measures.

Sliding the material of her dress down in the front, pulling the cup of her bra with it, he traveled back downward, letting his tongue trace circles over the exposed flesh as it was revealed. When one perfectly pink, erect nipple finally appeared, Harry groaned, and dipped his head immediately, taking it between his lips. It was absolute heaven, suckling on her pert, responsive breast, tasting the salty-sweetness of her skin.

"Oh, Harry!" Tracey gasped in bliss and arched her back even further to give him as much of herself as possible. "Harry!"

Hearing his voice said in that tone made Harry harder than he could ever remember being. If things kept going as they were…

He laved over her nipple with wet, insistent strokes of his tongue, pulling it back between his lips to nurse hard, dragging her further and further into the storm along with him.
He shifted his arms, tugged the other side of her dress and bra down, bared that breast as well, and turned his head to cherish it with similar heat. She had the prettiest nipples – of medium size, with beige areolas the size of galleons, dusky-coloured at the tips, and begging for his attention. He gave her what she wanted with ardor, both ravishing and worshipping at the same time.

Nibbling his way back up the other side of her throat, he lapped over every place his teeth had paused to bite, before he worked his way back up to her ear.

"Do you want me to stop?" he asked.

He swallowed, breathing hard, trying to regain control and to do the right thing, even as her face turned into his and recaptured his lips while one of her hands sought his at her waist, smoothing them together up over her torso until the roundness of her breast was cupped in his palm.

Tracey shook her head, her long, satiny hair brushing against his cheek. "No," she whispered somewhat firmly, and that was his undoing.

With a deep moan conveying his burning need, he ran his thumb over her wet nipple, rubbing back and forth, driving them both to new levels of insanity.

"Then we won't," he told her, feeling the darker, dominant side of his masculine nature switch on. "We won't until you beg."

Turning them about, dropping her leg from around him, he tumbled them onto the couch, lay her back against the cushions, and bent his head to take an exposed, straining peak once more into his mouth. Tracey's supple body writhed against his to the chorus of her approval as he sucked and nipped her tit.

"They're beautiful," he murmured in between licks. "The prettiest breasts I've ever seen and tasted. Pretty like you…" He moved to the other side, lapping, teasing her nip to stand to full attention. "You're perfect, Tracey. In every way, so perfect."

Raising his head, he reached for her lips again, continuing to tell her the thoughts in his heart amid kisses and stolen breaths.

"I've waited for someone like you. Just like the song said - waited so long. Will you be my girlfriend? I want you to be mine. Not just for the game, but after. I want you after, too. Three dates is enough time to know that, right?"

Tracey nodded, gasping as his fingers pinched her nipples, rolled them. "Yes! Oh, Harry, yes!"

Harry's mind was fuzzy with compelling lust, and he moved on instinct now, losing himself in the touch, taste, feel and scent of his witch. Davis was gorgeous, and willing, and the most powerful aphrodisiac in the world right then to his starved senses.

One of his hands slid down her waist to begin bunching up the hem of her dress. When he could reach easily under the fabric, he caressed her over her panties; they were damp with desire. When she undulated her hips into the heel of his hand, pressing what he knew to be her clit against him, he felt his heart leap straight into his throat. He nearly lost what remained of his sanity, then.

Slipping his hand over the top band of her knickers, he quickly shoved his fingers under and touched her soft, wet curls for the first time. Tracey gasped in surprise, then moaned as he began running his fingertips through the hair, tickling, stroking, familiarizing his tactile senses with her texture, scenting her musky arousal in the air between them.
His dick was so hard he ached clear to his very centre; he longed to rip those panties off and thrust into her, to bury his iron-hard length all the way up into her. Instead, he satisfied himself with slipping between her slit with his middle finger and lightly caressing her clit.

"Oh, Merlin!" Tracey cried out, arching into him. "That feels so good! I've never... Oh!"

Her innocent words slammed into his brain, hard-core and as heavy as a sledgehammer, and they jolted Harry out of the moment and made him realize just how far they'd progressed.

Godric's bones, he was fingering her!

Pulling away, he hurriedly lowered her dress again, trying to give her a modicum of respect, despite having shown her great disrespect in pushing for things so fast. "I'm sorry! I just... lost control." He looked into those wide, shocked, multi-coloured eyes of hers and felt remorse so great that his heart wanted to cower. "I didn't mean to push things so far, this quickly. I'm so sorry, Tracey."

Tracey's fingers on his lips shut him up immediately, and it was then that he recognized that she didn't seem to be in the least upset by what had transpired. In fact, she looked like being snogged properly and felt up was just what she'd always wanted; her swollen lips were parted by excited breath, her gaze shimmering with lust, a light sheen of perspiration on her forehead and cheeks indicated desire...

"Harry, I liked all of it. Please don't apologize," she shyly whispered, pulling his hand up slowly and letting it rest on the bared flesh of her breast once more. "Here, touch me again."

Licking his lips, Harry did as she bade, watching her face the whole time. She closed her eyes and hummed in pleasure, smiling, and the reaction was so honest and sincere, that it made him wonder again how it was she could be in this game. She seemed so innocent. But he knew she couldn't be; Malfoy made it clear that everyone playing had to be sexually aware.

"Kiss me again, Harry," she enticed, glancing at him through a half-lidded stare that called him to obey.

Melding their mouths together in a long, sensual kiss, bracing himself on his elbows and being careful not to press his erection too hard between her legs, Harry let his fingers gently, leisurely caress her nipples, this time in a more exploratory manner than a blatantly sexual one. In this way, he learned the feel of her breasts; noted that her right was a bit heavier than her left, that the left side was more sensitive to pinching, and that Tracey loved it when he moved them together in a counter-clockwise circular motion. He also learned that she loved her lower lip to be lightly bitten and that she enjoyed sucking on his tongue softly, while they mimicked the sex act with their mouths.

The chimes rang out eventually, signaling an end to this round's discoveries, much to their mutual disappointment. With deep sighs of regret, but also contentment, the two of them sat up together. With tenderness and care, Harry helped her to replace her clothes, giving her right nipple a naughty, final lick and kiss before covering it with her bra. Tracey's light whimper in his ear just then almost made him reconsider re-dressing her, and for half a second, he had the wickedest thought of simply undressing her again and this time, letting the two of them completely forget the game in favour of hours-worth of love-making.

Reality crashed in, however, when Tracey giggled. "I would never have pegged you for liking The Beatles."

This was the last thing he'd expected her to say, but strangely, it was the best thing she could have to pull him out of his wayward thoughts. Harry chuckled and affected a thick Liverpool accent. "I'm
British. Of course I like The Beatles! Doesn't everybody?"

He offered her a hand up, righted her clothes one final time, as well as his own, then smoothed down her hair.

As they headed for the exit, Tracey chuckled. "I'm quite sure Malfoy doesn't."

Harry rolled his eyes as he reached for the handle, cracking the door. "Yeah, well, let me amend my earlier statement: only utter prats don't like The Beatles."

A thought occurred and he shut the door again. Turning to her, he took her back into his arms and kissed her again, tasting her slowly. "I meant what I said earlier – about you being my girl. I want that very much, but you don't have to answer yet. Think about it this next question round, and then let me know the next time we're in here. Okay?"

Tracey looked at him with some amusement, her teasing smile telling him he was being silly to make her wait, as it was clear she intended upon answering in the positive to his suit, but she conceded easily enough.

He kissed the tip of her nose, her cheek and her lips again.

"Thanks for a fantastic third date, by the way. Can't say I've ever had anything quite like it. Want to do it again really soon?"

Tracey gave him a mysteriously sinful smile. "Hmmm…I'm not sure. You'll have to convince me by kissing me some more."

He chuckled, feigning resignation. "Oh, well…if I must."

Opening the door all the way, he lifted her off the floor bridal style with relative ease (she didn't really weigh all that much, honestly), and snogged her enthusiastically all the way back to the couches, taking his sweet time getting there.

As he put his stunningly gorgeous partner down a step away from the coffee table, his smile was brilliant.

"Right. So, see you for our fourth date in a few minutes then."

Davis nodded, grinning mischievously. "Mmm… I expect flowers next time, Mr. Potter."

He chuckled and kissed her one more time, rubbing his cheek against hers lovingly. "Yes, mistress mine. Flowers you want, flowers you shall receive."
Draco's heart was pounding with anticipation by the time his partner walked past him. The clack of her heels on the stone floor was muted by the thick Aubusson carpet he'd summoned the moment he'd stepped into the room and changed the decor. Romantic patterns in a Greek style were highlighted in beige and creams against an olive green backdrop, and were in stark contrast to the large, black leather couch which sat upon the carpet as the lone piece of furniture in the room. A magically lit hearth set against the back wall provided the only light in the room, creating a sensual ambiance. Hermione seemed oblivious to the changes, however, as her eyes were locked onto his as they slid past each other. He made sure to give her an extra heated look and a tiny smirk just to perturb her further.

It worked, earning him a twitched eyebrow and a steely glare. He snickered in satisfaction as he shut the door behind her. He trailed her across the floor, but instead of standing before the fire, he took a seat on the couch, the soft, supple leather crinkling and molding around him. From this angle, he could watch her profile as she stood before the magical flames, see how distracted and disturbed she was by the far-away look in her bronzed eyes as she absently raised her drink to her mouth and took a sip, by the small crease above her brow and by the way she bit her coral-coloured bottom lip as she pulled her glass away. Even worried, she was magnificent.

Distracting himself from lusty thoughts, he held his card up and read it aloud, deciding to take the initiative:

**DEED: Set your wand to vibrate and use it on your partner any way you want.**

Granger froze with her glass of water half-way to her mouth, her eyes widening perceptively. He saw the fear pass like a shadow over her face and felt a moment of disheartenment. Sure, they'd fallen back on slinging insults in the common area outside, but he'd thought they'd made real progress during the last action round. Hadn't they mentally 'clicked' over the meal? He knew he hadn't imagined the mirroring lust in her eyes as he'd leaned over to tease her, either.

"What does your card say?" he asked in an even, soft voice, trying to move past the awkward moment, hoping to get her to open up a bit, relax a little more.

Her lids lowered as she slowly raised her card to her eyes and she read it for him:
DEED: Your partner must give you a sensual foot and leg massage with a nice scented oil of your choice.

Ah, perfect. This gave them the ideal beginning, allowing them an opportunity to ease into things. "You can go first," he graciously offered, setting his card aside along with his wand (which he'd scooped up off the table before leaving the main room earlier), and got to his feet. "I don't mind."

Dark, measuring orbs shot to his, and he saw clear mistrust reflected there. Draco sighed in exasperation and held out his hand. "Come, Granger, we don't have all night. You wouldn't forfeit over something so simple as a foot rub, would you?" He willed a small end table into existence at the end of the couch, directing it to contain two soft hand towels. He toed off his shoes and knelt down by the table, looking at her over his shoulder. "Well?"

Looking between him, the table and the sofa, Granger made her decision to stay and play this round out, much to his great relief. Crossing to the couch, she took a seat, placing her half-full water glass on the table. "You wanted to be submissive," she growled at him. "Here's your chance to prove it, Malfoy."

He smirked lazily. "Oh, I intend to." Reaching for her right foot, he grabbed it up and began taking off her golden sandal before she had time to react. When her foot twitched, as if she would draw it away, he held on tighter and pinched her big toe lightly. "Stop. I'm not lifting your dress, just taking off your shoes. Geez, Granger, you're so jumpy."

A sigh of frustration escaped her lips. "Do you honestly blame me? Prior to today, you've practically considered me less than the stuff on the bottom of those shoes."

"I have not," he countered, smoothly extricating her foot from her sandal and placing it on the floor next to him. He then started on her left foot. "Quit exaggerating."

"You have so!" she argued, her voice rising in pitch. "Why else would you call me a 'Mudblood'?"

As he gently removed her heel and toes from her shoe and put it next to its mate, he looked up at her evenly. "When's the last time I even uttered that word?"

Granger opened her mouth, seemed to consider it, and shut her lips again, looking away in confusion. "I... can't recall."

Kneeling upright, Draco placed his hands on either side of her legs on the couch and stuck his face next to hers on purpose, looking her right in the eye. "Fourth Year, just before the Yule Ball. Now, ask me why that specific event."

She blinked, shocked to find them so close together, and leaned all the way back into the couch to put some distance between them. "Why?"

Draco's heart was literally hammering now under his ribs. He was going to reveal a little bit more of himself to her, and he feared the fallout would most likely be that she'd withdraw as soon as she heard the truth, but this was an important barrier of misconception between them that needed to be smashed down in order for them to move forward. He'd take the hit to his pride if it meant making progress. "Because you took my breath away that night, in that pretty, little periwinkle dress you were wearing." He smirked a little bitterly at her astonished look. "Oh, yes, I know the colour choice
was purposeful, and I even know what it meant - unlike your oaf of a date that night."

The acidic ire and jealousy that shot to the surface as he thought of Krum touching her came and went quickly, replaced by a strange melancholy.

"I couldn't take my eyes off of you the whole evening. Every time I tried to distance myself, there you were in the corner of my vision, smiling and laughing - dancing freely, like nothing in the world could hurt you. You were fearless in the face of all that jealousy aimed at you by the rest of us in that room, Granger. And for the first time in the three and a half years I'd known you, you were truly uninhibited. It was… beautiful."

Unwittingly, his eyes were drawn to those painted lips of hers, and he found himself wondering for the hundredth time what they tasted like.

"That's when everything changed. That's when I started doubting the beliefs my father had instilled in me. Because everything I was taught told me that a Mudblood shouldn't be so… exquisitely transcendent." He forced himself to look back up into her eyes. "I haven't said that word since, until this exact conversation."

Granger stared at him like he was half-mad - a wild animal gone tame, as if she wasn't quite sure she could trust it enough not to bite her hand off yet. Feeling a little vulnerable, Draco tore himself away, sitting back on his haunches again, and reached for a towel, busying his hands and mind. He placed it under her feet, and the second one across his lap. "So, do you have a preferred scent or shall I choose one?"

"What?" Hermione asked, clearly thrown by the sudden change in subject. "Scent? Oh…" She seemed to recover her composure rather quickly. "Um, no. You choose."

He'd totally thrown her, knew he'd really pushed her comfort levels this time. Hell, he'd shattered his own, so why the fuck not put them on equal footing? With a deep sigh, he thought up an appropriate scent for the massage, settling on a warm blend of black cherries, crème anglaise and sandalwood. A bottle popped into existence on the table next to him, and he swept it up, opened it, inhaled to assure himself of the selection (yes, it would be perfect), and then set about pouring it into his hands. "You'll have to lift the dress to your knees, both front and backside," he instructed. "I don't want to stain it with the oil."

Granger complied, and when her bared calves and ankles came into view, he forced himself to concentrate on putting the bottle back on the table and not spilling the oil warming up in the cup of his palm. He'd only ever seen her feet and legs bared that one time during the Yule Ball; every other time, they were covered, either by knee-high socks or slacks or those Muggle jeans she sometimes wore. The sight of those petite ankles, the slim width of her feet and their pretty arches, along with those adorably painted toenails made him uncomfortably aware of his growing erection.

Shit, he'd never been a 'foot man' before, but he had the feeling that after this massage, he was going to be a convert to the cause.

Taking up her left side first, he began by smoothing the slippery liquid over the golden skin on the top. Once the foot was good and coated, he pressed his thumbs into the bottom of her arch and gently, but with firm pressure, worked his way upwards. His partner moaned. Draco tried to ignore how that made his cock jump to attention, focusing on the task – the goal of relaxing her - instead. Otherwise, the second he touched her with his wand, she was either going to freak or beat his arse. He repeated the motion with his thumbs three times, working out the immediate kinks before concentrating on kneading her heel next.
"You've done this often," she stated with certainty.

Draco shrugged. "I've done it on occasion."

"Semantics," she challenged.

"What do you really want to know?" he tested her, reading the implied statement behind her initial one. "Are you asking if I give women foot massages as part of my normal sexual repertoire?"

She was quiet a moment as his thumbs ran circles up the edge of her foot. "Well, do you?"

Draco smirked. "No. Only the special ones get this kind of treatment."

"And the others?" she snapped with accusation.

His grin widened as he looked up at her, catching her eye as his fingers teased the sensitive skin between her toes, knowing the reaction that would cause. "Hard, fast fucking in whatever position is most convenient for the time allotted or the space permitted."

She licked her lips and bravely held his stare. "You have a lot of one-offs then?"

He shrugged again, letting his thumbs rub the pad of her big toe in circles. "You're looking for numbers," he stated. "All right, I'll tell if you do."

Hermione narrowed her eyes at him, considering the deal. "You go first."

Draco chuckled. "Fine, I'm not ashamed of my sex life, Granger. I've slept with nine women."

There was a short pause as she seemed to digest that information. "Any men?"

The question made him snicker as he shook his head. "No, sorry." He tossed her a cheeky grin. "You're not into that sort of thing, are you? 'Cause if we ever do a ménage a trois, beautiful, it has to be you and another female. I don't do apes."

She chuckled. "No, I'm straight and I prefer my men to be as well."

"How many men are we talking about here?" he asked, continuing to play with her toes, not moving the massage further yet, liking where this discussion was going and stalling to stretch his time out.

Granger paused, took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "I've slept with two men."

Draco felt his stomach tighten. Two? He'd only known about one. Who was the other bloke? "The Weasel everyone knows about. Was Finnigan the other?" His heart burned like fire in his chest at the thought of that cock-sucking Irish touching his girl…

Granger looked at him with sincere concern. "Oh. My. God!" She burst out laughing and pointed one perfectly manicured finger in his face. "You're jealous of Seamus!" Her smile became positively wicked, making his dick harder than granite. "Heard the rumours, have you, about how he's cut?"

_Fuckity-fuck-fuck-fuck!

Draco did his best to hide his ire away, playing it off as simple penis envy. "Jealous? Hardly. The guy's some kind of mutant. Seriously, how could any girl get pleasure from being ripped in half?"

Granger actually giggled, and this time without the influence of alcohol. "Welllll…" She exaggerated the pause. Draco pinched her calf, making her squeal and erupt into full-out peals of laughter. "Calm
down, Malfoy. No, I never slept with Sea,” she reassured him, patting his head with fondness, still smiling.

Despite the tiny annoyance he felt at being patronized, Draco actually felt relief overtake all other emotions at the moment. That tight knot in his chest eased. "So, who's fellow number two, then? Please don't tell me it's Saint Potter?"

She was quiet for a few moments, and Draco knew that she was debating over telling him more. Technically, she didn't have to divulge personal information to him. She didn't even have to talk to him, in fact, until she picked a card that required such an act.

"Charlie Weasley," she finally confessed. "Last Christmas. It was just once. Rebound sex for both of us."

Draco's jaw hit the floor. "Do my ears deceive me? You had a one-off with your ex-boyfriend's older brother? You? I would never have figured you for that kind of kinky."

His partner looked at him with disgust. "Honestly, it wasn't that life-altering an event. It was nice, but he was still in love with his ex-girlfriend, and there was the issue of Ron hanging between us, even though he and I had been broken up for over four months by then."

"Would you fuck him again if you could?"

The question was out of his mouth before he'd even realized he was going to ask it. Biting back his mounting jealousy again, Draco tried to cover by sounding sensitive, like one of those gossip columnists in PlayWitch. It wouldn't do to keep tipping his hand as he had been; he had to get better control of his internal green-eyed monster.

"Now that there's been almost a year of separation, and you and the Weasel are amicable, would you resume a relationship with Charlie if you could?"

Hermione appeared to give the question some serious thought, and that pit in Draco's stomach opened up again, this time threatening to drop him in without hope of rescue. Why could he never keep his mouth shut around this woman? Seriously, she drove him absolutely barmy!

"No, I don't think I could," she admitted, much to Draco's relief. "It was nice but, Charlie was a bit… overwhelming."

Draco massaged her sexy, toned calf with slow, rhythmic kneading, making sure to manipulate each stroke so it felt not just relaxing, but was also blatantly sexual. "Overwhelming in what way? Was it the 'fast and sweaty, up against a wall' kind of exciting, or a 'sweet and slow, and emotionally intense to the point where it left you broken-hearted' flavour of devastation we're talking about here?"

His witch blinked, truly blushing now. "Malfoy, I'm not sure it's such a good idea—"

He narrowed his eyes in defiance. "Bok, bok, bok, Granger." She'd opened this can of worms, so she could bloody well finish the discussion, as far as he was concerned. He wasn't sure he could take knowing any of this stuff later, anyway, especially after he'd had her. No, it was better to get it out of the way now, so he could stew properly and then try to put it behind him.

Hermione's mouth dropped open in astonishment. "Oh, you did not just give me the chicken, Malfoy! I'm a Gryffindor, for Godric's sake!"

He gave her his best Cheshire Cat grin, intentionally provoking her despite the fact she'd inadvertently incited him. "BOK. BOK. BOK," he tossed back in challenge.
Huffing with righteous indignation, the bookworm crossed her arms under her perky, unbound breasts and glared at him. "It was in a bed, for sixteen hours. He made love to me in every position you can imagine. I cried for more."

Draco felt a scorching flash of fury overtake him, and then he abruptly caught the tell-tale glint in her eye, and the small twitch at the corner of her mouth and he knew he'd been fooled. "You're making that up." He spanked her on the leg. "Tell me true or not at all."

The gig was clearly up, so his sassy partner started laughing and threw her hands up in surrender. "I thought the cards wouldn't let me get away with telling you a bald-face lie, but I had you going there, didn't I?" She looked inordinately smug about pulling one over on him.

A tiny bit of relief washed over him, and he took a deep, cleansing breath, working his way back down her leg, preparing to switch over. It was completely hypocritical of him, but the idea of her making love to any man –much less for more than half a day- made him see red.

"So, not sixteen hours. Still a Weasel though?"

She nodded. "Yes, still Charlie. I was visiting The Burrow – the Weasley family home," she clarified when he didn't recognize the term. "Everyone always goes home for the Christmas break, and Harry and I are always invited, too. I usually come in to stay a few days before the New Year. It was in the middle of the afternoon, and everyone was already outside playing in the snow. I'd gone back inside to get my scarf from the room I'd been assigned, and Charlie followed me up. We'd been flirting for a few days at that point, but I hadn't thought anything about it until just that moment when the door locked. The next thing… Well, you know what happened. It was, as you so crudely put it, fast and sweaty, hanging off the edge of Ginny's bed and with only half our clothes off. I think I still had my Chullo on, in fact, and the whole affair lasted maybe ten minutes - but then that's about average for an illicit rendezvous, I believe."

Draco stopped cold right as he picked up her other foot, shocked by her story. "Let me get this straight: First, you did it in a borrowed bed? Eww. Second, you wore a knitted hat while getting fucked? Mint! Even I haven't done that! Third, that's only the average amount of time you'd spend if you're in it for a quickie, not an 'affair.' And fourth, did you orgasm? I noticed you left that important detail out."

She slapped him on the shoulder as he began massaging her right foot in a mirror pattern to its twin. "I'm not telling you that! That's private!"

His eyebrows rose into his hairline with incredulity. "Are you serious? You could tell me that you were wearing outdoor skull apparel while riding the wild sausage on top of used bed sheets, but not whether you actually liked the experience or not?"

Personally, Draco thought that was his best use of colourful metaphor to describe the act of sex ever, but his partner obviously didn't share his humor. Her cheeks flamed brilliant crimson, and her eyes narrowed with distaste.

"You are the crudest prat I have ever had the misfortune of knowing," she accused.

He shrugged, undaunted, his cheek muscles positively smarting from all of the grinning he'd enjoyed this session. He hadn't had this much fun in years!

"Admit it: you like me being this way, Granger. It gives you someone to measure your prudishness against."
His partner was silent a moment, then cleared her throat. "Moving on now, have I answered all of your other questions to your satisfaction, Mister Curiosity?"

Well, that was a step-up from 'Mister Smarmy Pants,' at least.

Draco shook his head. "No, but I'll let you off the hook for now. Why don't you tell me what you know about Asian plants?"

He switched subjects on a whim, giving her a break from the sex talk for the moment… all while he rubbed the bottom of her foot in slow circles, being sure to press on the reflexology spot that was said to stimulate the reproductive organs. Well, he had been sorted into Slytherin, after all.

Hermione spent the remaining ten minutes of her massage time cramming as much useless information into his brain as possible. He tried to retain it, but realized that he was much too preoccupied with the question of whether she'd come for Charlie Weasley or not to really care about anything else. Besides, he'd have all of this information available to him later, when he actually cared enough to need it.

As he finished up the massage, he put her foot down, wiped his hands off with the towel in his lap, then rose back up on his knees and loomed over her again. Once more, she tipped back an equidistant amount until the leather cushion of the couch would allow her to move no further.

"You have the prettiest feet and legs, Granger, and I could rub them for hours listening to that amazing mouth of yours spew out facts that most of us would find impossible to recall –except maybe Longbottom, who's as hard-up for plants as you appear to be- but we are on a time limit here, beautiful, and I'd really like to get to my card done now."

Granger's eyes widened with sudden panic. "Right. Your card." She looked down at her hands in her lap. "Could I make a request before you begin, please?"

*What, like not doing it at all,* he bitterly assumed, grumbling at the thought. "Sure," he drawled instead. "I'll listen to any reasonable supplication."

She swallowed and forced her gaze to meet his. "Can you please not stick your wand inside my body in any capacity? I don't even use… toys… if you understand my meaning. It would be disgusting for me."

Truthfully, that wasn't too unexpected an entreaty from her, and so it didn't disappoint him in the least. He didn't want to scare Granger off, after all. What he ultimately wanted was her willing, squirming, wet and wild, not cursing him out, crying, or quitting the game on him. If this was one of her taboos, he could live with it.

"I can respect that and agree. I promise only sensual touching over the clothes with the wand. We'll make this just another type of massage."

Cinnamon eyes watched him warily as he picked up his wand and set it to very lightly, silently vibrate. Moving to the seat next to her on the couch without further delay, Draco slowly brought the wooden rod to Hermione's cheek. He stroked her flesh with the rounded end, moving in small, tight circles. Instantly, she twitched and began giggling.

"It tickles."

Her shoulders, he noted, relaxed some at that revelation, as if she'd expected it to prickle or hurt, but had instead discovered the sensation to be quite enjoyable. He moved the gently pulsing baton to the bottom of her jaw and lazily traced the line up and down.
His partner giggled again. "This isn't so bad."

When he moved it over to her ear next, tracing the shell around the back, then over the front to her lobe, working his way down the curve of her neck, her smile disappeared, however. Shivering as he slowly worked the trembling tip over her pulse point, she jerked a bit as the wand traced over one bared shoulder and down the inside of her arm to the bend in her elbow. Draco paused there to allow the wand to instigate desire, and then he let it travel down her forearm to the inside of her wrist, where it did the same.

Hermione's breathing quickened as he moved the quivering wood between each of her fingers, lingering with sensual intention against the fleshy, sensitive skin at the joint of each 'vee' and along the curve between index finger and thumb.

"Feel good?" he leaned his mouth towards her cheek, speaking softly.

Reluctantly, Hermione nodded. "It's… acceptable."

"Relax," he whispered as smoothly as the Devil, himself. "I won't hurt you, Granger. I'll only bring you pleasure, as promised."

Glancing down at the wand's path as it traveled across both her exposed knees to the other hand, and followed a reverse course up her right arm, over her shoulder, across her neck, Draco brought it around her jaw towards her lips, lightly pressing it against the bottom of her chin and stroking back and forth. "I'll be gentle," he vowed in a low, lulling tone, placing his lips mere inches from her ear. "Gentle and obliging, just like you wanted."

Her body began shuddering against him, as her breath hitched. She kept her eyes forward with stubborn insistence, however, as if trying to convince herself that what he was doing to her wouldn't affect her.

There was no way in hell he was going to let her avoid what he made her feel!

Pressing the lightly buzzing wand against her mouth, he very gently traced the shape. "Have I told you that you have the perfect mouth, Granger? A plump, bottom lip and a small, heart-shaped bow at the top." He nuzzled his face closer, careful not to touch her with his mouth without her permission. "I could kiss that mouth for hours, beautiful."

She glanced at him from the corner of her eye. "You're exaggerating."

Tracing a path over her chin again and down the center of her throat, causing her to tilt her head back, Draco smirked. "No, beautiful, I would cherish that mouth of yours, if you'd let me. I'd suckle your bottom lip and lap at your slit until you let me in. I'd coax your tongue to come out and play with mine. I'd nibble your fleshy bits with my teeth. I'd linger over each melding of our lips, sharing my breath and flavour with you. I'd sweep into your mouth and learn you the same way. It would be like sharing a little bit of our souls." He lowered his eyelids and gave her a sultry, promising expression. "I love kissing, Granger." The wand was tracing a path from shoulder to shoulder now, crossing over the halter. "Tell me true: has anyone ever taken the time to kiss you like that?"

Her eyes were wide, and in them, he saw the sad reality. Clearly, Granger was in need of a little T.L.C.

"You know I'm going to do that to you sometime before this game ends, don't you?" He used his wand against her jaw to turn her head towards him and stared her blatantly in the eye. "If nothing else, I'm going to kiss you as I've wanted to for years. You'll never forget my kiss when this whole
thing is over. I'm going to make sure of it." He let his eyes move down her face to her lips, and back, saw the skepticism in her gaze and felt the challenge stir his blood. "Don't believe me?"

She looked him square in the eye, her doubt evident. "No man can kiss that good."

Still so fearless! He wanted to take those pillowed lips of hers right there –fuck her bones into the very couch, in fact- but the Slytherin within cautioned patience. He would only win her willingness by going slowly. "We'll see," he simply replied, letting his wand drop back down her neck, letting his eyes follow the tracing path.

He let the head of his fluttering wand travel down between her breasts next, and her reaction was immediate: she drew in a deep, short breath.

"You said nothing sexual," she reminded him, angry now.

"No, I promised I would do nothing disgusting, and to keep the wand over your clothes. I did caveat this whole thing as a sensual experience, however." He rubbed the wand over the round top of her breasts. "This is not gross in the least. It's provocative, without being nasty, and it's pleasurable for both of us." He tilted his chin to the couch arm. "Lay back."

His partner's eyes widened and she shook her head.

He nodded in return just as fervently.

"My card," he reminded her. "My need this time." At the stubborn glint in her eye, Draco growled in frustration. "Granger, you know I won't do anything to you that you don't want me to. I've already promised not to hurt you. I want this to be fun for both of us, so stop fighting me. Just cooperate and we can get this over with faster."

She considered his request for a full minute at least. "Nothing I don't want you to do?" she required of him to vow again.

Draco checked his impulse to sigh and nodded. "Swear it on my magic. You say, 'stop,' we stop. No questions asked."

The vow on his powers seemed to convince her, and she flowed downward somewhat awkwardly into the wide couch cushions, resting her head and shoulders flat on the soft, leather pad. Draco crowded in between her inert body and the couch backing, leaning up on an elbow. The two of them squirmed to adjust to each other's comfort, and finally fit nicely into the space. He loomed a bit over her as a result, looking down into her face, and it was suddenly a very erotic pose, as if he were mounting her for sex.

Dark cider-coloured eyes looked earnestly up at him, and in that moment, Draco felt his heart leap into his throat and constrict. He swallowed past the lump, fought off the urge to nuzzle her, and instead let his wand come to rest back in between her breasts once more. "Relax," he again coached. "Close your eyes if you want. It's just a sensual massage."

With a deep sigh of surrender and a grumbled, "Fine," her long, dark eyelashes fluttered down and her lids shut. "I can't relax so easily, though. Speak to me again," she requested. "Like the first massage."

Grabbing onto that idea, Draco slowly moved his wand up and down her sternum, tracing a path clear to her belly button and back up,leaning his mouth to her ear. He purposefully spoke in a low, honeyed tone, trying to both ease and ensnare her senses. "The room is dark. The only light comes from gentle slivers of silver beams from the moonlight drifting through an open window, casting
shadows in the corners. The air is warm, a little sultry. You stand before the casement, magnificently
dressed in a shimmering black, silken nightgown that caresses your skin with every movement."

He let the wand begin to slowly drag concentric circles all over her belly and waist.

"What am I doing here?" she whispered the question, as if this innocent act of participation was
somehow too naughty for anyone else to hear.

Draco licked his lips, liking her partaking in her own seduction, continuing his lazily drawn rings
around her dress, touching bared skin where the edges aligned.

"You're waiting," he replied in the same, enticing tone. "For your lover. He's promised to come to
you soon."

"Where is he?" she asked in that same hesitant voice.

He couldn't have been served up a better line if he'd written this script himself. Leaning his mouth
closer to her ear, he answered. "I'm here, beautiful. In the shadowy corner, watching you, where I've
always been."

There was a significant pause of half a minute while she bit her lip, clearly considering how to reply.
"Why are you hiding?" she finally murmured, turning her cheek into his.

Whoa, she was really getting into this! That astounded him, while at the same time, attracted him all
the more to his partner. Role-play was one of Draco's favorite things to do, but who'd have guessed
Miss Bookworm had such a fantastical fetish, too? It seemed he would have to reassess his
assumptions about Hermione Granger when all of this was said and done.

"Not hiding, beautiful," he corrected her gently. "Waiting… for you to be ready for me." He moved
the wand around until he was circling the underside of one perfect breast. "Are you ready now, do
you think?" The wand trailed up and around one of her nipples, finding its outline through the dress,
careful not to touch quite yet. The sensation on her areola, however, he knew would drive Hermione
wild.

As expected, she gasped, taking a deep, shuddering breath. "Yes," she sighed. "I'm ready."

"Then take your nightdress off for me," he required, his mouth lingering so close to her skin that he
could practically taste the strawberries scenting her hair product. "Stay in the moonlight just like that
so I can see every inch of your delicious skin." He paused to give them both time to visualize it, then
hummed in her ear. "Mmmm… your body makes me weak, beautiful. Your breasts are so ripe, with
such pretty nipples." He let the buzzing wand finally caress the tiny bud he'd been teasing. "I could
suck on these forever. Do you like my mouth here?"

Granger's mouth parted on a sexy, low moan that made his cock beg for release.

"Yes, your mouth feels so good right there! Lick me all over. Use your teeth… gently."

Circe's holy tits, did she really just say that?

He pressed his wand down a little harder as it ran over her in wide circle, narrowed into the center
and then back out again. "Shall I mark both sides equally?"

She gave him permission with a whimpering nod and he moved the wand across to the neglected
breast and repeated his performance. The juts of her tiny nips were hard points against the fabric of
her dress, making his mouth simply water. "I worship you, beautiful," he venerated her with his
voice. "I love touching you. I never want to stop."

To his utter surprise, her right hand came up and lightly gripped his wrist holding the wand. She guided him down her abdomen, towards her womb. "Then don't. I've wanted you to touch me like this for a long time." The wand tip reached the summit of her thighs and pressed down gently. "Don't stop."

Draco groaned, seriously fighting off the urge to stroke himself against her leg, where his obvious erection was now pressing. "Let me take you on the bed, beautiful." He closed his eyes and played out the sexy scenario in his mind as well. "Let me love you against those black, satin sheets. I want to see those rose petals all around your gorgeous body."

Hermione nodded. "Yes, take me there. Love me there."

He imagined taking her hand and walking the few steps to the bed of their shared dream, of laying her back, riding her down, bending over her as his lower body pressed against hers. He described it for her in detail, leaving his wand exactly where she'd left it off. "Can you feel me resting between your soaking, wet lips, beautiful? Feel how much I want you, how you drive me to this state every time you so much as look my way?" He was dying from the fire burning through his veins, caught up in the fantasy now, too. "Let me put my mouth on yours. Let me taste you while I work my way inside."

She paused, and he felt her swallow hard, and then she nodded. "Yes, I want to taste you, too."

That was all the encouragement Draco needed. Slowly, he dragged his lips over her jaw and cheek, until they hovered over hers. He opened his eyes, found hers still closed. "Look at me, beautiful," he coaxed. "I want you to know me."

Granger's whole body was shaking now, almost violently, as she dragged her lashes up, and her eyes opened to behold him. They stayed that way for long seconds, neither moving. "Say it again, now," he appealed, praying she wouldn't back down. He wanted this, but only if she knew who she was asking and only if she meant it. He wouldn't take this without consent. "Tell me to kiss you."

Hermione blinked once, twice, and then licked her lips. "Kiss me."

With infinitesimally patient, careful motion, Draco gave them their first kiss. He closed his eyes only once she did, and then it was to deepen the pressing of their lips together. As his tongue darted out to lightly lick, to entice her to open wider for him, the wand began stroking her slowly down between her legs, working into the groove of her slit and pressing against her core.

Hermione gasped at the pleasure he was provoking in her delicate clit, and the moment her mouth parted, he thrust his tongue in fully, reaching for hers. They both moaned at the sensation of stroking against the other, even as he cherished her lips at the same time. At the first small separation for breath, she let go of his wrist and thrust her fingers into his hair, pulling his face into hers, at the same time as grabbing his shirt with her freed hand and holding on.

"Beautiful," he murmured, moving back in to feast some more upon her luscious mouth. "You're so fucking beautiful, Granger." He groaned, losing himself in the singing of his blood from her touch and flavour, even as her hips began to gyrate against his wand in time to his stroking.

He kissed her as he promised he would earlier, giving her every bit of his skill to make this an unforgettable moment. She moaned into his mouth as her pelvis continued to pick up pace. "Malfoy… Oh, God! More!"
Holding nothing back from those kisses, Draco gave until his mind was so fuzzy that thinking was moot, and there was only action. He could feel her body tensing under his, knew she was close to finding her release, and all he could do was urge her on, desperate himself to hear and see and know he’d brought her. "Come on, beautiful," he coaxed between thrusts of his tongue into her apple-scented mouth and kisses that ended with his teeth lightly tugging on her bottom lip. He tasted the salt of perspiration dotting her top lip as he dove back in for more. "That’s it. Reach for what I’m giving you, love. Come apart for me."

Her eyes flew open as she crested the wave, as if she’d never known such pleasure could exist, and then they squeezed tight and she arched her back and found her bliss. Clamping her legs together around his hand, she cried out in release, her face and body and voice unchecked, completely uninhibited. She gave him everything, and it was the most honest thing he’d ever seen.

"So beautiful," he murmured softly in awe, pressing his lips to hers once again, capturing the last of her scream, taming it and claiming it for his own.

Granger whimpered into his mouth and held onto him tight, trembling from head to toe even in the aftershocks. Finally, when sensation became too much, she took her hand from his hair, smoothing it down his arm, and silently requested he remove the stimulation from between her legs. He complied easily, refusing to break off from the kiss quite yet, however. Wanting more…

The chimes rang out, and he groaned in disappointment.

Fucking time limit!

Pulling away reluctantly, he looked down at her. There were tears in her eyes. Her quaking hand was still holding onto his wrist and she was struggling to regain control. Obdurate, steadfast, tenacious Hermione Granger had been moved by what they’d done! With cherry-coloured cheeks, shimmering chocolate orbs for eyes, and candied lips, she looked positively edible… and scared half to death.

"You’ve never done that before," he softly made the realization. "With a partner, I mean."

White teeth bit into her bottom lip as her shaking increased. "No."

He blinked in confusion, putting together what she was implying. "You’ve only ever made yourself climax."

Anger stirred in the dark depths that held his. "Don’t laugh," she hissed low, but he could sense the pain lurking underneath.

Was it possible that neither Weasel had been able to make her come? Had he really been the first man to make her orgasm? His heart took off madly, ripping itself free from the confines of his body and heading straight into the heavens. He’d been the first man to bring Hermione Granger - to experience her strumming the high note! Now, she’d never be able to forget him!

Lost momentarily in these revelations, leaning over her on one arm, he had absently begun twirling amber and earthen strands of her hair with that hand. Now he focussed again on her face. "I won’t laugh or tease," he promised, lowering his lips to hers, locking their gazes. "It’ll be our secret."

A glimmer of relief passed over her, before she lifted her mouth for his kiss. "Thank you."

Letting his wand drop to the floor, he allowed himself to come over her fully and shoved his fingers into her hair, claiming her lips in a final, blazing pull. She answered with equal ardor, running her fingers along the back of his neck, letting her nails massage his skull, tickling him. It was the sexiest,
most luscious kiss he'd ever experienced, their tongues sparring and entangling, desperate for a last minute taste.

He made himself pull back, forced the reminder on them both that they needed to get moving or else they'd forfeit the chance to do this again next round. "Time to go."

Granger simply nodded, as he rolled to his feet and collected his shoes. He waited patiently for her to slip her sandals back into place and cinch them up, and then offered her a hand up. She took it without a second thought, pressing her palm into his as she made her feet, but he didn't let go immediately, instead tugging her back into his arms. As he held her against him, there was no hiding his lust for her; he didn't even try.

"Did you like your massages?"

Despite the moment of wariness he caught sliding through her eyes, she slipped her arms around his neck. "Very much. Thank you again."

Time for the big question: "Was the kiss as I promised? Could you forget it so easily?"

An impish glint appeared in her gaze, followed by a very wicked, sultry smirk. "What kiss?"

Draco blinked in astonished exasperation.

She did not just say that!

"Did we kiss?" she kidded, pressing up on tiptoes to bring her mouth into alignment with his, becoming the aggressor now. "Hmm, seems I've forgotten already. I think you're going to have to remind me… Draco."

Draco narrowed his eyes, considered her change in mood, a smile tugging at his lips. "You've never forgotten a thing in your life, and you know it… Hermione." He dipped his head until his mouth buzzed hers. "Tricky witch."

Her snicker was cut off as he snogged her senseless once more, thrusting his tongue against hers, tasting every crevice of her mouth, embracing her against his pounding heart. She gave as good as she got, too. Slytherin Almighty, Gryffindor's Princess really knew how to kiss!

Reluctantly, she pulled away after a minute or two. He tried following her, tried to keep their lips melded together, but she broke off the kiss. Even then, however, neither seemed willing to move away completely. Her fingertips tickled his jaw line and cheeks, as his hands rubbed circles over the sway of her hind. Resting his forehead against hers, running down her cheek as he tried to rein in his desire, Draco sniffed in astonishment and smirked at his own foolishness. "Too tempting," he sighed in longing. "I want to shag you right here and now, all bloody night long. The game can go hang."

Melting out of his arms, his partner quickly headed for the door, leaving him standing there with the erection of the century. Eying his trousers as she made the door and turned to flash a look at him over her shoulder, her smirk was positively sinful.

"Sorry, but no forfeiting for me yet. I'd like to know what opportunities the cards will offer us next."

With that, she turned the knob and stepped back into the common area without a backward glance.

"Evil siren," he grumbled after her, adjusted his cock in his pants. Draco took another minute to regain composure, thinking of cold and unpleasant things to get his raging hard-on deflated, and then headed out after his witch, secretly eager for the next round, too.
Draco Malfoy's last time calling Hermione Granger a Mudblood in the novels to coincide with the timeline we've established here for this fic (remember, Cedric didn't die and Voldemort was never resurrected in this Alternate Universe), was just before the Yule Ball. Specifically, he said this: 'You're not telling me someone's asked that to the ball? Not the long-molared Mudblood!' ('Goblet Of Fire', Chapter 23).

Periwinkle = A de-saturated colour of the blue/indigo/violet family. The flower itself (of the same name) means "early friendship" when given.

The scent of black cherries, crème anglaise and sandalwood is the designer scent attributed to Victoria's Secret's "Amber Romance" line of bath products. It sounded heavenly and something that would be both alluring and soothing, when I went online and looked for an appropriate massage oil scent.
Seamus allowed Lavender to take the lead and guide him over to the couch in their private room once the door had been shut behind him. For once, she sat next to him without being coerced by the game's requirements, and he thought that to be a solid step forward. Her palm against his was a wee bit damp from nerves, however.

"Are ya sure ya wanna continue with the game, angel?" he asked, trying to give her one more chance to opt-out. "This'll be the last time I'll ask ya."

According to an old Irish proverb, a three-time refusal really, truly meant that you were sincere, rather than simply being polite. It's why he tended to ask the truly important questions, like this one, in triplicate.

His partner stared at her card for a moment in silence, re-reading it.

For a long minute, Seamus held his breath, afraid she'd simply decide to call the whole thing off, wish him a good road and walk out of his life. To his great relief, though, she mustered her courage in the Gryffindor way, handing him her card without a word.

**DEED: You get to ask your partner any five questions you want about them and they must answer wholly and truthfully.**

Feck!

This whole shite had the potential to go downhill fast if she asked him something really uncomfortable. He had two really, big secrets aside from his True Wizarding Name, and he wasn't sure how she'd handle hearing either of them.

Hell, either of them would probably scare her off.

Trying to keep his face as neutral as possible so he didn't give away his concerns, Seamus simply nodded his acceptance of the card's requirements, and offered his card for her to read.

**DEED: Your partner must dance with you however you want.**

A very feminine blush filled Lavender's cheeks.

"We can do yers first, if ya want," he offered, leaving himself wide open for what he knew would be the flaying of his life. He was sure she was going to use her questions to probe his feelings and
memories, and to discover the secrets that he wasn't sure she'd be prepared to handle. "I don't mind being honest wit' ya, Lavender. I only hope ya can be accepting of me, tho'...both the good and ugly alike."

He cupped her chin and tilted it so she would have to meet his gaze.

"I've been no angel in me short life, as ya know, but remember that all the mess made me who I am today, ya? And, I'd like ta think I'm not a bad bloke."

His partner assessed him in silence, measuring his sincerity. Knowing that this was a make-it-or-break-it moment, Seamus dropped his defences and spoke from the heart.

"I want ya, Lavender, so even if ya ask me somethin' that stings or hurts deep, I'll always tell ya true, card game or no. No lies a'tween us. Not from me. Can ya handle that?"

His witch considered his offer, and then nodded, letting out a deep breath. "Merlin knows, I haven't exactly been an angel either, Sea. There might be things you learn about me during this game that will change your opinion of me, too. But…I'll try not to be a hypocrite and judge. I'll try."

He nodded in accord, releasing her chin and sat back into the sofa.

"Then, ask away, angel. Ask me as many questions as ya have need. Just save me a handful o' minutes at the end for our dance, yeah?"

Adjusting her position on the couch so she took the corner and could stare at him without having to be uncomfortable, she crossed her ankles and rested them on top of his thighs. Her right hand smoothed across the satin of her dress, as she considered her first question.

Seamus mentally girded himself for absolutely anything to pop out of her mouth.

"Okay, first question: how did you really feel about me back then?" she asked, hitting hard right out of the gate.

There was no question about which time period she was speaking.

"I fancied ya a hell o' a lot," Seamus admitted. "I meant what I said a'fore: I wanted ya fer me girl, serious-like, doncha know?" He gave her a shy smile, letting one hand smooth over her ankle in a tentative caress at the same moment. "Ya were me first true love, sweet angel."

Lavender blinked at him in astonishment, her face turning a darker shade of red.

"Steam's comin' outta yer ears, me witch," he teased, chuckling and continuing to stroke the hollow area right below her ankle bone, a place he knew was an erotic spot for most women. "Have I said somethin' ya didn't wanna know?"

His ex cleared her throat, trying to compose her features by looking down at her hand resting on her thigh. "The night we had sex-"

"Made love," he interrupted.

She glanced up at him, clearly confused. "You didn't really love me then. It was infatuation, and it was over too quick to be called love-making."

He took the pot shot to his ego and sighed, shaking his head. "It was as close as I could'a come then ta such a feeling, given me age and lack of experience. Ya were never a one-off fer me, though. It
wasn't just sex ta me either. I felt a strong connection to ya, even then. Had done since the moment we met on the train that first time comin' ta school. Th' years only made those feelings deeper. So, ya can understand when I say I'd wanted our first time ta be good tha' I really mean it. Bloody hell, I'd been stalkin' ya since after the Yule Ball the year a'fore, thinkin' o' ways to get ya attention so ya'd want ta be mine back!"

His partner's mouth gaped open. "You were?"

He huffed in exasperation. "Are ya that daft, woman? Why'd ya think I'd asked ya ta be me study partner after the Christmas break, and ta go ta Hogsmeade wit' me? And why'd ya think I sent ya chocolates on Valentine's?"

Her expression shifted again, molding into lines of anger. "Because you'd made a bet with Dean that you'd get in my knickers before the school year ended!"

Seamus cut short the automatic counter he had ready and instead grinned, knowing he'd been found out. "Well, ya, I'll cop ta havin' made that bet, but that's not really why I asked ya. I was hopin' ta win ya by then, ya see, and I'd planned ta use the money ta buy ya somethin' nice or ta take ya ta Madam Puddifoot's. It was jus' a bit o' locker room braggin' ta cover up me long-term plans fer ya. Besides, I rather liked th' idea o' Dean payin' fer a nice date fer us. Question is, lass, how did ya know about it?"

Lavender rolled her eyes. "Did you forget that my best friend is the Queen of Gossip around this place? Thanks to Parvati, I knew that same afternoon."

He laughed. "Ya intentionally shot me down then, just so I'd lose?"

His partner tweaked one golden eyebrow and smirked at him. "It was fun seeing what hoops you'd jump through. You'd gotten increasingly desperate and more creative there near the end of second term, as the school year was coming to a close, I noticed."

"As I recall, ya were hangin' wit' tha' ponce from Durmstrang more often by then, ya?"

His partner's lips were stretched wide, and a knowing, mischievous glimmer appeared in her eye. "You mean Tolga, Krum's best friend?" She faux breathed a sigh of longing and batted her eyelashes. "Ah, yes, he was quite the gentleman: strong, handsome, and respectful. His kisses tasted like fine-"

Seamus' humor melted away in an instant and he couldn't help the jealous growl that rumbled through his chest and escaped through his tightly closed lips. Krum's mate had been his nemesis that year, appearing at their side during the Yule Ball to cut-in for a dance, and then honing in on Lavender while Seamus had stepped away for a few minutes to hit the loo. After that, for the rest of the year, the guy would randomly stop at Gryffindor's table in the Great Hall to speak with Brown, playfully flirting with her.

Being reminded of how his witch had fawned all over the other man made things in Seamus' guts tighten.

In a move he knew would surprise her, he pounced, knocking Lavender's legs to the side and receiving unfettered access to her belly. Relentlessly, he moved in for the kill…

His partner was helpless under the assault of his tickling fingers, laughing uncontrollably as he showed her no mercy. "Tell me my kisses are better, or I'll tickle ya 'til ya pee," he playfully threatened, tucking away his dark possessiveness so as not to frighten her off.
"You...wouldn't...dare!" his partner challenged him, gasping for breath and giggling uproariously while squirming like mad under him.

He leered at her. "I'd been willin' ta bet on gettin' into ya knickers, and ya still doubt there are levels I wouldn't stoop ta get what I want?"

"All right, I give!" she surrendered, putting her hands on his chest to push him off. "I'll tell you."

His fingers paused, and he waited, a part of him mistrustful of her easy capitulation.

Looking up at him, Lavender's lips twitched with mischief. "I'll tell you...that...he snogged me under the-"

Her comment was cut off by his renewed assault on her ribs until tears streamed from her eyes and she was begging. Seamus finally stopped when she wailed that she was sorry. "How sorry are ya, angel?" he asked, bracing his hands behind her on the arm of the couch, capturing her between them. He leaned his face down, stopping inches from her lips, feeling a strong compulsion to make her melt under his mouth's attentions and forget the fact that other men even existed. "Sorry enough ta let me try ta out-kiss yer Bulgarian boy-toy?"

She looked skeptical of his claim.

"I doubt you could."

"Oh?" He angled his mouth closer to hers. "Wanna bet on it?"

Tilting her head, she considered the proposition.

"Alright, what's the bet?"

Seamus' heart took off like a rabbit. He was going to get a chance to kiss her this round after all! "If yer hands touch me during the kissin', I get yer card next round, in addition to me own."

"And if I win, I want yours," she came back at him.

He felt quite assured of the outcome and wasn't daunted at all by her air of supreme confidence in the face of his challenge. "Sure thing, angel."

Lavender put her hands under her bottom in a cheat meant to assure her victory. "Then I give permission for you to snog away, Finnigan. Do your worst."

"Intend to," he whispered as he bent to take that which she offered.

Slow and sure, he captured her soft, pink lips...and was lost for her once more. Na síogaí, he loved the taste of this witch! She was as sweet as golden honey and he was drawn by his favourite addicting flavour to kiss deeper, harder.

Lightly gripping the nape of her neck, Seamus tilted his lover's face back to gain a more advantageous position, opening her up. His fingers sifted through the silky, glinting strands of her hair, securing her, assuring she couldn't turn away from the all-consuming burn he intended on working over her.

Ravenous for her return kiss, he gave her all of the fire within his heart, rasping velvety licks over her silken lips, thrusting into the warm, wet cavern of her mouth to a rhythm that mimicked the unconscious swaying of his hips as he knelt over her quivering form. He lapped and coaxed, teasing
her one moment, only to sweep in with fierce, resolute possession the next.

As he melded them together, enticing her with grasping, greedy pulls of lips, he touched her face, softly caressed her cheeks and followed the grooves of her throat with his fingertips and knuckles. He stroked the top of her bosom, traced the shell of her ear, and sensuously flicked the lobe with his thumb, brushing it with a barely-there touch.

Lavender's body began to unravel beneath him. She shivered, moaned in his arms, and he could smell her growing arousal through the layers of her clothes. It made things inside him tighten up, made his cock leap into life. Heart pounding under his ribs, he prayed she wouldn't resist much longer, for it was becoming harder for him to do so...

Gods alive, how could he have denied himself this pleasure for two whole years? How had he stayed away from her? She'd been his for such a short go, and he'd ruined it by being an impatient fool. But something inside him had known all along that she was meant to be his forever...and yet he'd denied it, pushed down the hurt of her rejection and buried himself in others to forget. It hadn't worked; he'd never forgotten, never really let go.

_I need ya, me love. I see it now so clear-like. Yer meant ta be mine._

The kiss did as intended: it finally melted Lavender's resolve.

With a low, husky moan, her hands flew into his hair and grabbed hold.

Something inside him sparked to life at her capitulation. It electrified his whole body, sent a jolt down his spine and into his groin. He groaned and nearly spilled his seed right there in his pants... She moaned in response, as if she'd felt his body's reaction, and with a yank, he was falling into her arms. Their bodies met, rubbed and strained against each other as their mouths mated.

_Fuck, but he wanted to rip her clothes from her and plunge into her welcome, warm sex..._

It was Lavender who finally broke the kiss.

Pulling her mouth from his and turning her cheek into his, she held him, trembling in his embrace and panting for breath. "I lose," she capitulated with a sigh.

Seamus drew back. "Is it such a bad thing, wantin' me?"

With a fingertip, she traced his lips, letting her lovely indigo eyes follow the movement of her nail sliding across his mouth. "It's so hard to forget, Sea. I was hurt so deeply by you. I'd fancied myself in love with you since the Yule Ball, but then I heard about that stupid bet, and I was sure you were just playing me so you could brag on winning. The next year, I took a chance on trusting you anyway." She let all her breath out and closed her eyes. "When you left right after we had sex...made love...whatever you want to call it, I felt so used. I thought you'd only slept with me to prove that you could, especially after not winning the bet the year before."

Seamus opened his mouth to defend himself, but her lids fluttered open and she pressed her fingertips with some small pressure to prevent him from speaking just yet.

"Even though I understand now why you left me there alone afterwards, and that you didn't mean to hurt me, it's still hard to forget. You broke my heart," she admitted. With more bravery than he'd given her credit for, she stared him in the eye once more. "I'm scared to trust you again. It's been two years, but...I've heard the rumours. I know you've been around, and how you make women feel. Every girl I know whom you've ever slept with _still_ pines for another chance with you. I hear them talk in the loo or in the dorms or in the corners of the courtyards." She seemed genuinely distressed
again. "I can't be like that again, Sea. I cried for weeks and weeks, and every time I saw you with a
girl for the next eight months, I felt such hatred for you…and for myself, for being so jealous."

As he watched her expressions change, Seamus made a conscious decision that he never wanted to
see her frown again, and that he would do whatever was necessary to prevent it. That included
telling her whatever truths she needed to know...starting now. "Lavender, I know I don't deserve
another go wit' ya, but I been watchin' ya on and off ever since ya stopped talkin' ta me two years
ago, wonderin' if I'd ever get a chance ta make things up ta ya." He smoothed the hair back from her
forehead. "We were friends a'fore that night, and I fancied ya me first love, but then I bungled it all
up...and ya tore yerself away from me and I never got o'er tha' loss. There's been a hole in me chest
ever since, and nothing I do fills it. Only bein' wit' ya tonight seems ta be mendin' me heart." He
dropped his forehead to hers and met her eye. "From th' moment we met, I knew ya were
different...special. I knew when ya took me hand that day on the train that ya were meant ta be mine.
I made a lot o' mistakes, I know, but I'm askin' ya ta
please
give me a chance ta make it up ta ya."

Lavender was biting her bottom lip so hard it was reddened and she looked both afraid and hopeful.
Perhaps he'd finally done something right!

Either way, he'd made his case and it was time to pull back, to give her some breathing space so she
could consider his proposal. Letting her go, he slowly lifted his body off hers and scooted back to
resume the seat he'd vacated earlier. Lifting her legs with care, he placed them right back across his
lap exactly as they had been earlier in the round.

"I'll make ya another wager, angel," he offered, wanting to ease her fears. "Startin' next round, ya
can put ta me any one question ya'd like answered during the game, at any time, and I have ta answer
it truthfully, no evadin'. After I've given up the answer, tho', I want a kiss from ya in reward fer
puttin' me through the ringer. In exchange, ya'll do the same fer me. This way, we get ta know each
other without pretense." He held up a finger to cut off her obvious protest. "I promise here and now
not ta ask ya yer True Witch's Name. If ya want ta tell me it fer free, then I'm all ears, but I won't
force that from ya ever. But anything else goes. What say ya?"

Clearly ill-at-ease with the vulnerability of her position, she quickly sat up and wiggled backward
until she was leaning against the sofa's arm.

"Okay," she conceded, "but I get to ask the first question next time."

Seamus readily agreed, even knowing that it meant she could find out his darkest secrets. He'd take
the chance for another shot with her. "Fine by me." He gave her what he hoped was a warm,
encouraging smile. "So, ye've still got four more questions this round ta ask. Fire away, love."

Lavender's gaze strayed to the magically lit hearth nearby as she puzzled out her next query, and he
watched as she internally struggled with what she wanted to know versus her fear of that knowledge.
Her expressions probably weren't quite so obvious to others, except those with a keen eye, but they
were to him, as he'd been watching her for seven years and knew her as only a man obsessed could.
The tiny strain around her eyes, the barely-there wrinkle that broke up the perfection of her brow, the
way her lips flattened just a touch... She was going to be masterful in her chosen career, he knew,
able to hide her real feelings behind a mask, but he certainly didn't want a reporter's mask standing
between them.

Hopefully, tonight, he'd get her to drop that caution and be herself around him again.

"My second question...I'm not sure I should ask it, but here goes anyway," she finally decided,
looking at him from her peripheral vision. "How many women have you had sex with?"
Seamus took a deep breath and glanced down at the perfection of her feet, tracing the pearl buttons on her anklet's strap. This one was going to be hard, because he knew how she'd react with anger once he actually confirmed for her that he had been something of a man-slag since their break-up. It wouldn't reflect well upon him, that was for sure. But he had promised her honesty, so... "Off the top o' me head, I don't know," he replied. "In th' high teens, at least. Most o' them have been here at school, but some ha' been during th' summer and winter hols, back in Ireland." He glanced up at her through his sooty lashes and felt the sweat prickle his forehead. "Do ya need names?"

Lavender's hand stroked back and forth over the fabric of her dress in a nervous gesture. "No. I'm assuming they were all after me, though?"

His attention fixated on her ankles again. "Yeah, as a'fore ya, I'd only been with Parkinson."

"Third question: have you shagged any of my friends?"

Shite.

"Yeah."

"Who? Consider this part of the third question still."

He shut his eyes and took a deep breath, trying to calm his pounding heart. "Ginny and...the twins."

She'd gone silent, and Seamus knew he was in for an arse-whipping then.

"You know, Ron, I understand," she hesitantly told him. "He's fit and easy going. Ginny is Amazon gorgeous. No question there about doing her. But I've got to be honest, Sea: I can't even contemplate having sex with Fred or George Weasley, much less together at the same time."

Seamus nearly came off the sofa in surprise that her mind would automatically go there.

"Wha-? No, I was talkin' about the Patil twins!"

Lavender was silent again. He dared a glance to find out why.

She had her hands fisted at her sides and her face was a shade of puce he was sure he'd never seen before in his life. "I knew you'd been with Parvati, but you're saying you fucked my best friend and her sister? Doesn't count as a new question, by the way, because I said so...and I'm a second away from scratching your eyes out, Finnigan, so don't push me on that!"

For that exact reason, he tried to step softly around the explanation.

"Er, technically, it was a group thang, an' it was done under th' influence o' drugs, so..."

He'd never seen anyone's jaw fall that far to the ground, either.

"Again, not a new question... You seriously had an orgy?"

Was it possible to sink into the earth and hide there for the next century?

"Um, yeah," he confessed. "Ta be fair, like I said, we were all pissed on this drink Tam...er, Tamisin Applebee smuggled inta her trunk ta school. It was an aphrodisiac tea made from Kava Kava. And Anthony Rickett had some Muggle Wingers we all tried, too. Th' combo made us all mad for a serious ride. We were all hard and sniping for hours, outta our feckin' minds! It was like...ya ever been totally uninhibited? No? Well, tha's what we were. Thank the Founders tha' Su...er, Sue Li cast the charm against pregnancy and disease on all o' us a'fore the party really started."
"And that's where you and Padma and...Parvati...all had sex."

"Ya."

"Did you have sex with Rickett, too? Still part of the third question, since I need clarification on your answer."

"No, I didn't bugger any bloke or let 'em bugger me. I swear it on me mam's good name! But...I did all the girls, and not gentle-like, ya know? Even took 'em with the other fellas at the same time. Ya know, two or three pene at once. After, I felt sick in me guts and never did anythin' like it again. But it's not somethin' ya can go back and change now it's over, can ya?" He leaned his head back against the sofa and stared up at the ceiling, feeling a dark, hollow pit open up in his belly. "I wish I could take it back, tho'. It scunders me now, tellin' it ta ya, knowin' you're sitting there thinkin' me some twisted breed o' skanger."

She was quiet again for a moment.

"Who else was there? Besides the people you've already named, who else?"

He gave her a regretful grimace. "Er...jus' one o'er bloke." His accent was really thick now, but try as he might, he was too nervous to control it.

"Who?" she persisted. "Consider this my fourth question."

Seamus flinched even as he said the name.

"Blaise Zabini."

Lavender was silent for several minutes, digesting what he'd said.

Hell, she was probably envisioning it, too.

Merlin, why had he been such a man-slag? Yeah, he knew his mam's blood was mostly responsible, as the nature of her family's magical lineage was one of flighty, fickle, sexual beings, but still, he knew he could have reined in his lusts. Unlike a Sex-Warlock, he wasn't compelled towards fucking everything that moved. He just...was a bit on the randy side. Sex wasn't necessary, but he sure craved it, like a really pure, sweet honey. It had gotten him into a bit of a fix as a result...

"I had sex with Ron the same day he'd broken up with Hermione."

Seamus sat upright in absolute astonishment at Lavender's unexpected confession.

And he thought he'd won the record for the school's fastest rebound!

"I'm pretty sure that's skirting the thin line of being complicit in his cheating," she continued rather matter-of-fact, yet in her eyes, there was shame. "Not to mention it's really bad form to get involved with a good friend's ex, especially when they were a serious couple and it's only been a few hours since they'd called it quits. Somethings you don't do. I did."

"Then why did ya?" he wondered.

She shrugged, but he could tell the nonchalant gesture was merely an attempt to hide a much deeper guilt. "It was a one-off, after seeing him at a Chudley Cannons' game last summer. He'd had tickets to take Hermione, but they'd broken up that afternoon. He took his older brother, Charlie, instead. I was there with my older brother, Thomas. We ran into each other and decided to hang for the whole
game. After, we all went to a pub to celebrate the Cannons' win, but Charlie and Thomas went home after a few rounds. Ron and I stayed and got to talking. We spent hours chatting each other up and got on famously, it turned out."

She paused to pluck a piece of lint off the sofa, but Seamus could tell it was so she could gather her courage so she could continue.

"It was probably because we'd had one too many Butterbeers," she admitted, "but on a spur of the moment, we went back to the stadium to see if we could get an autograph from any of the players to commemorate the rare win. The place was cleared out, though. We stuck around, walking up and down the stands, and we talked for hours. I told him about what happened between you and me, and Ron confided that he and Hermione had ended their relationship a few hours before. They'd both been dancing around the subject for a few weeks, but he said he knew it wasn't working out because they fought all the time. He didn't feel that special bond with her anymore. He was really broken up about it, too, because she'd been his first lover."

She smiled somewhat sadly then. "I guess I felt a connection with him, with his suffering. I could relate to getting your heart broken, you know? The next thing I knew, we were kissing and it got out of hand. We ended up having sex in the bleachers." A small crease, the universal sign of regret, appeared in her forehead. "It was comfort sex, for both of us. It helped to reaffirm in our own minds that we were still worthy people, and that it was just the situations we'd been stuck in that were bad. I think hooking up like that was what helped us both to move on with our lives."

"Did you...start seeing him right away, then?"

He'd always assumed they'd gotten together after the start of first term this final year.

In truth, the thought of Lavender and Ron having a sexual relationship at all still bothered him, and Seamus was man enough to admit that fact. Still, at least she'd been dating his friend and not some Hufflepuff...or worse, a Slytherin.

"Not right away," she told him. "It wasn't until two weeks after school started. He approached me in the library to talk. It took another week before we went there again. It's been casual ever since, never anything serious. We just get along really well, and the sex is...was...a nice release. I didn't feel threatened by it, because Ron's very passive in bed." She glanced at the door to their suite, as if she could see through it and into her ex-lover's room. "At least, he'd always been until tonight. It's weird seeing him so dominant, especially with someone like Parkinson."

"Seems she brings out a different side ta him," he hesitated a guess. "Like ya do ta me."

She glanced back up at him, her expression resolved. "I don't think Hermione knows about last summer, and I have no plans to tell her. She wouldn't understand anyway. It wasn't intentional what happened between Ron and me. We didn't do it to hurt anyone, and we didn't expect for things to end up as they had. And even though the two of them were already finished by then, that doesn't change the fact that what he and I did...it feels wrong. To tell Hermione would only hurt her and possibly ruin her friendship with Ron, though, so I'll live with the guilt eating me up before I shatter her self-confidence like that."

"Ya carry the stress o' it around yer eyes," he noted. "It's there, if ya look close enough."

Lavender nodded. "I know it's not technically true, but I still feel as though I betrayed my friend. But like you said, a person can't take back their actions. You just learn to live with the sins and move on."
Seamus considered that.

Yeah, if anyone could understand the message here, it was him. Sometimes people made really big, stupid mistakes that later they repented, but it didn't undo the harm done. Merlin knew, he had done his share of things he later regretted...like Aengus. Not that he regretted the boy, but he did rue the day he'd decided to get involved with Maddy.

It wasn't that he was excusing or enabling Lavender's behaviour, but he'd done some pretty rotten things himself and so was in no position to be throwing stones. So maybe she was right and some skeletons were best left hanging in the closet and taken to the grave.

He stared at his ex-girlfriend and suddenly realized that she was a lot more mature than he'd previously thought. Some people, he knew from experience, had no compunction about taking what they wanted, no matter who it hurt, and they lacked the heart to feel any guilt about such a wrongdoing. His girl had a conscience, though, and that he could respect.

Lavender gave him a sad, apologetic smile. "See? Not so sweet or angelic after all."

Seamus trailed a hand up her leg, smoothing it back and forth to try to soothe her. "We both have pasts, love, but that doesn't change me opinion of ya. Ta me, I see a beautiful woman, inside and out, when I look at ye."

She looked unconvinced, and Seamus knew he wasn't going to persuade her otherwise, at least not right away. It was going to take time and effort on his part to get help her move past this. A solid distraction in the meantime would do, something to lighten the mood and help them both temporarily put these thoughts aside so they could end this round on a good note.

He still had his card to perform, too.

Maybe he could combine the goals this time...

He stood up...and was hit in the face with a wave of heat. Man, the room was sweltering! The nearby fire was in full-roar and unlike the real Gryffindor Common Room, the ceiling above them wasn't made of natural cooling stone and it lacked the vaulted height to allow the hot air to rise. Instead, this replica room had a plain white, insulating plaster ceiling that was only a few feet above their heads, and it seemed to trap the warmth closer to the ground. It was seriously uncomfortable.

"It's a little hot in here," he confessed while unbuttoning his stuffy dress shirt from neck to navel and pulling the tails out of his trousers, letting them hang open so he could breathe easier. The white, cotton tank underneath gave him some semblance of modesty, so he wasn't concerned that Lavender would freak out, thinking him stripping down. "Didja stoke th' fire when we came in?"

His partner looked over at the fireplace with a frown. "No. You're saying you didn't?"

"Did'na think o' it, no."

"Huh, that's odd. I thought these rooms were controlled by our thoughts alone."

He shrugged, not really too troubled by it now that he felt a bit less like a baked potato. With an easy thought, he brought the fire back down to a more reasonable temperature. "Easily fixed," he said and held his hand out for her to take. "Now, would ya care ta dance, me angel?"

Hesitantly, Lavender put her palm in his and he helped her to her feet. Then, he manoeuvred them into a slow dance position, one arm about her waist and pulling her in close, the other taking her hand in the traditional waltz coupling. As he stared down into her lovely, wide-eyed gaze, he had a
His roommate, Dean Thomas, was always on about his Muggle music. The bloke's collection of flat, silver discs that had a variety of songs imprinted on them was huge and every year, he always smuggled some in with his trunk and something called a 'Sony Walkman CD Player' to play them. This year Dean had been into American music, something called 'Country', and Seamus had listened to some of it. It hadn't been that bad, in his opinion, and he'd especially liked one song in particular.

Cuing that song up now with a thought, Seamus drew his witch into him so that their bodies were touching and his nose was buried in her fragrant, soft hair. He guided them in a gentle swaying, circular motion, letting the music's guitar work move him to the right tempo.

**Come a little closer, baby.**
I feel like layin' you down  
on a bed of sweet surrender,  
where we can work it all out.  
There ain't nothing that love can't fix.  
Girl, it's right here at our fingertips.  
So, come a little closer, baby.  
I feel like layin' you down.

That erotic tingling sensation he'd felt earlier returned. It was a slow descent down his spine, starting at the back of his head and traveling with electric fingers down each vertebrae. It made him shiver.

In his arms, Lavender shivered, too.

**Come a little closer, baby.**
I feel like lettin' go  
of everything that stands between us,  
and the love we used to know.  
I wanna touch you like a cleansing rain.  
Let it wash all the hurt away.  
So, come a little closer, baby.  
I feel like lettin' go.

His partner didn't speak yet, but seemed to hear the words of the song, as Seamus had intended, words he felt could have been stolen from his heart for this moment.

With a deep sigh, he closed his eyes and listened, too.

**If there's still a chance,**
then take my hand,  
and we'll steal away  
off into the night,  
'till we make things right.  
The sun's gonna rise on a better day.

Lavender's skin was so warm against his, and her light breath tickled his neck on each exhale, and it was hard not to want more, feeling her breasts pressing into his chest. Tilting his head, Seamus nuzzled her dainty ear and drew in the light floral scent of her perfume.

A mere infatuation, she'd called this.

She was wrong.
There was nothing minor or simple about their feelings for each other.

**Come a little closer, baby.**
I feel like strippin' it down
back to the basics of you and me,
and what makes the world go round.
Every inch of you against my skin.
I wanna be stronger than we've ever been.
So, come a little closer, baby.
I feel like strippin' it down.

The lyrics of this song were entirely too provocative.

Seamus fought off his cock's stiffening reaction to the idea of stripping her down and feeling every inch of her bare skin again, but that was a monumentally difficult task with her scent in his nose and her lithe body swaying in time with his.

This was bad; he was going tight and hard against her thigh. Surely, she could feel it!

**Come a little closer, baby.**
Just a little bit closer, baby.
Come a little closer, baby.
I feel like layin' you down.

Shite, lying down with her...and licking those pretty breasts as he pressed against her wet, aching core…

*Fuck!*

*No,* he growled at his dick.

This moment was about rebuilding trust, and for once in his feckin' life where a woman was concerned, he wasn't going to make this about sex! He angled his hips away, knowing Lavender would feel what he couldn't control, and ended the dance with a kiss to her cheek, trying to distract her from looking down.

"Thank ya fer the dance, sweet angel, and fer telling me yer secret. I promise not ta tell a soul."

She smiled up at him. "Thank you for listening, and for the promise, and for the dance."

He was about to reply with, "you're welcome," when she did something entirely unexpected: she reached out and cupped his obvious arousal.

Seamus jerked as her fingers wrapped around his bollocks and held him by the root. When she lightly fondled him, he groaned and closed his eyes against the pleasure.

"And for trying so hard not to scare me with this," she whispered as she went on tiptoe and pressed her mouth to his. "Next round, I want a chance to pleasure you, though."

Her fingers upped the pressure just a bit, causing his cock to throb with need.

"Angel-" he growled in warning, reaching to grab her wrist to stop her. "I didna want this ta be about sex. I wanna earn yer trust back."

She kissed him again and Seamus was surprised by the whimper that escaped his throat.
"I want both," she said and lightly bit his bottom lip.

He began to pant.

His cock was so hard that the engorged head stood well above the waistband of his pants, naked to her eye should she choose to look. Instead, she boldly stared him down, daring him to stop her and making it clear at the same time that she would not let him dictate the direction of their new relationship.

Restraining her had only seemed to make Lavender more determined, he noticed. She'd been up-front in stating that she was a dominant in bed, and evidently, she needed to assert control in their new relationship to feel completely comfortable trusting him again. Since that was Seamus' ultimate goal, he decided he could let her have this much right now, if it would help his case. Releasing her wrist, he allowed Lavender free roaming privileges, trusting her not to mistreat the most sensitive area on his body.

Desire flared through his veins as she took his capitulation and ran with it.

As their lips and tongues met again, her naughty hand never stopped its exploration of him, stroking his cock through his trousers. Her soft moan of surprise as she realized his true size made him almost lose his resolve to let her take the lead; he moaned loud and lusty instead as she pressed her thigh between his and rubbed her pussy against his leg. The sound emboldened her further, and in a jiff she'd unbuckled his belt and lowered his zip. Liberating him from his pants, she ran smooth caresses over the wet, hot crown, slicking him up with the pre-cum he was putting out in streams now.

God, he'd never been so wet, even that one time he'd been off his mind on Rickett's wingers! Those weird electric tingles shot through his dick this time, causing tiny explosions of pre-ejaculate to weep from the tip.

Seamus groaned and thrust his hips in time to her pumping hand. He wasn't going to last much longer! Lavender's touch had unmade him faster than any other woman he'd been with before.

He wanted to finish in her hand right here and now...but the cards didn't allow that kind of move this round. In fact, none of this should have been legal, and he was surprised the game didn't count them both out for the foul. "Love, we should stop here, a'fore I lose me sanity," he gently murmured against her lips. "I wanna make love ta ya proper, like ya deserve, but we're not ready yet for tha' step." He gently moved her hand off his steel-hard, throbbing dick and brought it to his mouth for a small kiss. "We should slow down a bit. We've got time."

Lavender made an adorable whining-growling noise. "You're right. We're going too fast here."

She glanced down with longing, though.

Seamus quickly tucked his aching member back into his pants and re-zipped quickly, before she could tempt him further.

"Next round, I'm in control," she told him with a cute pout.

The chimes rang out right then.

Buckling his belt back into place, Seamus conceded with an easy nod. "Fine, lass, I'll be what ya need. Just...don't hurt me either, ya?"

"I'll try not to, Sea."
Knowing it was as good a promise as he could get from her, he agreed, and then took her hand as he walked her to the door and out into the main room once more.

As he took his customary seat next to her on the white sofa, Seamus let out a sigh of relief. He and Lavender had finally reach an accord. It was the breakthrough he been hoping and praying to get, a second chance to make things right.

Now, he just had to make sure he didn't screw it up again.

Chapter End Notes

- Tolga is actually the name of the real life actor who played Viktor Krum's aide in the movie (since the character he portrayed was never actually named). I borrowed it for this fic.

- Kava Kava is obtained from the shrub Piper methysticum, which is native to the Polynesian Islands. It has been used by the Islanders as a religious and visionary herb and aphrodisiac for most of their history. Since none of the active ingredients of Kava Kava are water soluble, the natives would pre-chew the roots and then blend this saliva/root mixture with coconut milk. The resulting liquid was then fermented to produce a potent beverage that was used for important rituals. The effect of the drink is to relax spinal activity, producing an euphoric state of relaxation but without impairing mental activity. Some subjects also experience a tingling feeling in the genitalia, producing all the ingredients for an interesting sexual experience (it is known to direct increase sexual desire and prowess, even increasing the intensity of the sensations felt during orgasm). Over use of Kava Kava has been known to cause dangerous respiratory and skin problems. Source: www.altnature.com.

- Wingers = Ecstasy (the drug)

- I am aware that "Come A Little Closer" by Dierks Bentley didn't come out until 2005, and this fic takes place in 1998. However, according to my research on the song itself, it was written back in 1996 as one of Dierks' first attempts. I'm going with creative license and saying he put out some demo tracks of his song before it was "officially" released. Stretching it, I know, but…this is fanfic, right?

- Na síogaí = (pronounced "na shee-ogue-ee") Means "Fairy folk" in Gaelic. Encompasses a large grouping of hominid beings with ties to nature and who feature an exceptional beauty.
Pansy was in a frisky mood, racing Ron once more to their private room.

He let her win again, because it made him happy to see her laughing.

"Let's see," she put her hands on her hips in a rather sexy pose, as he shut the door behind them. "That's three now you owe me."

Ron shook his head, leaning back against the door and crossing his arms. This sassy woman in front of him now was so different from the Parkinson he'd known before; he'd never have guessed that he'd once believed her to be the cold Bitch Queen of Slytherin. Where had that woman gone? "Four," he corrected her with a wide-stretching grin. "Two at the couches, one here, and one last round."

Her giggle was downright naughty and suggestive. "Well, far be it from me to argue with my astute partner," she easily conceded, and Ron found he liked her better this way – playful, unregulated, and exuberant.

"Wanna collect now?" he asked, dropping his arms and stalking her towards the bed. Every step he took forward, she took one back, her eyes glimmering with renewing desire.

She stopped suddenly and held her hands out, her card held in one of them. "Wait, wait! Cards." She waggled hers back and forth in front of him. "What's yours say?"

Ron lifted his in his left hand and read it aloud:

**DEED: Your partner has to kiss your neck, ears, face and lips as you instruct them.**

Pansy sighed in happiness, but her smiled slipped as she turned her own card over and read it:

**FORFEIT: Apologize to your partner for any mean things you've ever done to them.**

"We could be here all night on my punishment alone," she wryly commented, wincing with sincere
regret. "There are a lot of things to be sorry for." She looked down at the ground, her good humor lost in an instant.

The reality of their particular situation really struck home then, and Ron realized that he'd been purposefully ignoring their past, shunting it from his mind because the sex stuff had felt too good, and honestly, he didn't want it to stop. But there was a lot between he and Pansy that couldn't be ignored - and all of it had been bad. In fact, prior to two and a half hours ago, he was quite sure this woman would have happily spit in his face rather than let him touch her. Now… everything had changed. Now they wanted each other with an almost desperate need.

How in the hell did that happen - especially to someone like him, who had never had very good luck with women?

The truth was Ron had always felt a bit like a fish out of water in bed. There'd been 'Mione, a one-off with Lavender that had become quite regular after that (despite being casual), and for a month in between last September and now, there had been Romilda Vane in his bed. In all three cases, though, he'd never felt completely free to enjoy himself sexually, as he'd always been worried about his technique and whether he was actually making the girls come (he suspected 'Mione, at least, had faked it throughout their relationship so as not to hurt his feelings). It had put him off, held him back, and had made him feel inadequate as a lover as a result.

Until Parkinson, that was.

Her reactions to his touches were honest. He knew she orgasmed for him. There was absolutely no doubt in his mind that she liked what he did to her. She might have been able to sham the cries of pleasure, but she couldn't fake the rush of her body's juices that had coated his lips and fingers when she came. She couldn't simulate her nipples tightening or the blood flushing through her cheeks at the moment she peaked her bliss. She couldn't falsify the way her pupils dilated, or how her clit quivered against his tongue.

Pansy didn't make him feel incompetent as a lover at all, and that did more for his self-confidence than anything else could. It also made him want – no, need - to touch and taste her often, as if she were some addiction he had no will to deny.

Speaking of which…

"I'll just go ahead and give you permission to touch me anyway and anywhere you want to for the rest of the game," he stated with a leer, taking one step forward, smirking wickedly and licking his lips. "Your turn."

Parkinson's eyes glittered with growing desire. "I give you permission… to touch me anyway and anywhere you want for the rest of the game," she repeated his words to him, taking one step closer. They were now less than a foot apart, gazing at each other with hunger.

Ron stepped the final, short distance between them to plant himself directly against her. Reaching out, he cupped Pansy's jaw, tilted her head back a bit, and looked into her shimmering, dark eyes. Despite being shorter and much slighter of build (he was the second tallest student in school, coming in at three inches above six feet and Parkinson was about average for a girl, about the same height as Hermione and Lavender both – maybe five and a half feet tall), his witch had a commanding presence that made him conscious of her in a way he had never previously been aware of a woman. It was something in the way she held herself, with straight back and shoulders, a tilted chin and direct stare that could pin you in place, like his mum when she was upset, and features that were striking enough to notice from a distance, like a supermodel. She appeared strong, someone you couldn't intimidate easily, a fighter. He respected her all the more for such bite.
And yet, despite that, he was willing to give her an out, knowing from experience how she would straighten her spine and extend her claws when backed into a corner. "I don't mind switching cards, if you want."

Pansy's eyes widened in surprise (as if she hadn't expected such a bloody nice offer), but she shook her head firmly in answer to the proposition. Dropping her card, she wrapped her arms about his neck, locking her gaze onto his fervently. "No, I want to act out my card. I need to… before things go all the way between us… so you'll know I'm not playing you."

Despite how Hermione or Harry might believe him completely incapable of fathoming the opposite sex, Ron understood exactly what Pansy was saying in that moment. He didn't want there to be any lingering doubts or resentments when he finally had her, either; nothing to contaminate the sex, to keep it from being fun and wild. And there was absolutely no question any longer that he was going to have Pansy Parkinson at some point during this game. To hear her admit it, however – to know she wanted it, too – made his chest tighten and his dick jerk awake in his pants.

He nodded in agreement to her reasoning, letting her jaw go, slipping that same hand down her back to hold her close. "Why don't we do the cards together?" He gave her what he hoped was an encouraging smile. "For each apology we give, we kiss."

Pansy's eyes lit up and the shadows of dread left her features entirely, replaced by relief and appreciation. "You'd really do that… apologize to me back?"

He nodded sincerely. Having grown up with a mother as dominating as his, Ron understood the importance of saying you were sorry to a witch if you wanted to keep your balls. Sure, he faltered all the time with 'Mione, but that's because she was… well… 'Mione (as soon as they'd broken up and the romantic feelings had passed on, his ex- had been mentally shifted right back into the 'buddy' category alongside Harry, and saying 'I'm sorry' to your mates was done differently than with your girl - usually without words, maybe a grunt or two and a handshake, and an offer to buy a round). He'd treated Lavender and Romilda like a love interest should, though, and frequently apologized (when the girls deemed it necessary, usually indicated by a frown or an arched brow of disapproval). "Sure. I haven't exactly been nice to you either, yeah?" He waggled his eyebrows at her teasingly, trying to put her in a better mood. "Sides, it's free kisses!"

Playfully smacking him lightly, Pansy chuckled. "Is that all you think about? My mouth on you?"

Ron bumped his forehead into hers and stared her down with a naughty grin. "Not the only thing, no. Imagining your mouth all over me definitely gets me hard, but..." He rubbed his nose along hers, then down her cheek seductively, pressing his lips to her ear. "…the thought of my cock up inside you, fucking you so good that you cry out for more, making you come for me continually until you pass out from exhaustion… that's the real prize, baby," he whispered, as if it were a secret just for the two of them alone.

His partner's lids fluttered closed as she groaned, reacting instantly to the desire he'd ignited just by planting that vision into her mind. Her body twined itself around his rather sinuously, one leg lifting to wrap about his, her arms snaking around his neck, her fingers thrusting into his hair. "You're making it difficult to concentrate," she sighed in a sing-song voice, letting her cheek rub cat-like against his.

"That's the plan," he murmured and chuckled, letting his hands rub circles over her bum. "Here's an even better idea for you: if we both forfeit, we could bang about for the next several hours, and I'll let you apologize to me that way instead. Whaddaya say?"

His witch actually considered it, biting her bottom lip, but finally shook her head. "Not yet. I really
like this game. It's helping me to know the real you." She opened her eyes and stared at him with some consternation combined with a touch of wary anger. "Or is sex all you're interested in from me?"

Rubbing one scarred set of knuckles against the soft skin of Pansy's cheek, he considered her question. What did he want from Parkinson? "Well, I'd be lying if I said I didn't want to shag you senseless," he admitted with a wry smile. "But that's not all I want, no." He wasn't sure where the words came from, but he felt his heart beating faster as he spoke them, recognizing them instantly as truth. "I… I like you, Parkinson. Didn't think I ever would, but there it is. You're funny and affectionate and you're so fucking hot. This whole thing between us has blown me away and, well… I kind of like it. You're… gods, you're an amazing chick." With his free hand, he pressed against the sway of her back, bringing his revived erection prominently against her abdomen to prove his words. "I'm glad now that I got you for my partner."

Pansy looked like she was on the verge of crying. "Ron…" she sobbed and buried her face into his shoulder and held on tight, her thin shoulders slightly shaking. He returned her embrace with equal pressure, nuzzled his nose into her fragrant hair, inhaling and letting her soft and sensual scent – a fragrance that reminded him of the sunshine, oak bark, honey flower and amber resin of an English forest in summer - override his mind's whirling thoughts.

He didn't know how long they stood like that, but it was nice to feel her warmth against him. Ron had never been the hugging type (mostly because the three women he'd dated previously weren't the hugging types either, and hugs from family members were boisterous and hard, not soft), but with Pansy, it didn't feel so odd. He rather liked it. He thought he wouldn't mind spending another couple of minutes just like this, in fact, but his witch had taken those moments to compose herself once more and stepped back, dropping her leg from around him. Her dark eyes glimmered wetly. "Um… so, I should go first, I guess, since it was my card."

Taking her hand, Ron led her to sit on the bed next to him where they could be more comfortable. She entwined the fingers of those clasped hands on her lap, and stroked across his rough knuckles with her free hand, tracing the patterns of his scars and still-healing cuts tenderly. "I guess I should start with the first insult I ever threw at you," she forlornly stated, sniffing delicately. "Do you remember it?"

Ron tried to think back. When was the first time he'd met Pansy Parkinson? Oh, that's right – at King's Cross Station. Harry had already arranged for his trunk to be taken by the porter and stowed, and he was awaiting his turn when a girl with dark hair and very fine robes cut in front of him, placing her trolley directly before the porter. He'd made some comment to the effect that she was splinching lines, and she'd turned to look at him with disdain and anger.

"First Year, Hogwarts Express platform. You told me that you'd been waiting in line for the porter, and that I had to have been mistaken in calling you out for a line cutter," he smirked, recalling how adorably irate (although he hadn't thought so at the time; he'd thought her a shrew then) she'd been at the accusation.

Pansy looked up at him. "I had been waiting in line. He'd ignored me, however, when Potter appeared. Just dropped me flat in favor of The Boy Who Lived."

Ron blinked in surprise. "Really? I didn't know that."

Parkinson nodded. "The game won't let me lie, remember?"

"Shit," Ron breathed out heavily. "Then… fuck, I owe you the apology."
His partner shrugged. "As I recall, I started the insulting first."

He thought about it. What had she said to him? "Didn't you shriek something to the effect that the hand-out line for the poor started around the corner?"

Pansy's lips twitched with amusement that she quickly stamped out by pursing them. "Something like that, yes." She shook her head. "I was really quite angry with the porter for ignoring me as he had, and then you for insinuating that I was cutting the line. I took it out on you, though, because it was easier – you weren't an adult." She looked up at him with chagrin. "I'm sorry for that cruelty."

Ron's eyebrow twitched and he tsk'd, feigning shocked disappointment. "Eleven year olds these days… Shocking little blighters!" He grinned cheesily. "Gimme a kiss and I suppose I'll forgive you, though."

His witch did let her smile break through then, and leaned forward, tilting her face to him. Her lips touched down gently on his, pulling softly. It was only a second or two, but man, it got his dick harder than rock, because he felt the sincerity behind the action. "Your turn," she nudged him in a low, teasing voice.

"Um… I apologize for calling you a bossy, blind bint that day," he traded, and pressed his mouth down on her, mimicking her performance with a quick pull of lips.

Wow, who'd thought that such small kisses would be so… nice?

Pansy bit her bottom lip as she pulled away. Seemingly embarrassed with her next thought, she looked down at the collar of his embroidered jacket and let the fingers of her free hand come up and fiddle with it, straightening, smoothing it down so it lay correctly over his bulky shoulders. "I'm sorry for saying you were an ungraceful clod in Second Year."

Ron laughed. "You've always called me that."

His partner withdrew her hand and fanned herself off with it instead. "That was the first time I said it to you, actually. It was in the Alley, and we were going into _Flourish & Blotts_ for Lockhart's book signing before the term began; you bumped into me as you were rushing past, remember? You nearly knocked me over."

"Oh, yeah," he remembered, his gaze focusing inwardly on the past for a second. "You were there with your mum?"

Parkinson hummed in concurrence. "When you bumped me, it had a domino effect. I knocked into her, and _she_ fell into my aunt, who nearly landed in a crate of worm-rot apples that some street vendor was selling." She kissed him again, staring at him through half-closed lids as she pulled away. "Sorry for shouting that after you as you ran past."

Ron leaned forward and took his kiss before speaking. "Sorry for bumping into you and rushing off so rudely. We were looking for Harry. He'd Floo'd into Knockturn Alley by mistake. Rough neighborhood. We were worried."

Pansy accepted the apology with a nod. He kissed her again, grinning mischievously, knowing he'd overstepped the game to sneak in a second reward. "Cheater," she accused gently, smiling as well.

He shrugged. "You'll live."

His partner leaned back in the bed, facing the ceiling. Ron followed her down, lying next to her on his side, leaning up on an elbow to see her better. She was concentrating again, biting her lower lip.
"I'm sorry for the incident in the storage cupboard during Double Potions in Third Year. You know, when we got locked in."

Ron considered that memory. "Are you sorry for insulting me or for slapping me that time? Or for getting us locked in there in the first place?"

She turned her head and looked at him earnestly. "All of the above."

"Then, I'm sorry for dumping the whole bottle of Glop of Pixie Sperm all over your head for hauling off on me," he yielded. Internally, he congratulated himself for saying that with a straight face.

Pansy scrunched up like she'd bitten into sour lemons. "I still don't see how something so small can produce something so foul-smelling," she rhetorically stated, then poked him in the chest. "Well, it serves you right that you had to breathe the fumes with me until Snape let us out. What were you thinking, opening such nasty tripe in an enclosed space?"

Ron shrugged, also scrunching up his brow and cheeks in a grimace. "I was thirteen and thought it would be a laugh. I had no idea it would stink so bad." He made a defensive gesture with his free hand. "Hey, it's not like they tell you such things in Third Year Potions textbooks. And besides, who'd milk the wee folk for their sperm? It'd have to be some dodgy head case, because the idea is totally mental to start. Can you imagine trying to wank them off? How would you accomplish that even? They're so small!"

Parkinson burst into hysterics, her face glowing with fuchsia merriment. "Maybe… they buy 'em… a subscription to… WeeWitch," she gushed while wiping away tears from the corners of her eyes. "And give them… a shot glass."

Ron chortled. "Cute. Naked pixies whacking off tiny erections to little, blue centerfolds… I think my mind is permanently fried now."

"What do you mean now?" his girl mocked, grinning like that bloody cat from Alice in Wonderland. "You've always been brain-damaged, Weasley."

"Cheeky skirt," he accused, shaking his head with jest. His hand shot out and grabbed a hold of her left boob and honked it twice. He feigned innocence. "Oh, I'm so sorry, Miss, but you see, my cooked skull can't seem to manage my limbs anymore." He started massaging her breast. "I hate when this happens. This here's a reflex impulse - completely uncontrollable."

Pansy giggled, but as the seconds ticked by, her smile fell once more and she grew strangely quiet, her eyes narrowing in thought. Such concentration made an adorable dent in her forehead, but caused his hand to stop in its fun for the moment, unsure as to whether such groping would be further tolerated. "You know… speaking of spontaneous response," she stated, making a cute moue with her lips. "Now that I reflect on it, I might have done that on purpose. Locked us in that day, I mean. Unconsciously, of course."

Bewildered by such a contradictory statement, Ron gave her a skeptical expression. "That doesn't make a lick of sense, woman. How can you do something intentionally, but without meaning to?"

Shaking her head and snuffing in amusement, Pansy snickered under her breath. "I mean, I had hold of the handle and was leaving, but you said something and I just had to turn back and retort. I let go of the door. I knew it locked from the outside, so why did I do that? I'm not usually prone to such… thoughtlessness."

"Ah, gotcha." He chuckled, waggling his eyebrows, trying to regain some of the earlier silliness.
"Maybe because I'm mint at firing you off?"

Parkinson caved with a snigger. "Yes, you are at that." Leaning up, and using her free hand to tug him down with pressure on his jacket, she snogged him a good one, slipping her tongue into the mix, lapping against and between his lips wantonly and evocatively. "You definitely fire me off, Mr. Weasley."

He sighed in longing. "Bloody hell, woman, I'm as hard as a rock from just that! Look what you do to me." He grabbed her hand off the lapel of his coat and yanked it down to feel the bulge between his legs. His erection was very prominent.

Recognizing his desire for her, Pansy seriously contemplated him for a few heartbeats in silence, before saying something that quite honestly floored him. "We are like Malfoy and Granger, aren't we? How weird."

Ron leaned up off his hand, raising himself higher on his elbow. "Whaddaya mean?"

His partner's fingers began rubbing his cock gently, absently. He didn't dare say anything to make her stop, enjoying her stroking too much, despite his curiosity. "I mean, it's obvious now that I look at it. Just like them, we've always antagonized each other. I've been rather obsessed with it, honestly. I don't feel the need to go out of my way to insult Potter, or even Granger, like I do you. You're... special."

Scoffing in amusement, he helped her hand along by guiding it all up and down his length, spreading his top leg wide open, letting the knee bend upright. "Special enough to insult? That's kinda wack."

His partner shook that dark chestnut hair of hers back and forth, swishing it rather attractively from side to side, all the while never pausing in her caressing of his steel-hard nine iron. "No, special enough to pay attention to you, and to want you to pay attention to me back – even if that awareness was negative." She tilted her head, her gaze traveling over his face, assessing it carefully. "It was... like foreplay, or something. I got off on yanking your chain as often as possible."

The imagery combined with her hand's action was too much. Pushing her hand down onto the mattress, Ron pounced, pressing Pansy back into the bed, straddling her with his heavier form. "I get off on you yanking my chain as well," he grinned slyly, running fingers through that silky, shiny hair of hers. "So... you're saying that we really were attracted to each other all this time?"

His partner shrugged daintily and hummed in agreement. "Rich girl, poor boy. Slytherin versus Gryffindor. Wrong side of the tracks for both of us." She grinned impishly. "It was fated that we'd want to fuck."

Inside his pants, Ron's cock was now swelling to proportions that were painful. "Say that last part again," he dared her, leaning forward until their lips were barely touching.

Pansy's lids lowered with sultry languidness as she stared up at him. Licking her painted lips, she gave him a wicked smirk. "It was fated that I'd want to take your hard, tasty cock into my desperate mouth, Ron, and that you'd want to lick my wet, begging pussy, and that we'd want to fuck sweetly and strong, and that after, you'd want to kiss me until I died."

His heart practically stopped at her lurid descriptions. Swallowing hard, Ron felt an unnamed emotion well up inside, pulsing its way up his throat and into his mouth. "Fuck, baby, say you want us to do that right now or I'm gonna pop."

Small fingers traced a line over his hip, across his waistband, and dipped to trace his hardened length
under his tight trousers again. "Oh, yes, I want us to tear each other's clothes off and fuck each other into the mattress… but not yet. If we do, this game ends for both of us. You know we'll have to forfeit, because I don't think once will be enough for either of us. It certainly won't be for me. I'll want you for hours, Ron. I'm not exaggerating, and I know a spell that will give us that. Daphne taught it to me." She leaned up to kiss him just once as her hand stroked over his sack and one finger trailed naughtily over that spot right underneath that made him jerk with need. "There's still so much we can do with the cards – things we can explore about each other. I want to try it all with you. I want to tie you up and feed you, I want you to play with me with toys, I want to massage you and have you massage me, I want you to spank me nicely, and I want to bathe with you… I want us to play and enjoy this time together. I want us to talk and get to know each other better so that when we do have sex, it'll be so good, because we'll know what the other likes." She looked up at him sincerely. "If we rush it, we'll miss all of that."

Shit… this all sounded like a dream come true for a bloke: a beautiful witch wanted him to pleasure her fully, and to give it right back to him. Talk about something right out of the story pages of PlayWitch! "Right. You're abso-fucking-lutely right, baby," he agreed, swallowing back his animalistic needs. "I want all of that, too."

She teased him only a moment or two more with those sinful fingers of hers, before moving her hand away. Underneath him, she stretched in a very kittenish manner, her mood switching instantaneously to that of the rascal. "Then you go again," she smartly challenged, being sure she thrust her breasts into his chest with a provocative arch of her back. "I rather like hearing you apologize to me, my sexy wizard."

Sighing with partial disappointment, partial pain, Ron sat up on his knees and adjusted his "package" purposefully in front of her, sticking his hand down his pants and moving his stiff prick to a more comfortable position. Parkinson's eyes, he noted, followed his every move like a snake entranced by a flute player. She even stuck her pink tongue out and wetted her lips, and in her eyes, he saw the promise of more sucking of his jolly stick in the very near future.

He moved off of her, laying back into the same position at her side as he'd been earlier, trying to calm his racing blood. He ached clear through to his bollocks. It was time to get back in the game, which would serve as a good distraction from his thoughts of soaping up Pansy's breasts… "Okay, so, uh… my turn. Right. I'm sorry for…" He thought about his history with this girl again, digging for an appropriate instance where they'd clashed. "Ah, I know: for saying you and your dress looked ugly at the Yule Ball in Fourth Year."

Pansy frowned. "You mean on the staircase?"

He nodded, still squirming, having trouble finding a "cozy spot" in his pants. He was throbbing with need. "Yeah, remember Cedric called Harry away, and you were at the top of the landing on the Second Floor – what were you doing there anyway? I went on up to get back to the dorms without him, and we passed each other on the stairs and you said…"

"'Evening, Weasley. I see your date abandoned you. Why am I not surprised?"' she quoted verbatim. "I went to use the loo. Second Floor girl's bath is the closest to the Entrance Hall."

"Oh, well, yeah," he understood finally. "And I said in reply…"

"'You're looking particularly ugly tonight, Parkinson. With all of dad's money, you couldn't find a dress to flatter?"' she remembered, snuffing now at the silliness of that exchange.

Ron felt the blush creep up his cheeks. "Uh, yeah. Wow, you have a good memory."
She snickered, claiming her kiss. "I'm not in the top ten of the class for nothing, you know."

His jaw hit the mattress. "Wha…? Seriously?" Now, Ron realized that sentiment had come out all wrong – the sounding shocked part, specifically – but it was his gut reaction and he didn't curb it in time. Wincing, he hoped she wouldn't slap him into next week.

Pansy snorted, looking particularly proud of herself. "I'm no Granger, Malfoy, Greengrass or MacMillan – all of whom seem to have an almost freak ability to remember the tiniest facts - but I've always been able to hold my own at homework and tests. I like to read and study."

Pushing up on his elbow, he leaned over Slytherin's Queen Bee, incredulity plastered to his features. "I didn't know that!

His partner's dark, delicate eyebrow arched at him with amusement. "Yes, you did," she countered, walking her fingers up his arm and back down again, apparently just for the pleasure of touching him. "Think back - how many times have we had an altercation while I was reading?"

Frowning, Ron sat up, leaning an arm on one bent knee. How many times had they sniped at each other over the years? Too many to count (as Pansy had rightly said, they could be there all night apologizing to each other). As he considered it now, though, he realized she was right. He frequently saw her in the library, and would pass by with a snide comment before moving on to find 'Mione. She had a favorite window perch in the Charms corridor where she'd sometimes sit to look out at the view… and she'd always be reading, wouldn't she? And those times during the late spring when he'd catch her and her Slytherin girl friends sunbathing or picnicking on blankets outside in the grassy area near the Quidditch Pitch… she always had a book in her hand or tucked under her arm, didn't she? Why hadn't he put it together before?

"So, what do you like to read?" he asked, realizing he'd terribly misjudged her for years (thinking her more concerned with fashion and gossip and making people miserable than engaging in more intelligent pursuits, and feeling rather foolish about that presumption). "What's your favorite subject?"

Pansy didn't answer immediately, and he turned his head to find out why. She was biting her lip again, and her blush ran from her neck to her forehead. "You'll laugh at me."

Maybe the old Ron might have, yeah, but the Ron that was here with her now… no. He didn't believe he had it in him anymore to laugh at her expense. Twisting about and situating himself over her, straddling her body, he petted her soft cheeks with his fingers. "Promise I won't," he swore sincerely, capturing her gaze. "I'll even tell you mine."

His partner gave him an assessing look. "You love Quidditch," she stated rather perceptively. "You hate Potions and Divination, and could give or take the rest with equal indifference."

Surprised by her rather accurate assessment of his character, Ron grinned slyly. "Guess which of those tolerable subjects I like best, though."

Tilting her head, her short, dark hair fanning over the white coverlet as a result, his girl mulled it over for half a minute more. "Care of Magical Creatures."

He grinned, silently acknowledging her answer with a curt nod. "Very good. And you like Herbology best, Potions second."

A soft gasp was torn from her chest and she looked at him with flummoxed surprise. "How… how did you know?"
He beamed down at her lightheartedly. "Well, that's easy, innit? You're in Advanced Herbology, and
I heard what Snape said to you this week in your Advanced Potions interview – you've got a knack
for the subject. I'm betting your N.E.W.T.s for those subjects were the easiest, huh?"

"Oh," she replied in wonder, seeming at a loss for words. "Yeah. I... I think I did well with them.
We'll find out Monday or Tuesday, right?"

He nodded. "So, how'd you know about me and C.M.C."

Shrugging again, she looked at him as if it were obvious. "You helped your brother out during the
Tri-Wizard Tournament, packing the dragons up after the First Task. Looked like you enjoyed it."

"Yeah, I did, but... how'd you know?" he asked with some suspicion. "Were you spying on me?"

Pansy giggled and blushed. "Actually, I was spying on your brother. We all were – every girl in our
year from Slytherin, half the Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws, and more than a few Gryffindors."

"Gah!" Ron huffed in righteous indignation and flipped over onto his back again, throwing his arms
to the air. "Why is it that every woman digs on Charlie? I just don't get it!"

Pansy sat up on her elbows, chortling merrily. "It's the scars." She reached for his hand, flipping
herself around, this time straddling him and pulled his hand up between them. Kissing and licking his
Quidditch-battered knuckles, she playfully wiggled herself right over his erection. "We chicks dig
scars, Ron. Didn't you know?" She sucked one finger into her mouth rather suggestively, and he felt
a bolt of electricity shoot straight down his spine and into his cock. Groaning, he pressed his hips
upwards in time to her slow humping.

"I've got scars," he smiled coyly. "Wanna see?"

"I've already seen," his partner reminded him in a sinfully seductive voice, dragging her center
slowly over him and back down. "I'm sure I'll see again, too."

"Count on it," Ron growled, taking his hand from hers, grabbing her hips and thrusting up against
her roughly.

Pansy squealed in delight. Her face lit up like the sun, her smile so brilliant and true it almost hurt to
look upon it. Ron's heart pounded in his chest in counterpoint. He rubbed their bodies together for
several minutes, watching her face transform into lustful desperation. "Damn, baby, you make it hard
for a man to keep his wits." He let his hot hands roam up and down her thighs, pushing up her dress.
He wanted at her!

"Stop, stop," she breathlessly surrendered, trying to be serious, but failing miserably as she kept
giggling. "We need to finish this before time's up."

With a deep sigh, Ron stopped bouncing his girl up and down on his lap (much to his profound
disappointment), but he did settle her on top of his dick firmly, anchoring her in place with a grip he
maintained on her hips. This he would not give up – the sensation of her sweet spot nestling against
his through her knickers and his slacks. It was too good a feeling. "All right then, keep apologizing,
wench, before I decide to forget myself and throw you down to shag you rotten." He couched the
demand with an arrogant smirk, and was tapped lightly on the cheek for his brazen attitude.

"Impatient git," Parkinson cheeked fondly, but in the next second, her smile faded and she became
rather solemn. "Okay, I've got another one. I'm sorry for the time in Fifth Year that I screamed at you
for the 'owl incident.' Remember that?"
Reluctantly, he nodded, feeling heat crawl up his cheeks at the memory, but unable to keep himself from snickering. Oh, man… The 'owl incident.' Damn, he should have known that would come up at some point. Yeah, that had been one of the most embarrassing moments of his life.

They'd gotten into a blazing row at the Owlery when they'd accidentally bumped into each other (her leaving, him coming in), and in a fit of immaturity, he'd grabbed up the package in Pansy's hands, opened it and taunted her once he caught a gander of what was inside. Holding her specialty, catalogue-ordered thong knickers above her head and out of her reach, making her jump for them, had been (at the time) rather amusing. How was he supposed to know that Malfoy's Eagle Owl would find the enticement of green satin and lace to be an irresistible snack item?

Trying not to laugh as well, Parkinson distracted herself by watching her hands, which were once again smoothing his jacket, removing specks of imaginary lint. Apparently, that was a nervous habit of hers. "Mum was angry with me when she found out I'd been ordering sexy lingerie through the post at only fifteen, but that was nothing to her fury over having to go apologize to Lady Malfoy for causing her owl's death as a result of it choking on the bloody things."

Unable to stop himself, imagining the look on any of the Malfoys' faces when they'd been told the news, Ron burst into cackling laughter. Tears, literally, poured from his eyes and he howled in amusement. Pansy swatted him again. "Stop," she chastised sternly (although her grin kept the reprimand from being truly effective). "I lost a perfectly good pair of knickers that cost me my month's allowance, and the ability to keep secretly ordering the things because of you, you great prat!"

Grabbing ahold of her and pulling her down, he rolled her onto her back and loomed over her, continuing to bawl with hysterical glee into her shoulder. Pansy tsk'd in annoyance… which only made him crack up into another round of laughter. Eventually, she joined him in the hilarity of the situation.

"Bloody bird," she chortled. "Although, I guess suffocation by panties isn't a bad way to go."

Ron had never laughed so hard or so long in his life. If he hadn't been kneeling on a mattress already, he'd have been falling down and pissing his shorts. "Holy… hells…" he managed to gasp between pants for air. "We've done some… crazy shite... together, yeah?"

"I suppose," his woman snickered, seductively sliding her legs up the outside of his to wrap around his waist. "I'd like to do even more, though."

Ron's erection shot back to life, and the sudden crowding in his boxers made him groan. Unable to prevent himself, he tipped forward and hotly slid his lips over hers in a kiss designed to ignite them both. With a low growl in his throat, he kissed her until she was breathless and straining against him. Only then did he pull away.

They stared at each other in silence, and Ron realized right then and there that he wanted Pansy – not just for the sex (although that was tits up, too), but because she was a great catch. "You're so beautiful, so smart, so much fun, so fucking sexy… baby, you're it," he heard himself spouting off like some lovesick puppy, unable to stop the words tumbling from his mouth, drawn directly from the depths of his heart and mind. "I'm sorry I purposefully splashed you with rain earlier this year when I ran past you and hit a puddle, and for accidentally blowing up your cauldron in Second Year Potions, and for intentionally slipping a ground-up Puking Pastille into your soup last year when you were distracted…"

Pansy's jaw opened wide. "That was you? Why, you little snake!"
He kissed her three times for those three confessions, letting his lips buzz over hers as he pulled away gently. "And I'm sorry for always hurting your feelings – especially that day in the Transfiguration corridor earlier this week." He brushed her bangs to the side of her forehead softly. "I didn't know you were there, honest. And what I said…”

His witch finally shut him down with fingertips over his lips. "I pushed that fight. I'm sorry for that. For all of it, Ron. For seven years of cruel barbs, and slaps and shoves and getting you into trouble with teachers… I'm sorry." Her hand lightly brushed across his cheek, and he could feel the smoothness of her touch rub away all of the bad feelings between them. Unexpected tears slipped down her cheeks to fall into her hairline. "Really sorry."

Drawing him towards her with pressure against the back of his head, Pansy kissed him with a sweetness that melted Ron down to his bones. Their tongues and lips lingered over each other's, sampling with leisurely measure, prolonging pleasure, nurturing a connection that he could feel slowly liquefying itself into his skin, through his muscles, and into his heart.

Merlin help him, he was falling for Pansy Parkinson.

He let himself mull over that thought as they continued to savor each other's mouths, as her fingers continued to stroke the back of his neck, and as he caressed her thick, straight hair off her face and around the back of her ear with trembling fingers.

When the chimes rang out moments later, neither one was prepared to immediately break up their exploring. That took another five minutes-worth of soul-stealing kisses before it was possible to accomplish.
By the time Draco and his partner made it back to the couches in the main area, two couples were already out there waiting – Finnigan and Brown, and Pansy with the Weasel.

The Irish and his blonde bombshell were holding hands, sitting next to each other on the sofa, turned slightly towards each other, her head resting on his shoulder. How…darling. He almost lost his dinner right there.

As for Pans, she and her redheaded beau were leaning against the back of the furniture on Slytherin's side, her bum perched on the top of the sofa, Ron holding her with arms entwined about her waist. They were talking quietly, staring into each other's eyes, and Draco stopped cold, floored by the emotion so nakedly displayed across his ex-girlfriend's features. He'd never seen Parkinson so sincerely happy or unrestrained with a man before – and he'd been privy to more than one public display by her with a guy over the years. The smile on her lips, the blush on her cheeks, the loving way her fingers lightly caressed Ronald Weasley's arms, shoulders and throat were all indicative of one thing: massive infatuation. There was no feint in her demeanor, either, to make him think that she might be faking.

"Can't believe it either, huh?" Granger's voice at his right shoulder brought him around. "It seems odd to me, too. I mean, they were so openly hateful of each other before the first action round. It's the same with Ginny and your friend, Zabini, and even Lavender with Seamus. They all had bad histories that were...well...weirdly forgotten as soon as sex came into the equation."

Draco considered how best to reply to turn the strange circumstances into some sort of personal advantage, per typical Slytherin modus operandi. Tilting his head, he looked down from his greater height into the eyes of his partner. "Us, too."

Two words, so very powerful. They got the expected response.

Granger blushed prettily, her eyes searching his face for hidden clues about his feelings. Draco was careful to craft his mask to prevent too far a probe, however. "So, your opinion has changed now?"

Slowly, carefully, he lifted a hand and stroked his fingertips lightly down her left cheek. "Now, I think it's safe to say the transformation is for the better – for all of us. Don't you agree?"

Dark bronze stared into his very heart, measuring, calculating in seconds whether to believe him or not. "I think it's nice, yes. But definitely...peculiar."

Slipping his hand down to hers to entwine them together, he gently guided her to his side and walked them about the room, away from the seating area, talking to her as they went so as to distract her from their touching. "What's got you so suspicious? Don't you think it's possible for physical intimacy to alter the nature of a relationship?"
His ploy worked; his witch was too caught up in contemplating and discussing the topic to pay much attention to her hand clasped in his, to his long fingers rubbing seductively over hers. "Yes, it's possible, of course, and the game certainly gives such an opportunity to create cozy moments between partners. I have read the cards for my side, after all. But, it's almost like…” She floundered for the answer, which seemed to remain just out of her reach. Shaking her head in frustration, her brow lowered in concern. "It just feels strange. Not a natural development."

As they reached the stone-masonry of the back wall, they made their way around it, following the angles. "You suspect the magic of the cards is somehow influencing us to feel stronger…affection…for each other than would be normal?" he plucked the thought seamlessly from her supposition.

Halting her steps, bringing him to a stop at her side as well, Hermione glanced over at the table between the two couches on the other side of the room and stared at the piles of cards lying unobtrusively on the surface. Watching her profile carefully, he could practically read the thoughts flittering through her brain as they reflected in her eyes. She was most definitely concerned, although Draco could not understand why. "We know the cards are forcing us to tell the truth and to perform the actions,” she murmured in a low voice so they wouldn't be overheard, even with the obvious distance between them and the others. "What else are they forcing upon us? And how?” She glanced up at him from beneath painted lashes. "Where did you get this particular set?"

Draco shifted uncomfortably. "From some place I know you'll wholly disapprove," he stated frankly, knowing her character.

She narrowed her eyes in deliberation. "Knockturn Alley. Borgin & Burkes?"

Draco shook his head. "Correct on the general location, wrong about the storefront. They came from a few doors down, actually."

Hermione's eyebrows shot up. "Don't tell me you got them from Madam Aset?"

Surprise flashed through him. "Been patronizing the seedier parts of town, have we?” he snickered, astonished to discover his bookworm wasn't quite as innocent as he'd always assumed. "And how would you know about a Sex-Witch Shoppe, hmmm?"

"How would you?" she countered, slightly miffed at him (whether for knowing about the Sex-Witch or buying a questionable deck of magical cards, Draco couldn't rightly tell), and they continued walking, heading towards the couches now.

Leaning his mouth towards her ear as they walked, he whispered naughtily to her. "The owner taught me everything I know."

Jerking back from him as if slapped, she stopped again and stared at him with incredulity. "You paid for sex with a known whore?"

It was Draco's turn to be annoyed now. "First of all, it's a right-of-passage for all pureblood men of my status to be broken in by a Sex-Witch who's been properly trained and certified by the Ministry." At the look of horror on her face, he tsk’d at her naiveté. "I told you that the titled wizarding elite follow ancient customs that the rest of the world can't fathom. That one's a hold-over. That I lost my virginity outside that convention and earlier than expected – and to a half-blood, regardless of her ties to the Zabinis - infuriated my father to no end…which was the point then, because I was angry at him for the lifetime of brainwashing he'd heaped upon me." He tugged her a little harshly so that she was forced back into his close quarters, their faces only inches apart. "You can congratulate yourself for unwittingly empowering that rebellious streak within me, by the way, since I'd only started thinking that way after the Yule Ball just days before."
Having caught Granger flat-footed (and as open-mouthed as a fish out of water) was a major triumph for sure, but her candidly registered shock still wasn't enough to assuage Draco's rising temper now that he was on a roll. He barreled onward, intent on calling her out for the doffing hypocrite she was at that moment.

"Second, you're smarter than to call a practitioner of the craft of intimacy something as cheap and common as a 'whore,' princess. As well-read as you are, you should know by now that a Sex-Witch or Warlock can't help what they are anymore than you can help being a witch. They're born with the power to bring pleasure to others, much as you're innately good at Charms."

He sniffed in disdain, letting her hand go, stepping away.

"I'd have thought someone like you, who'd been on the receiving end of prejudice more than once, would know better than to judge others for the parameters of their birth."

Granger looked stricken suddenly, as if the thought had never occurred to her that she was, in fact, being an unmitigated, two-faced snob regarding this subject. He fired his point home with a final shot. "And for your information, Ms. Sabrina is nota whore. She's actually quite a lovely and refined lady who cares for her patrons. It was she who taught me how to respect a woman in bed - how to show her the proper attention and how to pleasure her perfectly every time." He smirked rather arrogantly down at his partner. "Something you're going to benefit from very generously as the game progresses, princess, so I wouldn't make too much of a fuss about my visitations with her if I were you."

He walked away then, giving Gryffindor's sovereign space and time to think about what he'd said. To his amazement, after only a few steps, he felt her hand grab his, and tug him to a definitive stop. He turned to give his partner his full attention, aware (now that he'd spied the group in its entirety across the room, waiting upon them) of the eyes watching their lackluster performance. They hadn't even raised their voices this time! He was sure that was disappointing to some of them.

"You're right. I was judging without considering all of the facts," Hermione admitted, bending to the logic, appearing properly censured by shame. "I apologize if I've insulted you or your…friend. Or your…traditions."

Well, this had to be a first: Granger was apologizing to him, admitting she was wrong about something. He wanted to shout, "Quick, someone take a picture so it can't be denied later!" but thought that would probably be a really immature thing to do given the circumstances. That meant there was only one acceptable recourse left to him…

"You're forgiven, Granger. Let's just get back to the game."

She didn't let go of his hand though, even as he made to turn and go. Instead, she stepped in closer and held him fast, and for an instant (just a tiny one), he thought perhaps she was moving in to kiss him in apology as well. His internal animal wagged its tail at the thought.

"I'm still concerned about the cards and their influence, though," she whispered, eyes darting over his shoulder to look at the entire cast of players. "What if it's dark magic of some kind? Did your Madam Aset tell you anything at all about them, or perhaps hint at anything in passing?"

Draco's beast calmed on all fronts as he pondered the question and reviewed the facts within his command. "She made it clear that the game belonged to a friend of hers, and that there's a charm already on it that will send it back to her automatically once the game is finished."

"How did you find out about the game to begin with?" his partner pressed, clearly unwilling to let
this go for now. "Did she show it to you when you went to...visit...her? Or was it advertised for sale and you went to procure it that way?"

Now he found himself in a quandary with no good options for getting out - which also put him in the position of becoming a potential victim of his own conniving plot. On the one hand, if he told Granger that he'd been planning to seduce her well in advance of tonight, and that he'd acquired this game solely for that purpose (once Sabrina had mentioned it to him, of course), Hermione would most likely quit the game permanently, thinking him a smidge obsessed.

On the other hand, his partner would mostly likely hound the living hell out of him for answers throughout the rest of the game, turning over and over every one of his words in that amazing brain of hers until she puzzled the whole thing out on her own – which would then frag her off, because she'd know he'd hidden the truth from her from the start.

If there was one thing he had discovered about Hermione Granger over the last three years, it was that she despised liars and schemers.

Shame, really, otherwise they'd have got on famously long ago.

Sighing in frustration, knowing he'd have to work this situation over delicately so that he wouldn't be necessarily lying, but so that he wouldn't give his hand away too soon either, he turned his back to the group and spoke low, for her ears only. "I wanted to try the game out after Madam described it to me over tea one afternoon," he stated, then rolled his eyes at her look of doubt regarding the last part of his statement. "I can't believe I'm about to say this, but yes, Granger, it's not always about sex. I went only for a social visit that time."

Which was absolutely true; so far, he hadn't lied a bit. He'd omitted, but not lied. What good would it serve if he explained that he'd specifically gone to Sabrina that day for her advice on love games so he could ensnare this infuriatingly nosey witch standing before him now and claim her for his own, if only just once?

"She gave me the basic rundown on the rules then, and explained that the game belonged to her friend and she could acquire it for me and have it sent to me here. The only other thing she said was that the cards have been around for over two hundred years, and that they originally belonged to some suicidal courtesan in a gentleman's establishment."

Hermione's eyes widened. "Suicidal?"

Draco shrugged nonchalantly. "Apparently." Not that it mattered. What did a bint who lived two centuries ago have to do with the price of tea in India, anyway? "The game's been passed down in Madam Aset's family ever since. They're something of an heirloom, as I understand it."

Granger's faced did that thing it was wont to do when she was turning an enigma around in her head – it scrunches up and made her look like a garden gnome. Politely, Draco coughed behind his hand to hide a laugh.

"If they're that important," she wondered aloud, "why loan them out to just anybody, then? I mean, I wouldn't lend something that sentimental out to you."

He gave her an irked frown. "Thanks for the vote of confidence."

She shook her head. "No, you misunderstand. I mean, what are you to Madam Aset aside from just another client?"

Now he was becoming personally offended. Raising an eyebrow, he scowled at his witch. "You say
that like I'm some forgettable street urchin with cheap coin whom she tolerates darkening her doorstep."

Wisely, Granger did not rise to the bait. Instead, she gave him a flat stare. "You know perfectly well what I'm talking about. You're not the Sex-Witch's relation in any fashion, nor did you indicate that you knew or were on solid speaking terms with her friend, so why on Earth would she and her friend deign to loan out a priceless family treasure to a mere acquaintance, business or otherwise? It makes absolutely no sense."

His hackles were rising. "Maybe because I'm a fantastic fuck," he crudely sniped.

One delicate, dark brown eyebrow twitched coolly. "We'll see," was all his partner replied.

With her own powerful two-word sentence, it was as if Hermione had flipped a switch suddenly, and Draco felt rather pleased that she'd conceded to the idea that he would shag her rotten at some point in the next twenty-some-odd hours, and he forgot all about the mood of doom that had been hovering like a storm bank over them both.

He threw her a sly smirk. "Come on, Granger," he coerced, taking her hand again gently and tucking it into his arm as if he were escorting her to a formal occasion, "You can burn out your brain on your own time. Right now, everyone's waiting for us."

That jarred her right out of her internalized space and, guiltily, she looked over at the seating area and noted the other couples all waiting patiently for them to finish their spat.

"Foot," she said with a sigh, "is it time to head back into the fray?"

Draco grinned, deciding to change the topic to cheer her up. He'd like where they'd left things this last round, and was hoping for more of a breakthrough this time. "Afraid so. And speaking of, perhaps this time you'll have to massage my feet." He sighed in melodramatic teasing. "Ahhh, you on your knees before me, washing my toes and rubbing them sensuously… I could really come to like that."

His princess chuckled. "I will never bend a knee to you, Draco Malfoy."

"We'll see," he arrogantly smirked. "You might just find you'll enjoy the eye-level view in that position."

He'd timed that shot to purposefully coincide with them reaching the sphere of the sofas, and so his partner had been unable to reply, knowing the others would hear. Instead, she sucked in a deep breath and let it out slowly. He let her go so she could take her place, but only after he'd pressed a rather chivalric kiss to the back of her knuckles, making her blush as crimson as an Allentide apple.

"Sorry for the delay everyone," Granger announced, making their excuses when Draco felt none were necessary. He said nothing, however, resuming his seat and crossing his legs, getting comfortable. It was Potter's turn to conduct this round, and he indicated with a nod to his contemporary that he was ready to begin once his partner resumed her spot across the way.

Potter clapped his hands together and rubbed them, as happy as a gay lark. "Right, so I hope everyone had a nice time last round. And…you're up, Blaise," he indicated the pile of green cards on the table.

Zabini rolled his eyes at the man's chirpy optimism, and, reaching forward, grabbed the top card of the Interrogations pile and read it aloud:
"If you had to count how often you wanked in an average week, what would that number be today?"

No one said anything, although there was some shifting immediately to Blaise's left. Tracey was clearly uncomfortable with answering the question (like that was any surprise).

"Sorry," she apologized curtly to everyone and quickly grabbed a Forfeits card, her face blooming with twin cherries on each cheek.

Draco was beginning to suspect that perhaps Davis was either incredibly shy, or an outright liar about her experience. Which would suck for her if she was still a virgin and Potter got one of Draco's Forfeits or Deeds cards, because that meant that the girl was good and screwed, literally.

However, since Pans had been the one to say her roommate could play in the first place, and he'd entrusted the recruitment of the Slytherin women to Parkinson, he really had no say in the matter.

Besides, it was too late to do anything about it.

It was his turn now.

Taking a deep breath, he looked up at the ceiling. "Let's see here…" he playfully stalled, knowing Granger was probably hanging on his every word, although she'd most likely be pretending not to be in the least bit interested. "How many times on average a week do I stroke it? Hmmm…Whose card was this anyway? I need clarification on something."

It was no surprise when Weasley grinned. "Guilty as charged."

"Figures," Draco snarked. "Okay, so are you talking about wanking to completion, or just touching yourself for pleasure, but maybe not coming?"

The redheaded git snorted and shook his head. "Who the hell strokes their dick but doesn't come?"

Draco gave him a rather amused smirk. "You mean to tell me that you've never whipped it out and touched yourself in class just to see if you could get away with it?"

Finnigan started laughing then and slapped his knee. "Holy shit, I thought I was the only one ta do that."

All right, the Irish just went up a tiny notch in Draco's esteem for admitting to something that he knew most of the guys had done at one time or another throughout their Hogwarts career.

Theo snickered and looked across at the Weasel, who was decidedly uncomfortable. "Admit it, you've done it. Hell, I've done it." He grinned without shame. "Almost got caught by Snape stroking the ol' pickle in fifth year."

"That would have been quite the disaster," Granger piped in, an amused giggle escaping her lips. "Can you imagine what the detention would have been?"

There were a few shared chuckles around the circle.

"I have no compunction about admitting to such pleasurable activities while in the classroom for
instruction," Daphne stated rather calmly, lifting her glasses from her nose, breathing on the lenses and rubbing them with the edge of Blaise's shirt tail. "I have twice indulged in such diversions while in Muggle Studies, twice in Divination, and once in Defense Against The Dark Arts."

Even Draco's jaw dropped at that.

Everyone stared at Greengrass like she'd just grown another head.

"Fuck. Me," Theo breathed out, jumped out of his seat and knelt before his partner, his face awed. "I think I'm officially in love with you, my Queen."

Replacing her rather sensible yet fashionable spectacles upon the bridge of her nose, Daphne looked down at her beau, and to everyone's surprise, she reached out gently and fondly ruffled his hair. "I will give you the opportunity to illustrate the depths of such feeling next round, if you conduct yourself agreeably, my Theo."

The smile he threw her was one of utter adoration, and in that moment, Draco started to doubt his earlier skepticism of Granger's assessment of the cards.

He glanced over at his partner, and clearly, she was sharing the same foreboding concern, her gaze traveling over Daphne and Theo before locking onto his.

"So, the question remains," he managed to draw the group back on topic, and Theo resumed his seat, "how did you define 'wanking,' Weasley, when you wrote up the card?"

Ron shrugged his broad shoulders. "I guess I meant you had to come at the end of it."

Draco nodded, his attention turning to the curly-haired witch at Weasley's left shoulder. "Then my answer would have to be every day, at least once, sometimes two or three times, depending upon how much time I have to waste, and whether I'm in a relationship or not."

"Why should that last part matter?"

That from Hermione, who stared right back at him in challenge.

Gods, he loved her sassy, fearless mouth!

"Because if I'm fucking a woman regularly, I don't need to get myself off so often," he replied matter-of-factly. "I'm more satisfied with a woman's touch than my own."

Potter cleared his throat. "Um, no questioning someone's answer, remember?"

Gryffindor's Princess nodded her concession. "Sorry for interrupting." She didn't look very sorry, though. She looked downright intrigued by Draco's answer – which was working miracles on renewing his erection. He had to bite back his excitement, otherwise he'd be tent-poling for the whole group to see. Instead, he reached for a red card.

The Irish was next. Chuckling, the guy leaned forward and grabbed the next Deed card off the stack in advance, then laid his head back into the sofa cushions and shut his eyes. "Usually it's every day fer me, but sometimes, I'm good for a day or two a'tween."

To his left, Brown looked like she was debating answering, but then looked at her partner out of the corner of her eye and shrugged. "At least three times a week," she admitted and grabbed a red card.

Next to her Finnigan grinned, leaned in, and whispered something in her ear that made the blonde
smile brightly and elbow him.

The Weasel was next. He took a deep breath, leaning back against his clasped hands, settling deeper into the cushions and grinned wickedly at Pansy. "As soon as I wake up every day, like clockwork, I give it a palm either in bed or the showers," he said.

Draco's former girlfriend waggled her eyebrows at her partner once and licked her lips, which made the Weasel King's shit-eating grin take up the expanse of his face.

All right, maybe Granger's idea *wasn't* as crazy as he'd thought…

Thinking of, it was now her turn.

"You won't tell," he dared her from across the few feet separating them, purposefully staring at her through laughing eyes.

As predictable as a sunrise, she sniffed in disdain and met his challenge head-on. "At least twice a week." She threw him a mischievous leer. "I tend to pick a random spot in the castle to do it, too. This week, it was the fifth floor corridor, behind one of the arches, in front of a window. That was Wednesday. Yesterday, it was in the boathouse."

Draco's circulatory and respiratory systems temporarily stopped working. So did the neuropathic relays in his brain.

"You're kidding!" the She-Weasel squawked, turning an incredulous look on her best girlfriend.

Hermione shook her head, while keeping eye contact with him. "Not kidding."

Theo burst out laughing, and it sounded different from his usual gaiety – sharper, definitely biting. "Who knew the Head Girl wasn't as virtuous as everyone thought? Sneaking about the grounds, fingering her pussy, right under everyone's noses!"

Hermione's brow lowered in disappointment. "I didn't figure you to be so crude, Teddy."

Nott's eyes narrowed into serpentine slits and he frowned. "I could say the same thing…'Mione."

The two glared at each other across the table – he with sullen hostility, she with dismay and disgust. Everyone else was silent, watching the confrontation unfold, questions about the nature of this previously unknown 'relationship' between the two combatants evident in every eye.

"No discussion," Draco growled angrily, not liking the antagonism aimed towards his girl from his best friend. He knew Theo had a slightly darker side to his typically charming, witty personality that he was very careful not to let slip out, but now it was rearing its ugly head, and aimed right at Granger in what appeared to be indignant resentment.

Clearly, the reason Theo had expressed an interest earlier this week in sticking it to Granger prior to the game starting had nothing to do with the reason his friend had professed. There was history here that no one aside from the two of them seemed to know. She hadn't slept with Nott; he hadn't been one of her two men…but the cards had let her lie last round to him, hadn't they? She'd said Charlie Weasley had made love to her for sixteen hours, and that had been a blatant lie. He'd been able to suss that out easily. Had she also lied about the number of lovers she'd had?

Suddenly, her reasons for adding Theo to the list of men she'd fantasized about made a little more sense now, too.
How much of what she'd told him tonight was truth at all?

"Granger, take a Deeds," he snapped the command in a hard voice, ignoring Potter's turn to Captain entirely, his jealousy making itself known and making him crazy. Better to move this along quickly, so he and his curly-haired partner could have a little discussion behind closed doors about her levels of honesty before things went any further. "Go, She-Weasel."

That worked to break the moment, although the tension in the air still existed.

As Granger took her card, little Weasley looked around, locked eyes with Blaise, and then put her hands on her cheeks and groaned. "I can't believe… All right, four or five times a week, okay?" Her face was as orangey-red as her jacket. "I blame stress and not enough chocolate reserves in the whole of England."

That made Tracey giggle and blush. "You should just convince someone to loan you money so you can invest in Willy Wonka's factory, then," the pretty blonde joked.

Potter looked over in surprise at his partner. "Or she could just pray for a Golden Ticket and get her hands on the stock for free."

Hermione tittered. "Steer clear of Oompa Loompas and blue chewing gum, though!"

The three of them laughed at their weirdly private joke. Personally, Draco thought they were speaking a foreign language for crazy people.

"Excuse me, but what in bloody Merlin's armpit are you talking about?" Pansy finally asked, raising one perfectly rounded eyebrow at the three jesters with questioning concern. "Have you three been dipping too frequently into Lovegood's drink recently?"

That crack only served to make the three snigger harder.

Parkinson tsk'd and gave them all a look that said they belonged on the nut farm.

"All right, all right," Potter finally waved off the chuckling. "I'm not going to answer this one either, out of respect for my date." He reached for a blue card.

Davis stopped him. "You don't have to do that on my account, Harry. If you want to answer, I won't be offended."

Everyone gaped at the reserved blonde in astonishment, even Blaise, who was usually unfazed by just about everything, minus the She-Weasel.

Tracey's cheeks were brilliant red, but she purposefully kept her eyes on her partner, ignoring the gawking. "But only if you want to."

Potter's eyes did something then Draco thought (prayed, actually) he'd never see – they heated up with blatant, wild lust. "Every other day at least, sometimes every day," the man announced, much to everyone's shock. His eyes never left Davis' face as he confessed, either, and her response was a hitch to her breathing that drew attention to her chest. Her nipples were hard and erect through the fabric.

Draco looked away. His blonde housemate was cute, but she wasn't where his interest lay. He much preferred brunettes.

He re-focused on the group only when Theo started talking a few moments later. "I'd have to say
once a day, minimum," his friend confessed. "Sometimes twice, though. I'm not discerning about where I do it, either."

Although the man's eyes remained on the stack of cards in the centre of the table, as he reached forward to grab a red one, Draco felt the jab had been directed at Hermione, and once more, his protectiveness and suspicion warred.

Pansy answered the question next. "Three to five times a week, I'd say," she mused, tapping one perfectly manicured fingernail against her bottom lip. Her eyes slid to Weasley. "A vibrating wand is a girl's best friend."

Draco smirked as Hermione shifted embarrassingly at the associated memory that statement conjured.

"Bloody hell," her redheaded partner swore, sitting up, his eyes lit with fire. "I'm gonna need a cold shower after this."

Pansy opened her mouth to reply what would undoubtedly be a rather suggestive offer, but Potter cut her off with a loud throat clearing. With an impish grin, Draco's ex- reached for a red card and sat back, smirking triumphantly nonetheless, knowing she'd won her new interest's complete attention.

Greengrass shrugged, reaching forward for a Deeds card from the stack and answering at the same time. "I have already admitted my interest in self-pleasuring, not only in private, but in public. As for a statistical average, I would fathom a guess of five times per every seven days." She adjusted her glasses again on her nose. "Masturbation alleviates stress and is a rather positive hobby for one's overall heart health. I also find nothing whatsoever shameful in the act itself. To enjoy one's life fully, one must be willing to appreciate all that brings joy."

Theo gave a rousing cheer and looked up at the ceiling. "Founders, THANK YOU!" he shouted in elation.

Everyone, even Draco, couldn't help but chuckle at such natural enthusiasm.

The round ended where it began – on Blaise. His best friend looked over at his partner and grinned slyly. "Every day or two, and with always the same fantasy girl."

The little Weasel girl sniffed in amusement and shook her head, rolling her eyes. "Sweet talker," she accused playfully, and Zabini waggled his eyebrows twice, smirking, as he reached for a red card.

"You can now turn your cards over," Potter instructed the group. "If you have to act something out now, say so."

Draco flipped his card and felt his cock jerk to life in excitement.

Now this was more like it! Finally, he had a card that would allow for a little skin to show!

Across the way, Granger looked up at him and licked her lips, her expression was one of nervous anticipation. Well, well... it seemed her card was going to require her to do something she wanted, but was anxious to perform. He wondered what that would be.

No one stood up to perform a card, but Draco did need to excuse himself for the loo. Potter and Weasley followed.

As he hit the door to the men's head, he heard Granger remind the women to cast the C&DC on themselves again. At least he could count on the ladies monitoring themselves.
As they stood at the urinals, not looking anywhere but straight ahead, Potter began whistling happily. After a few seconds of that tripe, it got on Draco's last nerve.

"Could you please not do that? It makes it crawl back up."

The Weasel burst out laughing, zipped and flushed, then went to the sink. "Yeah, Harry, what's got you grinning like the Sphinx?"

Draco and Potter flushed at the same time. They stopped and looked at each other warily, but both of them zipped up and walked to the sinks without a comment on their timing.

"What's got you?" Potter asked his friend, instead.

Ron splashed cold water over his face and the back of his neck. "I think I…" He looked quickly at Draco, then back into the mirror, readjusting his jacket and shirt. "Nothing."

"I thought Gryffindors like orange and red, not yellow," Draco taunted.

Weasley's face predictably turned a nice shade of puce.

"If you like Pans, just say so. She certainly seems to be taken with you – although I have absolutely no idea why."

As he was half-way to the door, a large, pale, slightly freckled hand grabbed him lightly to stop him. Draco looked at the offending limb holding onto him, then up the two inches into Weasley's eyes. "Do you…seriously, Malfoy…do you think she does?"

Oh, the options! Draco had the opportunity to totally crush the most annoying man he'd ever met, to emotionally squash him like a bug under his heel right then and there if he so chose. Two things held him back, however: one, Pansy's ultimate happiness, and two, Hermione's potential displeasure with him.

With careful, precise movements, he extricated the Weasel's hold on him. "I certainly think she's off her fucking rocker for you." He turned so that he was face-to-face with the Gryffindor he'd spent the last seven years tormenting with great pleasure. "If you break her heart, Weasley, I'll see you suffer a rather dissatisfying sex life for the remainder of your time on this Earth. Are we clear?"

Weasley's face went purple again, but his eyes glittered with fire. "Back at you if you hurt 'Mione."

"Yeah, what he said." Potter stepped up to his friend's side. "'Mione's our best friend, Malfoy, and why she seems to like you is beyond me, but neither of us is going to let you hurt her."

Draco arched an eyebrow at both men, looking down his nose at both in a well-practiced manner. "If hurting her was my aim, Saint Potter, do you really think I'd have gone through all the trouble of setting this game up and trying to arrange it for her and me to be partnered? I could have simply seduced her and dumped her on her arse in front of the whole school, if a cheap one-off and a malicious laugh was all I wanted from her."

The three men shared one of those enlightened 'guy moments' then, and Draco knew both of his rivals finally understood what he'd been after for the last few years. Weasley's eyes nearly bugged from his head, and Potter was doing a great impression of stone.

Draco shifted, pulling his shoulders back to ease the tension in them, refusing to be cowed. "Don't interfere," he warned them both flatly. "Just keep your noses on your own love-smitten girlfriends,
and leave Hermione to make up her own mind about me."

Threats issued properly, Draco turned on his heel and kept walking to the exit.

Back in the main common area, he shoved his hands in his pockets and took out his action card, strolling over to the door of the private suite he shared with Granger while re-reading every word to make sure he understood how far the card would allow things to go, knowing what he did of Granger's outfit. Throwing open the door to their private suite, he entered without a glance back, not even bothering to check the time.

"You have until thirty-seven past twelve to return here," he heard Potter call out as Draco threw himself down on the couch before the fire and leaned back, placing his card in the center of his chest, face-up so his partner could read it when she showed up.

Folding his fingers over his abdomen and closing his eyes to rest them, he waited patiently, smiling with sadistic glee.

This next round was going to rock...provided Granger gave him the truthful answers he wanted regarding her history with Theo first. That matter was one that needed an understanding between them before he'd touch her again.
Ron was clearly distracted by a thought that appeared to disturb him, Pansy noted as they entered their private suite. He'd been wearing the same sour, pensive expression since he'd exited the loo earlier behind Potter and Malfoy.

Since they'd given each other permission to touch without limitation last round, she took advantage of that offer now, winding herself around him sinuously.

"What's got you so preoccupied, lover boy?" she whispered against his ear.

His arms came around her as naturally as if they belonged there and had been doing so for years. He held her close and nuzzled against her temple. "I think you were right about Malfoy," he mumbled, pressing a kiss to her temple. "He's…well, I think he's in love with 'Mione."

Pansy's eyebrows hit the roof. "In lust, yes, obviously. In love, though?" She swung her head around to look him in the eye and smiled playfully. "Did he say something to you when you took a field trip into the boy's earlier? I thought gossiping in the loo was something only women did?"

Azure eyes studied her with sincere, weighty deliberation for a moment, and then she was lifted into her partner's brawny arms, carried over to the bed and dropped onto it. Ron leaned over her immediately, covering her body with his own and proceeded to kiss her breath away, cradling her into his embrace at the same time. Pansy's brain shut down and her hormones ramped up as his tongue lapped at her lips with deliberate, luscious strokes.

"You bring me to my knees with wanting you, Pansy," he murmured between kisses, thrusting his hands into her hair and holding tight. "What have you done to me?"

Her fingernails scraped through his hair and held on. Her thighs wrapped around his waist. Both actions were instinctual, as if this were the natural state of rest for her limbs; as if they belonged upon Ron's body in such a fashion. "You've done the same to me," she admitted, dipping back in to nibble on his bottom lip. "I have never wanted a man as I do you."

His hot mouth trailed a path over her cheek to her throat, where he proceeded to leave a love bruise upon her pulse point, suckling deep and hard, biting with just enough pressure to leave his mark upon her. "We're gonna do something about it now," he told her matter-of-factly, reaching for the buttons on her dress and removing the chains. "Don't try to talk either of us out of it this time."

Pansy bit her lip, her tummy rioting with both fear and anticipation. Was she ready for this? Would it be a mistake? Even though there hadn't been much of an opportunity to develop stronger feelings
yet, she still wanted Ron to respect her, and not to treat sex between them as a one-off.

"Would it be…strange…if I said I was a little nervous?" she asked, reaching for the buttons on his jacket and undoing the top few.

Wet, unhurried swipes up and down her throat ended with his lips poised over her ear. "Me, too," he surprisingly admitted with all sincerity. "But it's not gonna stop me from making you mine."

Heart singing with the thrill of his words, Pansy continued down the line of buttons until his embroidered coat was opened, and she shoved it from his broad, burly shoulders. "I cast the C&DC just before coming in here," she told him, just to assure there was full disclosure between them.

"I know," he murmured as he peppered light nips along the bottom of her jaw. "I heard. Flip onto your stomach for me," he growled dominantly, recapturing her lips for a series of brief, but charged kisses. "I'm taking this pretty dress and that collar off of you."

This was it. If she did as he asked, there was no way they wouldn't be shagging in a few minutes. Her blood pulsing through her veins like erupting lava, her body tightening and moistening with need, still Pansy found herself stalling.

"My card says I get to dance with you however I want," she rasped, tremblingly touching his lips with her fingertips. "I really wanted us to dance."

Ron smoothed her short fringe over her forehead. "We will be. I won't be fucking you. I'll be making love to you," he tenderly whispered, kissing her nose. "The ultimate dance, right? Now turn over, baby, please."

His poignant request, the tenderness in his gaze, the softness of his tone made her chest squeeze tightly.

Closing her eyes, Pansy took a deep breath, let it out, and then did as he'd asked.

Ron shifted so he was straddling her on his knees as he unbuttoned her collar and slipped it out from under her, and then unzipped her dress. He scooted down the bed and removed her shoes one at a time next. She heard some shifting, and guessed he was removing his own clothes, and then he touched her ankles.

"Sit up so I can undress you slowly."

She got on her knees and began to turn, but Ron was behind her in a moment, his hands on her shoulders, holding her still.

"Stay like that for now," he bid, and then his calloused, scarred fingers slowly, very gently slid the dress off her shoulders.

As he slipped the fabric over her bra, he moved into her, his face appearing over her right shoulder, watching as he stripped her of all defenses. He pressed sweet kisses to her temple, her cheek, and her neck as he slipped the dress off her waist and hips, down her thighs, where it pooled on the bed at her knees.

"I love your lingerie," he murmured in her ear, "but it's coming off."

Pansy's breath hitched and her heart took off like a fluttering butterfly as he smoothed his hands along a reverse path back up her body, following the curve of her bra to the clasp at her back. She felt the hooks loosen, and then he was removing her strapless, French mini-corset, dropping it off the
white, satin-sheeted bed onto the white, shag carpeted floor.

"You have the most beautiful nipples," he whispered, letting his hands roam over her breasts, pinching and rolling her buds into prominence. "So fucking pretty." He trailed kisses up this side of her throat now, while his hands cupped her large breasts and rolled them. "Would you like my mouth on them while I'm sinking my cock into you?" he asked, and it was then that she felt his naked length pressed into her back. "Tell me."

Pansy whimpered and nodded, reaching back and grabbing hold of his naked, lightly furred thighs. "God, yes. Just...go slow. I want to remember this."

His hands stroked her flared hips and abdomen. "However you want me, baby, I'm yours. You set the pace."

Her chest ached at his touching offer. No man had ever said that to her before, all of them taking what they'd wanted, how they'd wanted, some even when and where they'd wanted with little regard to her feelings. "Slow then," she reasserted. "I want to feel every inch of you come into me."

With surprisingly nimble movements, her garters were unlatched from their stockings. "What position?" he asked, pressing kisses all up and down her shoulder. "Do you want to be on top?"

"What do you like?" she asked, wiggling her bottom seductively against him, feeling the solid length of him pressing back.

He shook his head. "You tell me how you want me to take you, baby."

She felt like crying. Never had she been treated with so much sweetness and consideration in bed. It made her want to give selflessly back.

"I want you above me. I want to see your face when you come inside me for the first time."

He groaned directly against her skin, causing lightning to arc from that spot and pool with electric heat straight in her womb.

With deliberate, slow action, he slid her knickers down her legs. He kept her still with a hand on her hip as he manoeuvered her legs in such a way as to get the panties past each knee, one at a time, then down her calves and past her ankles. When they cleared her feet, he let them drop with the rest of her clothing to the carpet.

Aside from her lacy stockings, she was now completely nude for him.

Keeping her as she'd been, on her knees at the edge of the mattress and facing away from him, he wedged a thick, muscled thigh between her legs to widen her stance and leaned her body back into his embrace. She with shudder, she let go and allowed herself to go limp in his arms.

"That's it, baby. Give yourself to me."

Pansy moaned as his fingers curved around her hip and dipped low, deftly stroking between the lips of her sex.

"Fuck, you're so wet," he rumbled, his voice gone low and husky. "I love how ready you are for me."

Piercing her with two fingers and moving them slowly in and out of her body, he made her tremble and gasp aloud then, all restraint gone. She felt like some inexperienced virgin, incapable of
controlling her reactions. Moans and pleas escaped her lips as he thrust his fingers faster into her. Her body fired with sensation wherever he touched. All she could do was hold onto the arm that was now banded across her middle, holding her in place, as his other hand had its wicked way with her.

"I love going down on you," he admitted in a whisper in her ear, continuing to stroke harder, faster into her, to fan her desire. "You taste like Sugared Butterfly Wings, the white ones – so sweet, with a little salt. No other girl has ever tasted so good to me." He placed a small kiss on her earlobe, then nibbled it. A shiver ran up Pansy's spine and her hips bucked, forcing him deeper into her. "I'm sorry, I don't have the patience to do that right now, though. I need to be inside you." Leaning into her, he rubbed his cheek against hers and sighed in longing. "Tell me you want that, too."

Sweat beading her brow and upper lip, Pansy's whole body quivered on the edge of orgasm. "I want that so much," she admitted, letting all her barriers down for the first time, both terrified and elated by the feeling of letting go. It was like flying, she thought.

Like being free.

His fingers gave a final thrust and a small swipe over her clit as he released her from the torment, only to turn her and lay her back onto the mattress to prepare her for an entirely different kind of ache. As he mounted her, he braced his weight easily on those impressive arms, every muscle going taut, showing off its strength.

Merlin, he was beautifully built, she thought, running her palms over all that power. And for now, it was all hers!

His cock slid between her folds as she widened her legs to accommodate his body. He paused then, and their gazes locked as he paused at her entrance. His blue eyes burned with his intense need, and yet his body remained poised and awaiting her signal.

She gave it with a silent nod.

"Watch me sink inside you, baby," he bid. "Watch me love you."

He pushed forward, flexing his hips and joining their bodies in a slow, easy glide that took him deep into her. Pansy's toes curled from the pleasure. She sunk her fingernails into Ron's shoulders, seeking to anchor herself to him. "I feel you – every inch," she whispered, her eyes rolling back in her head, the exquisite sensation of their bodies becoming one nearly stealing her breath.

Being with him like this was too much, it made her too vulnerable...

"Don't look away," he murmured against her lips, wrapping his arms around her and pulling her into his warm embrace. "Be with me, Pansy, right here and now. Be with me."

In truth, Pansy was terrified of what she was feeling right then, afraid it would show in her eyes. Ron did things to her, not just to her body, but to her heart, and she was having a hard time shoring back up her walls, keeping herself disconnected.

Remembering that this was only for tonight, that it couldn't be more, thanks to her meddling parents.

"Be with me," he whispered again, kissing her nipples and her mouth. "Let me see you."

"I'm scared," she whispered back.

He kissed her again. "Me, too," he admitted.
That shocked her into opening her eyes. "Really?" she asked, surprised to know she wasn't alone in feeling such strong things for her partner.

He teased her mouth with soft, small kisses. "Really. But I'm not gonna hide from you. Not after everything we've been through." He gave her a naughty grin. "'Sides, I've blown up your cauldron once already. Reckon I can do it again."

She couldn't help but giggle at that, as it was such an outrageous thing to say.

...And just like that, Pansy felt relaxed, more comfortable with who they were together and what they were doing. It suddenly seemed very normal to be lying under him, to feel him sheathed deep inside her, as if they'd done this before, and would do it again many, many more times.

"Only if you move," she pointed out, noting he'd stopped the hip action.

Curling her pelvis, she made it abundantly clear what she wanted.

Ron groaned and dropped his forehead to her breast. "Woman, you're killing me."

A wicked, throaty laugh erupted from Pansy's mouth unexpectedly. "I'm hoping not. At least, not until you make me come again."

He raised his head, blue eyes twinkling with mischief, and he lunged for her mouth, capturing it as he began that same, slow rhythm with his hips.

It was a revelation, feeling him move over and in her. Pansy had been fucked by many men since she'd lost her virginity, but none of them had brought tears to her eyes during the act...at least, not in a good way. Now, her gaze was wavy and her heart filled with such joy that it seemed impossible to rectify that this was really happening to her.

Ron was making love to her as tenderly as she'd asked, carefully and controlled. His pace was easy and their fit was perfect. There was no pain, only pleasure, as waves of ecstasy rolled over her with each thrust.

Her knees bent of their own volition then to allow him deeper penetration, and as he slid home with her ankles locked around his waist, he paused. One breath, two, three. Panting into her throat, he was shaking, clearly attempting to stave off his own orgasm so she could experience hers first.

"See me," she requested, cupping his cheeks and forcing him to meet her gaze. "See the real me, Ron."

With a deep breath, Ron did as she asked. Their eyes met, locked, and in their depths, she glimpsed a flash of emotion that both frightened and called to her. Pansy felt her heart pound in response, and the return of her earlier anxiety. She ran her thumb over his bottom lip, scared by her instinctual reaction to answer his unspoken feelings.

Should couldn't have this, not after this weekend. It wasn't...in the cards.

As if reading her trepidation, he leaned into her caress, his lashes fluttering as he shuttered his eyes and glanced at her through them.

"I'll have all of you," he vowed. "I have to."

Adjusting his knees and gripping her hips, he withdrew his cock and then thrust so deep she could feel him in her heart.
"You're giving into this, Pansy. Like I have." Leaning down, his mouth nipped as hers as he thrust again. "Give into it."

She cried out as she shattered in his arms, in the gentlest, most loving bringing she'd ever experienced. "Oh, god," she whimpered, her tears slipping free. "Ron!"

He was there, in the midst of the storm, holding her, calming her, grounding her after her fall. "Was that what you wanted?" he asked somewhat shyly, nuzzling into her throat once her breathing returned to normal and she'd quieted. "Was it good?"

Feeling ridiculous for her emotional outburst, Pansy quickly wiped at her eyes. "It was perfect," she reassured him, attempting to steady her shaking nerves and her pounding heart. Slytherin women didn't cry in public, but this was the third time she'd shown her hidden face to this man. How weak he must think her! She plastered a smile onto her face. "It was beautiful."

Relief bloomed across his crimson cheeks, his light dusting of freckles across the bridge of his nose prominent with his flush of happiness. "So, you liked our dance, then?" he tenderly teased, rubbing his nose against hers.

Merlin, he had pretty lashes for a guy. And a genuine smile that was infectious.

In fact, his good mood had a way of dissolving her darker thoughts, drawing her into the light, and making her want to reciprocate. Which was absolutely not the Slytherin thing to do...

Wiggling her hips, she wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him closer. He was still hard inside her, she noted, which meant there was an opportunity here to exploit. "I did. Very much. I'd love a second one, if you're... up...for it."

His grin was positively beaming. "That won't be a problem."

Adjusting his weight on his knees and sliding his hands to her hips again, he used that incredible strength in his arms, hips and thighs to pull her up and off the mattress. Vertical now, she clung to him as he held her in the air and began thrusting, fucking into her hard and fast from below.

Now, this was more like it! She'd loved the feel of his cock gently taking her, but this...

"Come on, Pansy, ride me. Pump those sexy hips and moan for me."

She moved as he wanted, meeting his thrusts with her own force, clit throbbing, cunt clenching. Soon, their skin was slicked with their combined sweat, and the air became too hot to breathe. Pansy panted like an animal in heat, digging in and riding hard, giving as good as she got. That second high, the one she'd never before been able to reach was right there, and she was tipping... surrendering to its power...

"That's it, baby love, come for me again," Ron demanded, fucking her so hard little detonations of light snapped and exploded behind her closed lids. "Give. In."

His words released her from the last of her emotional bondage. With a scream of his name, Pansy arched her back and flew once more, surrendering both her body and her heart at that same moment. No pleasure had ever been greater, as for the first time, she held nothing of herself back from a man during sex. Nothing will ever be the same, she thought as she clung to Ron, feeling her sex tremble and clench around him, drawing his release from him at that same moment. This, tonight... he had changed her, forever.

Utterly spent, Pansy fell into her lover's arms, collapsing against the shelter of his strength, her body
floating on an ocean of pure, physical contentment.

All the while, her heart and mind were at bitter war with each other:

*You can't keep him. You have to let him go,* the Slytherin within admonished.

*I...can't,* her woman's heart protested.

Because she had fallen in love, for real this time, and it hurt too much to think of what that would mean outside of this room, especially once the truth of her circumstances finally came out in the *Prophet's Pink Column.*

With a groan, Ron crashed onto the mattress, turning at the last moment so he ended up beneath her. His lungs sawed in and out as he struggled for breath, and his shoulders and arms were bleeding a bit from where her nails had dug in, but the smile on his face spoke of a bone-deep satisfaction. "Fucking…brilliant," he wheezed, and turned his head to place a big kiss on her mouth. "Oh, Merlin, you were…amazing, baby. I think…I can die happy now, love."

Fighting back another round of tears at the use of his sweet endearment, Pansy cuddled with her lover instead, trying to enjoy the afterglow.

"Thank you," she whispered. "I'll never forget this moment. Not ever." She peeked up at him through the strands of her disheveled hair that had fallen into her face. "I never thought of this act as beautiful before, only fun. This is both."

Scarred knuckles stroked her cheek and calloused fingers ran through her hair as Ron's breathing calmed, and the powerful beat of his heart, which she could feel vibrating through her chest as she lay atop him, slowly receded. He covered a yawn in her shoulder by turning his head. "Did you like it enough to want to do again?" he asked with a snicker, his tired, flaccid member finally sliding out of her as he adjusted them so they could lie on their sides, facing each other. "I mean, once we've recovered from the best sex of our lives."

Dreamy, smiling blue orbs of mischief and a sexy, lazy smile challenged her.

Pansy pretended to think about it, shunting aside her painful, melancholy thoughts for now. She would give them this time, as she'd vowed earlier, and wouldn't dwell on anything beyond these hours with him. She had fallen in love, and her heart would be destroyed by it, but she would never regret this decision.

"I could be persuaded," she teased, letting her fingers stroke the ridge of his collarbone. "But didn't I wear you out?"

He snorted. "Hardly. I think I could go again in…maybe half an hour." His fingers lightly caressed her hip, then reached up to fondle a breast. He palmed it, massaging it in a manner that aroused, despite her exhaustion. When his thumb stroked over the tender nipple, it went tight immediately. "Actually, I'm getting a little hard again now."

Sure enough, his wizard's staff was already half-erect.

Feeling naughty, Pansy trailed her nails lightly down his hairless chest, heading for trouble and looking forward to the repercussions. "So, what was your card anyway?" she asked, pretending she wasn't about to grip his cock and give it a good, long stroking.

Ron huffed in amusement. "Are you kidding? You still want to play the game?"
She nodded and he sighed in surrender, rolling his eyes.

"I'm supposed to tell you ten good things about you."

With a wicked laugh, Pansy gripped his growing erection and began lightly rubbing her thumb nail under the wet head, in the spot she knew most men were sensitive. "Well, why don't you just get started on that list, then, while I busy myself with other wicked pursuits."

His cock twitched, growing harder by the second, especially when she nudged his leg up and over hers, and gently cupped his balls, caressing them.

"Oh, fuck," he sighed, closing his eyes and letting out a shaking breath. "Um, you're the best sex I've ever had. You just made me come so hard my head is pounding. Both of them."

"Truly?"

Nodding in agreement, Ron continued his fondling of her breast.

Reaching, she stroked that ultra-sensitive path of skin directly under his balls. "Tell me more," she coaxed.

He shuddered and his cock jerked, getting harder, rising to full mast. "Jesus, the things you do to me," he moaned as she gripped his cock in one hand and rubbed over his perineum with the other. "Uh, I already said you suck cock like a dream, which you do. Fuck, do you! And you're gorgeous, Parkinson. Every inch of you is perfect." He gasped as she pressed a finger against his back entrance, but it wasn't the sound of rejection so she rubbed there, too, feeling him go impossibly hard again in her other hand. "And I love that fucking cute mole on your hip," he sighed. "Fuck, that feels good."

Wanting to reward his flattery, she shimmied down the bed and took the head of him between her lips, lightly sucking. "Go on," she enticed, lapping at the pre-come that was once more weeping from his slit.

"Y-y-you're so much f-f-fun to be with," he stammered, watching as she suckled upon him like a lolly. He was careful not to thrust, however, letting her do as she willed. "And I love the playfulness, and that for a Slytherin, you're amazingly sincere."

Mmmm, she'd liked his list so far.

Stretching her mouth wide, Pansy dropped down on his iron-hard erection, taking him all the way into her throat.

To her surprise, Ron hissed in pleasure, sounding just like a snake. "Oh, yeah, baby, just like that." Now he gently thrust his hips up. "Suck hard. Let me fuck that pretty mouth again."

Bloody hell, she loved the way he talked to her. It was crude, but done in such a loving, reverent tone, as if he was praying to a goddess for her blessing.

And to be truthful, his words got her all hot and bothered again.

Reaching between her legs, she flicked her clit once, felt it a tad sore, but that electrifying spark of need burst into life once more at her touch, so she started rubbing it as she liked, working them both back up together.

"Keep going," she coerced as she lifted off him and lapped at the swollen, red head held still in her
fist. "You're doing so well."

Ron lay back and stared up at the ceiling, letting her have her way with him as he finished his list. Clearly, he'd copped to her plan of being in control this time around and didn't have a problem with that, which was something she found incredibly sexy. A man who didn't mind being submissive when asked, and who didn't feel his masculinity was threatened by that was rare…and hot.

"You're so smart, baby," he went on, fingers clenching the bed covers and kneading as she kept him in a constant state of arousal. "How come I never noticed how bloody brilliant you are? It's not like it wasn't staring me in the face all these years. I mean…I really dig that you read books outside of class assignments. Just for the fun of it."

She lightly nibbled on the flared head of him, making him gasp and start swearing again.

"Hell, Pans, I like everything about you, I think. You're not afraid to sit out on the grass in the spring to get a suntan like other girls, you wear pretty clothes, and you smell so fucking good, all the time. Godric's bane, I even love the way you mouth off to me when we're fighting!"

His breathing picked up as she took him back into her throat and allowed it to close around him as she pulled back. Against her calves, she felt his toes curl.

"Merlin's rod, Pansy, stop torturing me! I want to be back inside you now. You win."

Soaking wet from her own ministrations, there was absolutely no discomfort as Pansy stalked up his body, gripped him tight in hand and lowered herself onto his cock once more. They both sucked a lungful of air in at the sensation, and then let it out simultaneously in relief when she sat fully down upon him.

Ron's hands gripped her wrists and he licked his lips, swallowing heavily as he began to move her over him. "You are amazing, baby. You sure you're not hurting too much? I wasn't exactly gentle the last time."

He hadn't been, but then, that's what she'd wanted then. Now, she wanted something else.

"We'll take it easy this time," she told him, sliding over him to an uncomplicated, smooth rhythm.

Ron's hands glided up her body to cup both breasts, and he played with them as they leisurely fucked. "I love that you didn't quit this game when you could've. That's not just about being stubborn, but being brave, too, you know," he murmured, continuing his list as she moved him in and out of her slick sex. "I love that I get you this wet. I love the way your pussy tastes and that you like me fucking you like this."

"I love this view. I love knowing you're giving yourself to me right now, without fear, despite everything that's gone between us." He glanced up into her eyes. "I'm gonna come."

"Come," she said, knowing she didn't have enough in her to climax for a third time, but more than happy to feel him do so inside her again.

Given permission to let go, Ron gripped her hips and began pumping into her, not hard, but with a Gryffindor's determination to meet his end, soon. She grabbed onto his wrists and rolled into every one of his thrusts, giving him her body to find his ultimate pleasure within.

"Your turn," she whispered. "Give in and let go."

His gaze never left hers as he began to come deep within her.
"I love you, Pansy." He pulled her down so that his mouth met hers. "You, you, you, you, you," he chanted as he jerked and released again and again, grinding her down onto him, keeping them sealed together as tightly as possible until he was done.

Reeling from his confession, Pansy was taken completely aback. He loved her? How? Why?

Suddenly, Ron rolled them over and began kissing her as if he was starved for her taste. "I love you," he panted against her lips in between pulls of his mouth. "Gods, I fucking love you, you maddening witch!" He laughed, and it was a joyous sound that bordered on insane, she thought. "All these years, you've driven me absolutely barmy," he cheerfully said. "I get it. Finally, I get it! And I'm giving in to it."

"You love me?" she asked, blinking up at him in confusion.

He kissed her again. "Yes."

"But…"

A floodgate of emotion poured out of Pansy then and she burst into tears for a fourth time in front of this man. Too much… It was too much in too short a time to take in. She couldn't breathe, couldn't think. This was all happening too fast, pulling her under, drowning her in doubts and renewed fear. She'd lost all of her honed calculating rationality, all common sense.

You can't keep him!

Ron pulled back and looked down at her, his face betraying how completely vulnerable he felt in the face of her tears, and from bearing his heart to her as he had. With five words, you could ruin him, the Slytherin within Pansy reminded her as she stared up into his handsome face. She knew she could break this wizard's heart right now, smash it to bits. All she'd have to do was reply, "I don't feel the same," and she could send him spiraling into fits of depression, destroying that lovely smile and turning his shimmering eyes into cold lumps of blue coal.

Hell, it would probably be the right thing to do, knowing what the future held. It would make her noble or some shit if she let him go now. He'd hate her, but in the end, it would be for his own good.

But it would also be the evilest lie to ever pass her lips…and a part of her would die in the telling.

I can't do it. I can't let you go. I'm too selfish, I'm sorry!

"I love you, Ron," she admitted, gently brushing his lips with her fingertips. "I finally get it, too."

"Serious?"

He seemed doubtful.

She wiped the tears from her eyes. "Yes, and…" She sighed. "I'm giving into it, too." She pointed a finger his face in warning, however. "Just don't hurt me, Ronald Weasley, or so help me, I'll kill you dead. With poison. And many sharp knives."

Whooping in joy, Ron wrapped his arms about her and they rolled around on the gigantic white bed, giggling like two young people in love, letting the wonder and delight of their discovery overtake them.

When the chimes rang out, they debated continuing the game, agreeing to do so at the last minute. It was Pansy who convinced him to stay so they could try out some of the more risqué cards together.
Quickly they cleaned up and dressed, then headed out to the common area.

On the way to the couches, Pansy leaped onto Ron's back and shouted, "giddy up!" and he whisked her around the room in circles making her dizzy, refusing to let her go as the others took their seats and watched them playfully misbehave. Draco, in particular, gave her a disapproving frown.

Oh, pah! Who cared what those nobs thought anyway?

For the first time in her life, Pansy didn't feel the need to behave within the tightly held constraints that had guided her all her life. The rules that her parents had shackled her to when she'd been but a small child did not exist within the confines of this room, not tonight while they were playing 'Eros & Psyche'. So, for the moment, she could behave more lion, less snake, and that was okay.

She'd let herself have this one night of happiness, and accept the consequences later.

*I will love you for as long as I can*, she silently promised her partner, hugging him tightly to her.

And she would. She absolutely would.

Chapter End Notes

*Sugared Butterfly Wings* - A wizarding sweet manufactured by Madam Borboleta Candies Ltd. They are presumably real butterfly wings coated in sugar (they are all different colors, types and flavored differently). Honeydukes Sweetshop in Hogsmeade sold Sugared Butterfly Wings. These candies are featured in the Honeydukes Virtual Tour online.
Hermione could feel the negatively charged atmosphere the moment she stepped into the private suite and was, quite frankly, vexed by it.

Just who did Malfoy think he was, trying to shame her for a relationship with Teddy Nott that a.) was none of his business, b.) was in the past, and c.) was really none of his business. Despite the fact she'd shared with him some not-so-minor information about her personal, intimate experiences two rounds earlier, that didn't mean that she now owed him any explanations, excuses, or apologies for any part of her life!

Simply put, her and Teddy didn't concern him at all.

Full stop.

And that glaring fact wasn't suddenly negated by the news that Malfoy appeared to have fancied her for a few years, either. Regardless of how he felt about her, none of that gave him rights to her past, present, or future confidences. Anything she did or didn't choose to share with him was at her discretion, not his.

The end.

Speaking of the ferret, where was he, she wondered. She looked around but saw neither hide nor hair of him. However, as there was only the one piece of furniture in their private room at the present moment—the sofa—and it was turned to face the fireplace and away from the door, it was a simple matter of deduction to work out where he had gone: obviously, he was lying down on the couch, sulking.

Well, she wasn't going to indulge him his prissy fit.

Willing a floor-to-ceiling window into life against the far wall, she made her way over to the glass in silence.

She'd wait him out. Eventually, he'd have to speak to her. Besides, staring out onto the world gave her time to gather her thoughts, too.

The truth was she was wand-shy of becoming emotionally invested in the too-handsome blond who was her partner. Physical pleasure she didn't mind sharing with Draco, for she could admit to serious
lust for Slytherin's Prince. Giving away pieces of her heart to the boy who had tormented her for years, however? For that, it would take more than a nice dinner, two massages, some good kisses, and a melting orgasm.

Also, there was the issue of the cards...

If the game, itself, was manipulating the players somehow, she was determined not to fall under its sway. Her emotions were her own to give away or not as she chose and she refused to become a victim of magical influence in the game of love.

While she contemplated the riddle of the cards, she took in the view outside. Before her, illuminated by the nearly-full moon, was the lake. Its gently lapping waves sparkled like small, white stars upon a black velvet backdrop, beckoning the unsuspecting.

The thought made her shudder; she pitied anyone foolish enough to go for a midnight swim in those waters, as she knew that beneath their surface, there were things in the lake that were just as likely to eat you as do the backstroke with you.

In the far distance, to the left of the lake, the boat docks met Carriage Lane, which circled the shoreline. Down that winding, well-trod path, at the far end, sat Hogsmeade's train depot and the village itself, and beyond that lay the menacing stretch of the Forbidden Forest.

In the other direction, to her right, the stone and iron-wrought walls surrounding the whole of the grounds glowed with the faint bluish-white aura of the school's protective wards. They stood out like an enchanted scar marring the green splendor of the Scottish highlands.

As she panned the horizon, noting its familiar terrain and landmarks, she realised how deeply she loved this place. Hogwarts had served as her haven for seven of her most impressionable years. Yet, as of next weekend, she would leave it all behind to begin her journey towards the rest of her life.

Rather than excited, the idea made her decidedly glum.

Draco suddenly appeared over her shoulder, and to her astonishment, his warm arms slid around her waist from behind to give her a comforting hug. "I'm going to miss it here, too," he admitted softly in her ear, his silvery gaze connecting with hers in the glass. "It's been my home in a way my parents' house never was or can be. It's going to pain me having to leave a little over seven days from now."

A lump of emotion gathered in her throat and to her horror, tears wavered in her eyes. How had he known? It was as if he'd reached right inside of her and pulled her thoughts from her.

"Me, too," she admitted, feeling the hot spill of tears down her cheeks. "I didn't think...it would hurt so much to say goodbye."

To her utter surprise, Draco pulled her deeper into the cradle of his body, as if to reassure her. "We're all grown up now, Hermione. It's time to let go of our childhood and become adults. Time to be free to discover who we really are and what we want out of life." His lips pressed against her fast-beating pulse. "Don't you want that?"

Well, of course, she wanted that, but…

Wait just a moment! How was it possible for him to touch her like this without her permission? Didn't the cards prevent any action except when required by a card?

A low growl rumbled through Draco's chest. She felt its vibrations against her back. "You're thinking too hard again, Granger," he teased. "I can smell the smoke."
Her breath hitched as his hands began tickling her hips and as his lips slid over the shell of her ear and kept going, skimming over her throat. "You don't find it odd that...you can touch me without permission?" she gasped, right as he nipped the skin over her pulse. "I thought...we couldn't act...oh!...without the cards' consent?"

Draco paused, seeming to consider that question, then shrugged. "I'd mentally already given you permission to do whatever you wanted to me for the entirety of the game, Granger. I did that the moment I drew your name."

His mouth returned to caressing her sensitive skin, angling around her halter top to reach places that made her dizzy with delight.

"But, I didn't return the sentiment," she argued, reaching back with her free hand to grasp his thigh. He bit her harder over the spot where her shoulder curved and she dug her nails into his slacks and moaned with growing desire. "Until...just this second."

He licked slowly up the length of her neck to her lobe, taking the delicate bit of flesh between his lips and teeth and lightly sucking. "Is that so?" he hummed while nibbling upon her delicate earlobe. "Anything I want?" Those long, pale fingers of his moved to gently capture her hands and began tickling the insides of her wrists with his thumbs, even as she felt the press of his erection persuasively charm its way into the crease of her backside. "Would you let me make love to you? Right now?"

Hermione's mind was mystified by her partner's expert handling. His touches were electric, his voice sinfully enticing. A lesser woman would have been easily seduced by him at that moment.

She, however, had promised herself never to be an easy mark again after Charlie...

Pulling herself with great reluctance from her seducer's arms, she moved quickly away from the window, giving herself space to regain control of the situation. Snogging Malfoy, heavy petting, perhaps even a bit more with tongues, lips, and hands was one thing, but shagging... That was quite a different matter altogether. Hermione was still on the fence about the idea when it came to this wizard, her worries stemming from the fact that she didn't want to be ridiculed by Draco come Monday morning if he reverted to his previous modus operandi. She wasn't sure she could bear being mocked or laughed at by him after sharing something so intimate.

Forcing her breathing and heart rate to return to something approaching normal took a concerted effort, especially when she could feel a pair of lusty, grey eyes burning into her very core from across the room. It took several minutes to manage her energies correctly before she felt she could turn and face him.

He was leaning one shoulder against the window, his arms crossed and his attention fully upon her. Looking luscious enough to eat, of course.

"We should play our cards before time runs out," she attempted for calm, coherent...sane. Lifting her Deeds action card, she read it aloud to him:

**DEED: Lick and touch your partner's naked chest.**

Malfoy didn't reply right away, so she looked up, trying to gauge his mood. His face was as hard and cold as alabaster marble.

"You're absolutely right, Granger," he said with a bite to his tone. "Let's just get this game over with, shall we?"
What had she done this time to get his hackles up? Had denying him the right to shag her angered him? Well, if it had, then she was glad she hadn't given in! No man who cared a whit about a woman would push her for sex! Teddy had done that to her once upon a time, and she'd learned her lesson but good with him. Never again would she be bullied into doing anything sexual with a man!

She glared at her partner in displeasure. "Well, then, what does your card say?"

With a prickly attitude, he lifted his card to read it. As she waited to hear what fate had in store for her, Hermione dropped her own card onto the mantle of the fireplace nearby.

**DEED: Your partner must do a seductive striptease for you.**

Everything in her mind seemed to shut down, with only one thought rolling over and over in her mind: she wasn't wearing a bra! And her dress was rather simple to remove: unclasp the halter, unzip from the sway of her back, slide down and *voila*!

Holy hell.

"Since I drew first, that means you get to entertain me to start," he announced, tossing his card casually away and walking back to the couch, taking a seat and crossing his legs and hands. "So get to stripping, princess, and make it good."

Hermione blinked in confusion, and then her self-respect felt the proper level of umbrage for the situation, snapping her out of her stupor. "Do you always treat women who tell you 'no' like they're trash for not giving you what you want, or am I a special dispensation because of our charming past history?"

He glared at her. "And the manner in which you simply dismissed me wasn't equally as offensive?"

That gave her pause.

Well, yes, he had a point. She had walked away from him in the middle of his seduction. That would have been a blow to his ego, she supposed.

Still...

"I suppose, however, that I could just write off what you did as straight-up disinterest," he continued. "Obviously, your affection lies *elsewhere.*"

Ah, so they'd come to it at last.

It seemed they *were* going to have to address the elephant in the room before moving on, otherwise one of them would have to forfeit, and she knew that would only end in a screaming match that would wreck whatever equilibrium and good will they'd managed to find during this game.

Plus, Draco would probably never kiss her again. Which, she decided, would be a waste as she'd discovered she'd rather enjoyed is mouth, especially when it was preoccupied with the worshiping of hers.

Still, she didn't owe him an explanation.

Really, she *didn't.*

She held up a palm to stop him from saying any more, deciding to save herself a headache (and the loss of his lips) in the long run. "First, understand that whatever Teddy or I did or didn't do, it's none
of your business. I'm only going to divulge the truth to you to move past this hump and get back to the game. Got it? Good. Second, let me just clarify your implied meaning: you think I rejected having sex with you a few minutes ago because I'm infatuated with your best friend?"

One golden eyebrow rose. "His name is Theo, not Teddy."

It struck her then what was really going on with her partner.

"You're jealous!"

At her accusation, his jaw clenched and his lids narrowed in warning, but she noticed he didn't actually deny it.

That knocked the wind right out of her sails. The idea that Malfoy would care enough about her to be in such a bad way truly astonished her. Yes, she'd finally accepted that he'd desired her for much longer than tonight, but she honestly hadn't believed those feelings to be so serious that he would actually be openly resentful of her exes. Yet right now, he was looking as green as the last apple on the tree!

Rather than experiencing the pleasure of schadenfreude, however, Hermione found that she was strangely flattered—enough to soften her irritation with him, anyway. "Draco..." She sighed. "Teddy Nott is no contender for my hand."

"Theodore," he insisted, refusing to allow her to use the more intimate nickname for his friend. "Have you fucked him?" His tone was venomous.

"That is absolutely none of your business! How you dare you even ask me such a thing, anyway! Who do you think you are?" As he visibly seemed to struggle to get his anger under control, she pointed a menacing finger at him and drew the line, refusing to back down as this was non-negotiable as far as she was concerned. "Now you listen here, Draco Malfoy: you are not my owner or my god, and even if you were either of those things, I'd still owe you no explanations as to my decisions in this life! My truths and secrets are my own to keep, and I share them as I want, with whomever I want, in whatever fashion I want. That's called 'free will' and I choose to exercise it!"

Filled to the brim now with righteousness and fury, she began pacing back and forth, sure she was burning holes in the flooring where her heels tread. "You and this sodding game will not intimidate me into giving up something I don't want to share," she snarled at him, chest heaving, blood pumping, and heart aching. She turned on him again and glared at him. "And for the record, I am with you tonight, playing this foolish game because I decided to be, not because you want me to be. I chose to be here, and I choose to continue to be until I have a reason to want to leave. Give me that reason and I'm gone, and sod all this ridiculous game! Are we clear?"

It seemed that last had finally struck a chord, burrowing through her partner's insane envy and shutting down his pomposity long enough for him to become rational again, because as he sat in silence and listened to her ultimatum, he scrutinized her every move and seemed to ruminate upon her words.

When he finally replied, he was infinitely calmer and his tone was even conciliatory. "You're right. I was out of line and disrespectful. I apologise."

"You do?"

There was a part of her that mistrusted such an easy concession, especially from someone like
Malfoy, but she had to admit that he did look sincere...

"I do," he replied with a small bow of his head.

"Just like that?" she asked, still wary.

"I know when I'm in the wrong, Granger."

"Are you sorry?"

"I apologised, didn't I?"

"But are you really sorry or was it merely an admittance of misbehaviour to calm me down?"

"Can't it be both?"

"Fine," she grudgingly accepted his apology, tuckered out by the whole subject, honestly. "But don't think forgiveness means forgetting."

"With your brain, I wouldn't dream of it."

Was he mocking her mind, now, too?

She frowned at him, thinking how much she'd like to squash him like a bug right then.

Draco kept his expression carefully neutral as if he knew he'd pulled the tiger's tail one time too many.

"You're the most irritating man on the planet," she growled at him.

"Only for you, love." He shifted in his seat, uncrossing and then recrossing his legs. "Would you consider answering my question now if I phrased it in a more polite manner?"

God, the man was like a Crup with a bone! She threw her hands up in the air. "Why would it even matter if I had sex with Teddy or not?"

He stared at his knees, his brow creased as if he was troubled by the question. "Wouldn't you want to know if I'd fucked Ginny Weasley or Finnigan's witch?"

Her immediate retort of, 'no' died a quick death on her lips before it could be spoken aloud as a resounding and unexpected, 'yes' followed hot on its heels and echoed around in her head like a bad prayer.

Good god, she would want to know, wouldn't she?

Lord knew why, but she would.

"But I told you my personal history last round," she reminded him, dodging that uncomfortable question. "You know I've only had two partners."

"You could have perjured," he pointed out. "After all, you lied about the sixteen-hour sex marathon with the Dragon Tamer, and the cards didn't stop you then."

She considered that point carefully. He was right; the cards hadn't stopped her from fibbing last round, so it made sense that he would have doubts about anything else she might have told him tonight... "Be that as it may, I assure you I didn't lie, Draco," she reiterated. "I've never had sexual
intercourse with Theodore Nott. Though not for lack of trying on his part.

He stared at her in silence for a bit, and slowly the hard edges around him softened as he accepted her at her word this time.

Perhaps the use of Teddy's real and full name had also contributed to his grudging acceptance, as she was making it clear that she and Nott were not on good terms.

She sighed, ran a careful hand through her hair. How had everything turned around on her so that suddenly she felt the need to explain herself to her ferrety, git partner? Hadn't she just resolved earlier not to tell him too much for fear he'd use anything she said against her? So, why now did she care that, for reasons she didn't at all understand, she'd somehow hurt his feelings by initially refusing to answer his inappropriate and rudely-demanded question?

Glancing at him again, she felt her own sharp feelings begin to mollify. It was hard to stay angry at him when he looked so boyishly sullen and confused, she had to admit.

With a resigned sigh, she crossed over to the sofa and took a seat next to her partner. "It's quite a ridiculous story, but since it seems to bother you so much… In our sixth year, during the Valentine's House parties, Theo and I ran into each other at Hufflepuff's bash and began talking. By the end of the night, we'd kissed. He started pursuing me after that, and we'd arranged to meet at various places throughout the castle for the next two weeks so we could be alone to get to know each other better."

She felt the blush creeping up her face; knew Draco was measuring her carefully and undoubtedly observed it, too.

"'There wasn't a lot of talking, however,' she admitted. "Things never strayed below the belt, but the snogging was a bit…intense. He kept pushing for more, though. He wanted to get into my knickers, but I told him repeatedly that I wasn't ready for that sort of thing." She cleared her throat, feeling the heat in her cheeks like twin burning flames. "Honestly, that was the furthest I'd gone at that point in my life, and I was very doubtful of his intentions when he started badgering me for more than I was comfortable giving. At the end of the two weeks, when he realized I wasn't going to sleep with him, he just…moved on. He didn't even break it off formally with me when he started seeing other girls."

Biting her lip, she could still recall the hollow feeling in her belly the day she'd caught him crawling all over a female Ravenclaw student in one of the darkened nooks on the third floor. She'd never felt so used in all her life. She'd been so angry at allowing herself to be put in that position in the first place, in fact, that her wand had suddenly been in her hand and the jinx had left her mouth before she could recall it.

"I was so angry at him, you see—"

"What spell did you use?" he asked, intuitively understanding her unspoken confession.

"Melofors."

Malfoy's mouth turned up and then he outright grinned like a fox. "Vicious."

"Well, he was acting very pumpkin-headed then," she argued. "Served him right to look it, too!"

Her partner chuckled. "My respect for you is massive right now, you realise."

Another sigh escaped her lips as the seriousness of what she'd done was followed by a whole heap of regret. "Thank you, but the fact of the matter is the entire incident left me feeling used and stupid. I've gone out of my way to avoid Ted...Theo ever since, because, honestly, I'm embarrassed by the
whole thing. I let myself fall into such a cliché trap and by a boy with an already-established bad reputation, and then I'd been hurt by what should have been an obvious conclusion. It was all very foolish of me." Risking a glance at Malfoy, she let him see how truly embarrassed she was by the experience, hoping he wouldn't laugh at her for it. "It was last year, but apparently Theo is still angry about it, and worse, he seems mad at me now for finding my sexuality finally and not including him in the fun."

Draco narrowed his eyes in suspicion. "Yet you admitted earlier tonight to fantasizing about him and getting yourself off to the thought, so I take it your feelings for him haven't fully waned?"

She shrugged. "Well, he is rather handsome for a prat, but just because I'm attracted to someone doesn't mean it's a good idea to go down that road with them. Theo's not good for me. We don't work. And I don't fancy being the losing side-character in a romance novel: heartbroken by dangerous fascination."

Malfoy was quiet for a bit, so she risked another glance at him out of the corner of her eye. "Is that how you see me, too?" he asked rather bluntly. "Am I just another 'Theo' to you?"

She wasn't sure what prompted her to admit it aloud, but unexpectedly words that were best left unspoken were dislodged from her mouth as if she had no control over them. "No, but you're definitely the most perilous preoccupation I've ever had. It frightens me how much I'm aroused by you, and on so many levels."

As if her confession had rekindled his interest in her, his lids lowered, and his eyes gleamed silvery with renewed lust. The atmosphere between them changed again, reclaiming its provocative mood. Hermione felt her attraction for him once again bloom into life, pulling her back into his warm, promising circle. It was as if she couldn't help herself when she swayed closer to him.

Draco reached for her. His thumb rubbed her bottom lip as the back of his hand caressed her cheek. "What if I were to tell you that you're my greatest weakness, too?"

Her breath hitched and her blood began pounding in her ears. "I thought Malfoys didn't have an Achilles' heel."

"You've been my one vulnerability since our fourth year, beautiful. I thought I made that abundantly clear." His eyes fixated on her lips. "Do you need a reminder?"

"I think I might," she whispered, suddenly desperate to have this entire disagreement forgotten in favour of his kiss. "A rather powerful one, if you don't mind."

"Not at all."

In a quick move, he was tipping her back into the sofa cushions, leaning over her, his mouth sealed to hers with an undeniable passion. He kissed her hard, and she responded enthusiastically as if she had no control whatsoever over her body. She moaned as he thrust his tongue into her, pushed her hands into his hair and pulled him on top of her. When he dropped his hips to press intimately against hers, the hard ridge of his arousal was heavy and thick, resting between her thighs.

God, he felt good lying over her like this, and his kiss...she could willingly die in it if she allowed herself such folly.

And it was a kind of madness that had come over her right then, a lunacy brought on by the moon's sway no doubt. Or so she told herself, for the taste and feel of Draco was pure night magic, and it seduced her into insensibility. Velvet touches against her skin ignited burning, silver stars behind her
eyelids, and the taste of him was smooth, red wine that tempted her heart into all manner of sin.

He kissed a path across the bottom of her jaw and down her throat, pausing over her pulse to suckle gently. "Yes," she hissed as he nipped and turned her head to give him full access. He laved over the spot like a great cat marking its territory and then sunk his teeth into the soft flesh. She jerked in his arms and held him tighter to her, whimpering. "Yes, more!"

He growled then with satisfaction, a deep resonate sound that seemed to come from deep within his chest.

The sound jolted Hermione out of the sensual haze, made her realise just how close she was to tearing off her clothes and letting him shag her into the couch. "Wait, wait!" She struggled to put some distance between them, but Malfoy seemed unwilling to let go of his hold upon her throat. "Draco, please, I need air!"

His mouth released her and then he sat up on his elbows, blinking away his own muzzy-head. "What's wrong? Am I crushing you?"

"I... It's too fast."

He seemed confused by that statement.

"I mean I'm in danger of losing my mind here and doing something rash," she tried again, feeding his ego at the same time so he wouldn't feel the rejection so keenly this time.

That he seemed to understand. His expression relaxed and he gave her a charming smile. "Getting to you, am I?"

She gave him a flat stare. "Don't let it go to either of your heads."

He grinned at her bawdiness, and then pushed himself off to sit back on his knees. He offered her his hand to help her up and she took it. "Come, my princess, let's do our cards and keep your virtue intact a little longer," he suggested with a wicked laugh.

She smacked him lightly on his arm, but let that crack pass.

"I want to do mine first," he told her.

His card, what had it been again?

As she suddenly remembered, all the blood drained from her face.

"Oh."

A seductive striptease.

"I'd rather do mine," she quickly countered.

Kissing his bare chest. She could easily do that without losing control. Sure.

Malfoy stared at her for a moment, clearly contemplating how eager she was not to do his card. "Shall we leave it to chance then?" he asked and reached up to pull off one of the necklaces he was wearing. On the end of it was a coin that had been drilled in the middle. He undid the knot of the leather cord and took the coin off, then held it up to her. "Heads, my card first. Tails, yours."

He offered it to her to perform the flip. She took it and let it ride, flicking it into the air.
It landed on the carpet, heads up.

"Best two out of three?" she attempted to negotiate.

Why not? It usually worked on Ron or Harry...

Malfoy laughed at her.

She glared at him.

*Right, no diplomacy possible with entitled, ungentlemanly Slytherins.*

She'd have to remember that for future reference.

"How about instead I won't make you dance for me," he conceded with a serpent's smile. "In fact, we'll do your strip-tease together and neither of us will move from these positions on the sofa."

She glanced at how they were currently both kneeling, doubting the plan.

"How would that even work without one of us falling onto the floor?"

"I'll show you." He reached up and toyed with the halter collar of her dress. "Tilt your head forward so I can loosen this."

Resigned to her fate, Hermione did as he asked. With nimble fingers, Malfoy quickly unbuttoned the clasp and drew the halter down. He leaned back only a little, enough for him to be able to look upon her. "Put your hands over mine and direct me."

She did what he wanted and applied gentle pressure to his wrists. The silken fabric of her dress slowly lowered until the dusky edge of her areola came into view. Her breathing increased and she began to tremble as it slipped and a nipple on one side was revealed.

Draco paused, resisting her tugging on him to keep going. She just wanted to just get it over with as quickly as possible. Didn't he understand that?

"Breathe, relax," he murmured, locking eyes with her. "Show me your courage."

She tried to do what he wanted as the dress slipped down to her waist, and fell past her hips to gather at her knees, reminding herself over and over again that she was Gryffindor and that she'd vowed before this game had begun tonight that nothing would frighten her so much that she'd cry 'enough'. The truth was, however, being stripped almost completely bare by this wizard scared her at levels that had more to do with emotional vulnerability and less with actual physical terror. She could face a three-headed dog right now with less of a panicked feeling.

Looking into Draco's eyes helped. He didn't look away to peek; he firmly kept his gaze on hers the entire time. It was as if the revealing of her body was a secondary objective for him, with the more important goal of seeing if she would really do it.

*I dare you to trust me,* his eyes seemed to say.

"I'm trying," she whispered.

"I know."

She reached for him, placing her hand above his heart. Under her palm, she could feel how fast the organ raced and knew he was equally as nervous and anticipatory as she was right then.
"May I look at you?"

His question asked so softly, so sincerely, left her breathless.

"Y-yes."

Draco licked his lips and let his attention drop down her mostly-nude form. She watched his eyes heat with lust and widen with awe, and felt both a bit embarrassed and prideful at the same time. "Fuck, you are so beautiful," he told her.

"I'm average," she reminded him of the truth.

"You're exquisite," he countered. "Better than any of my fantasies." He played with the ribbons on the side of her lace and satin panties. They were tied in bows, that once loosened, would allow the set to fall to her knees as well. He seemed to know it, too. "Do you want me to take these down, too?"

That brought her up short. "You're asking? But it's your card."

He glanced up at her again. "You made it clear that I don't respect you the way I should. I don't want to do that anymore, and I don't want to make you angry again either. So, if you're not ready to show me everything, I can wait."

She blinked, taken aback.

By god, he meant it, didn't he? Something she'd said to him had actually penetrated and hit its mark!

"I'm trying, too," he told her.

She took a deep breath and let it out slowly, making a decision. Courage, she reminded herself. "Thank you for that. And I want you to know that I want to say yes, but honestly, I'd rather slow down a bit and let you first get to know these a little better." Clasping his hands, she guided them up her body to cup her breasts.

"Bloody hell, yes," he swore as he thumbed both tender nipples and then gently pinched them until they rose to hard, swollen points. Hermione's eyes closed and she arched into his touch in a silent plea for more. "I've been dying to touch you like this all night," he confessed in a ragged whisper just before he lowered his head and wrapped his lips around one pink bud, drawing it deep into the hot, wet cavern of his mouth.

Hermione's head began to spin. That quickly, and the need rose within her again, even stronger than before. She dug her nails into his shoulders, seeking an anchor, desperate to both draw him closer and to escape his hold.

How was it Draco Malfoy could make her feel as no other man had?

Why him?

"Draco...!" she cried out as he captured the other eager, rosy tip between his teeth and nibbled upon it. A hungry growl escaped him, and wicked heat shot through her at the possessive sound, curling her toes, driving her back towards the infernal fire that tested her womanly resolve. She fought to breathe as his tongue lashed the small, perky flesh, and she jerked wildly in his arms as his lips strongly sucked upon it.

She couldn't... She shouldn't...
More, want more!

She tossed her head back with a lusty shout as he gently kneaded and plumped her breasts. All the while, her soft, curly hair slid across her spine as her head swayed back and forth creating an erotic tickle that drove her on towards madness and ignited a sexual frenzy within her blood.

With both hands she gripped Draco's soft hair in a tight clasp, scratching her nails across his skull in a silent demand. She felt mindless from the pleasure he gave her, desperate for him to unite them. It was as if both magic and lust had been perfectly blended together and thrust into her body until it burned with a need so intense, she would die if he didn't come into her right then and there. She thrust her hips against his, felt the rigid length of his cock through his pants, and rubbed over it, whimpering in frustration at the barriers that stood between her core and his sex.

With impatience and eagerness, Draco tore himself away from her and reached for the hem of his shirt. With a quick pull, he had it up and over his head, then he tossed it to the floor.

Oh, dashed!

'Stunning' didn't adequately describe how beautiful Malfoy's body was without its clothes. He was literally built like a Greek statue: sleek, muscular, with a nice athletic shape. "You're..." Her mouth couldn't form the words to adequately express her thoughts as the temptation to touch him proved too much for her to resist. "Oh."

Draco groaned as she smoothed her hands over his hot flesh and teased the small, dusky-coloured nipples into prominence. He unconsciously flexed against her palms, allowing her to trace the tight ridges of his abdomen.

"Kiss me," he begged.

Glancing up from her exploration, she reconsidered his reddened mouth.

"Not there," he whispered the naughty enticement, following her thought. He took hold of the back of her head and directed her towards his chest. "Here."

She groaned, following his direction without protest. Latching onto one small nipple, she sucked it generously between her lips. Malfoy's breath hitched. Spurred on by his reaction, she licked over the small, flat disc like it was a sugar-coated lolly and he was her favourite treat.

"Hell, yes," he groaned twining his fingers through her hair and palming her skull to hold her in place. "Your card requires it, so kiss me, beautiful girl. Kiss me hard, leave your mark on me."

She did as bade, and when he finally let her up for air, she preened a bit at the delicious purple love bite she'd given him right over his heart.

Malfoy was literally quaking now with repressed hunger. "I want your mouth all over me."

Stretching her mouth to his throat, she placed warm, wet kisses to the skin over his pulse. "Here?"

He moaned and turned his head to give her full access. "Yes."

Obliging him was an enjoyable task, she found as she left another love bite upon him. He shook and jerked in her arms as she nipped him under the jaw, and then licked her way around to the other side of his throat to give it equal attention. "Here, too?"

"Please."
Her lips curled against his ear. "Polite at last. Now I know the trick."

He tweaked her nipple, making her gasp. "Don't get smart with me."

"Never," she told him with a grin.

He huffed. "Always so mouthy."

She licked an erotic pattern down his abdomen. "But it seems you like my mouth so very much."

He groaned and plucked her little bud again. "Fuck, but I do!" His hips rolled and he thrust the bulge of his erection towards her. "I'd love it more if it took care of me better."

She traced his navel with the tip of her tongue, feeling decidedly adventurous and wicked all of the sudden. "You mean here?"

"Keep going."

Kissing to the edge of his soft, cotton trousers, her chin brushed against his straining length in passing. His body gave a little jolt and he held his breath as she hovered.

"Dare you," he whispered in a voice as dark and seductive as midnight.

*Never dare a Gryffindor.*

Leaning forward, she mouthed the head of him through his pants, blowing a stream of hot air against him at the same moment. His fingers tightened in her hair and he hissed in pleasure.

"Sod the game," he growled. "Suck me right now and I'm yours forever."

With a wicked laugh, she pulled away, extricating his fingers from her curls with a gentle tug. Having regained much of her lost control over the past few minutes, she felt the calm that came with knowing she had such power over this man that he would risk offering her such a reckless thing.

_Men will say anything in the heat of the moment to get what they want from you,_ a little voice whispered in the back of her head.

In her experience and observations, she'd found the preponderance of evidence to suggest that such a thing was mostly true. And she'd heard enough rumours about Malfoy over the years to think he wasn't that much different from others of his gender in that regard, either.

And yet...

"Do you like this?" he asked as he pulled her into his arms once more and simply held her. Her bare chest pressing against the heat and strength of his had her shivering with want. "Do you like the way I make you feel, my Granger?"

Hermione toyed with his soft, platinum hair again, enjoying the silken glide of his mane through her fingers. "Yes," she sighed in resigned contentment. "I like this, like you, too much, I fear."

"Me, too," he admitted, his low voice entrancing. "Am I pushing you too fast, though, like Theo?"

How did she feel about what they'd done so far? She pursed her lips. "No, I don't feel like you pushed me into anything this round. If anything, I wonder if I pushed you too hard." Her cheeks felt hot with mortification. "I...I don't usually lose control like that."
Under her ear, his chest rumbled with his soft laughter. "So you admit you're affected by me."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "It's difficult not to be," she emphasized with a suffering sigh. "You excel at getting under my skin."

His warm palms traced evocative patterns across the width of her back. "And in arousing it."

"Mmm, that, too."

"Does that mean you'll suck my prick now?"
She glanced up in shock at such unexpected bawdiness.
He grinned down at her and wiggled his eyebrows.
"You're impossible." She gave him a withering glare.
Undaunted, Draco bent his head and quickly pressed a kiss to her lips. "Maybe next round."
The couch unexpectedly widened underneath her and she fell back onto her rump on the expanded cushion with a surprised, 'oof!' Draco lay down next to her and indicated that she was to lie against him, in his arms.

"Now that we've done our cards, we have a few minutes to cool down," he told her as she wiggled into position, lying with her cheek pressed to his chest. His arms came around her and he snuggled her close. "We can just lie here and talk, if you want."

Her breasts crushed to his side, Hermione found to her amazement that their bodies were a natural fit. They were the perfect heights for each other, their curves locking in like puzzle pieces. Against her, her partner felt so very right.

"This feels right," he said, once more echoing aloud her thoughts. "We fit well together."

"You don't sound surprised," she noted.

"I'm not. I always knew we would."

She let that strange comment lie between them, not daring to break the silence, enjoying the sound of Draco's heart beating steadily under her ear, and the feel of his chest rising rhythmically, strongly in time with hers.

They stayed that way for several minutes before his soft whisper against her temple woke her from the lull. "I'm going to ask you something that's going to blow your knee socks off, Granger, so I want you to prepare yourself." His free hand had roamed up her spine lazily to entangle itself in her hair, and with a gentle pull, he forced her to meet his gaze. "Are you ready?"

Swallowing the thick lump of nerves that had suddenly lodged itself in her throat, Hermione gave a small nod of her head.

He stared down at her with steely regard. "I want you to know that this isn't something I'm offering just because of what we've done tonight. I've been thinking about it long before this game. I just want to establish that up-front."

Hermione blinked in confusion. "All right."
He nodded, seemed intent upon his course of action, and yet it was clear by how tense he'd gone
against her that he was as nervous as she about what came next. "I have a business proposition for you."

Her spine stiffened. "A business proposition?"

"Yes."

Her heart lurched and her stomach fell.

As if he knew what she was suddenly reading into those words, he tsked and rolled his eyes. "Not that kind of business, Granger. I wouldn't dare ask you to be my mistress. You'd eat my balls for breakfast for the insult alone."

Internally, she saluted his wisdom for at least understanding that much about her and relaxed, realising she'd misread the situation.

"I'm offering you a job within my company, after graduation."

An actual employment offer had just been laid at her feet, by none other than Draco Malfoy—the boy who, just seven years ago, had thought her unworthy of even being in the wizarding world.

Ironic.

"You're referring to your idea for importing plants and herbs from Asia to the Western markets, you mean?" she asked to be sure.

He nodded. "You seemed to think it a rather interesting idea."

It had been, incredibly interesting, in fact.

She roll-tapped her fingernails on his chest as she weighed the proposal in her mind. Really, what did she have to look forward to after graduation? A career for the Ministry was the 'safe' route and most assured, but it honestly didn't seem all that thrilling to her, having to politick until her tongue turned blue all so she got what she needed to do the job properly. She'd rather not have to beg people to do the right thing or toady up to them for that same purpose. And if there was one thing she'd always wanted to do, it was to meet people from different cultures, to discover the world...

"It's a good fit for your talents," he continued his sales pitch, seemingly eager to bring her into the scheme. "You'd get to use all that knowledge stored up in your brain to earn a living, you'd get to travel like you wanted, you'd be instrumental in helping schools here in the west with their educational opportunities, and you'd be helping to open doors between the European and Asian wizarding worlds."

Hermione stared up at him, noted his apprehension. Clearly, he needed her to make his plans come to fruition, and that shifted the balance of power in this negotiation in her favour.

"A fifty-fifty partnership, or forget it."

Draco clearly hadn't expected her to agree so quickly, for he seemed astounded at the no-nonsense demand. "It would have to be twenty-five percent," he countered. "Blaise is already in. He borrowed money from his father for the venture and matched my initial stake. And my mother's agreed to back the endeavor with the personal accounts she was left by her father, so she's a full partner, too."

"I have a small bit of savings I could cash out and bring to the table, but I'm not sure I could match your buy-in," Hermione admitted. "How much was it?"
Malfoy shook his head. "Your wealth is all up here." He tapped her head. "We're going to need you to identify the potentially best and most lucrative botanical and herbal stocks on which to focus our acquisitions, determine their sources, and to teach us proper etiquette for approaching and opening up market trade with foreign cultures."

Her mind whirling with the myriad of wonderful, new possibilities opening up before her as a result of Malfoy's offer, Hermione excitedly leapt into the fray head-long. "We might want to bring Neville on-board, then. Professor Sprout says he's the best student in Herbology that she's seen in her entire teaching career. Oh! And Pansy Parkinson, too." She made a small face. "We may not get along, but she's second to Neville, and she's really good in Potions, like you. And Dumbledore, we should get his buy-in. He can easily convince the Ministry as well as Beauxbatons and Durmstrang to open their programs up for corporate sponsorship."

Her partner chuckled, placing a hand over her mouth. "So, I take it you're on-board then?" he asked the obvious.

Hermione stopped, surprised by her strong reaction. She hadn't been this excited since...well, since her second year when she'd made Polyjuice Potion right under the nose of every teacher and student in school.

Clearly, her career with the Ministry was over before it had even begun.

"Yes, definitely. I really think this could work, Draco. I think I'd love this chance!"

His smile was one of relief and pride in her for taking the chance. "We can draw up the particulars of the job title and responsibilities next week then."

"Do you have a name for the company yet?"

"Draconis Investments."

"Subtle," she dryly stated.

He grinned at her. "I thought so." His intent shifted in record time from playful to seductive, and his free hand released its hold on her hair and glided down her bare back, ending only when cupping her arse cheek and pulling her into intimate knowledge with his newly awakened arousal. "In the spirit of new beginnings, we should christen this moment, don't you think?"

As if it was a tap one could easily turn on and off within her body, sexual anticipation returned full force and left her hungry for his kiss once more. "Absolutely."

Much to Hermione's delight, Malfoy proceeded to prove to her for the next few minutes that he very much knew how to steal the breath from her. In the back of her head, she wondered if it was smart to become this involved with a future co-worker and partner, for there were surely a ton of possible pitfalls to combining sex with business. However, at that moment, she couldn't make herself care, especially when he pressed his sizable erection between her thighs and rubbed up and down.

When the chimes rang out, they both growled and grumbled in disappointment.

"Just forget the game," he whined as she pushed him off enough for her to sit up and pull her dress back into place. "Let's stay here and shag each other senseless."

Feeling frisky, as a small sadistic part of her loving to watch him beg, Hermione firmly shook her head. "Aren't you even curious about the next cards? What if they offer us an opportunity for something truly naughty?" She purposefully spoke the last in a low, sultry tone to get his interest. It
succeeded; he peeked up at her from between his fingers, one eyebrow raised in curiosity. "I've read all the cards for my side, and there are some truly creative ones in there I wouldn't mind trying out."

Sitting up on one elbow, he watched her as she got to her feet and rearranged her dress so it draped properly over her once more.

"Like?"

"Well, licking food off of your body for one, or using a feather or other type of toy on you. There's even one that requires you to orally pleasure me. Any of those would be fun."

Draco's face became as eager as a little boy's at Christmas. "Well, when you say it like that..." He got up suddenly, arctic eyes twinkling with excitement, and reached for his shirt. Fitting his arms into the armholes, he pulled it over his head.

They left the room holding hands and threw each other flirtatious, saucy smiles as they neared the couches in the main area. Before he let her go to take her seat, Malfoy stepped into Hermione's personal space, brought her hand to his mouth and kissed her knuckles.

"Game on then," he whispered so low that only the two of them could hear.

"Bring it on," she replied and threw him a challenging smirk before moving away and sitting across from him once more.

Chapter End Notes

On June 13, 1998, the moon was 90% visible in the sky (it had just past its full stage by three days). So, basically, it was still really bright enough for Hermione to have seen what she did out the window.

I used JKR's hand-drawn map of Hogwarts grounds to guess where Hermione might be looking out the window. The Room of Requirement is on the Seventh Floor, opposite the tapestry of Barnabas the Barmy (where it is said to be in the novels), and I picture it being in the southwest corner (a dead end), looking out over the lake (which JKR indicates is south of the castle), down the total opposite end of the hall from Gryffindor Tower (which is on the southeast corner).
Are we really going to try this again?

As Lavender and her partner entered the room they'd taken for themselves, the magical fire in the hearth was still lit, snapping and crackling in the quiet, providing the only sound in the room as the door closed behind Lavender. She leaned against the cool wood, getting goosebumps from the temperature difference on the bare skin of her shoulders and arms, carefully watching her partner.

Seamus turned at her obvious reluctance to follow him further into the familiar space, the green of his spring-coloured eyes assessing her mood and body language.

What if it doesn't work out this time, either? Can't he see how that thought scares me?

Even though they'd come to an agreement, and she'd willed her course in staying in the game, accepting the idea of giving her ex-lover a second chance, her automatic defences were difficult to let down. It was hard to retrain them to think of Seamus as trustworthy, especially since she'd spent the better part of the last two years convincing her heart and mind otherwise.

Maybe this idea scares him, too.

She'd promised to try. That meant lowering her guard and giving this an honest chance.

Sighing in resignation, she presented her card to her sexy, entirely-too-tempting Irishman, per last round's agreement. It sucked that she'd have to give this action up, as she really wanted to spank that sexy arse of his, but at least losing this chance had been worth it, as that kiss they'd shared had inflamed her senses and made her realize just how sexually and emotionally attracted to this wizard she really was. That lip-lock had, in fact, been the final, deciding factor in continuing the game, although she was quite sure that her partner had no idea as to its importance in that decision.

Seamus' glance flickered to the card in her hand, then back to her face, and finally shook his head. "Deal or no, I'll not be takin' yer card. Ya wanted ta be in charge." He gave her a shy smile and held out his own to her instead. "I said I'd be what ya need, angel, and I meant it. Take mine, yeah? Then ya can have both actions ta do as ya will."

Their cards held out to each other, they stared across the few feet between them, each caught in the other's considering gaze.
Finally, she dropped her eyes to his card, and read it upside down:

**DEED: Your partner has to wank you off with their hand.**

*Oh, yum!*

Actually, that did sound like an act she'd want to own, but given the nature of her own card, and what she was about to do to him, perhaps this time it would be best to leave him the opportunity to find some pleasure.

"I'd rather you keep it," she said. "You're not going to enjoy my card."

She read it aloud to him:

**DEED: Tie up your partner and use a flogger on them.**

Seamus' eyes widened, and he seemed genuinely astonished for all of two seconds before he began chuckling and a wicked gleam entered his eye. "Well, I canna say I've ever had that sort o' thing done ta me a'fore. It should be interestin', though, dontcha think?"

That floored her. "You really don't mind being tied up against your will?"

"Won't be against me will, though, will it? I'm agreeing to try it wit' ya."

You've changed. Two years ago, your hands shook while you undressed me... Now he was discussing her flogging his arse with a big, fat grin on his face.

Funny how two years could make that much of a difference.

For both of them, it seemed.

Her partner was in her personal space in the blink of an eye, crowding her against the door, his arms caging her in on either side. He pressed his forehead to hers. His green gaze burned with sexual intent. "And it'll be ya who'll be doin' all o' that ta me." He gripped one of her hands and brought it to the bulge in his trousers that was, even then, growing harder by the second. "And if ya take me card, too, there'll be strokin' ta look forward to."

Lavender's heart leapt into her throat, threatening to choke her with its explosive pace.

"I want ya ta know the feel o' me, sweet angel. I want ya ta torture me with those sinful fingers o' yers," he purred in mounting excitement, his nose running along the soft skin of her cheek, his mouth buzzing her lips. "Do anythin' ya want ta me, Lavender. Make me yers, love."

Godric Almighty, Seamus Evander Finnigan was pure lust on tap, wasn't he? Between her thighs, the crotch of her knickers was already decidedly damp, and he hadn't even really touched her yet!

"You'd better kiss me right now, or else," she warned in a trembling voice, shaking all over with need.

Not requiring to be told twice, her man swiftly sealed their lips together with an eager hunger. Her head was spinning from his taste, and the feel of his pelvis pressing into hers; the wall secured her in position from the backside so there was absolutely no chance to avoid their bodies melding together. Not that she'd want to escape this, *hell, no!* His kiss was a candy burst of sweet on her tongue, a bottle rocket explosion in her belly, a Jelly-Leg Jinx for her knees.
Her hands eagerly grasped his shoulders, her nails digging in as he lifted her under the bum, shoving her dress up and pinning her even more firmly to the wall. Lavender held on tight to him as the muscles under her fingers bulged and went rock hard when he gripped her hips and settled her right over his covered cock.

"Oh, gods," she moaned as he rubbed that iron-hard erection against her, simulating sex. "Sea!"

That familiar feeling was back, the one that started in the back of her brain and travelled down her spine, electrifying every nerve along the way, finding and settling heat into her very womb. A part of her that had remained dormant since the aftermath of their one night together came alive again, roaring its way to the surface, tearing away all rationality and common sense, and opening her up to the thrill of decadent, hedonistic danger. Straining against her partner, rubbing herself provocatively over his hard length with wanton need, Lavender's body burned and begged for release. Seamus could fuck her right then and there, against the wall, as fast and hard as he wanted, and she knew that she'd let him, so desperate was she for him to fill all of the empty spaces in her heart and body.

**Why are you the only one who can affect me like this?**

Was he magically enticing her somehow or was this something genuine and raw that existed only between the two of them?

Ultimately, it was her wizard who considerately reined them in. Pulling his mouth from hers, he laid his slightly damp brow at her throat, breathing heavily against her too-sensitive skin. "Gotta stop, love, or else I'll be havin' ya like this, and I don't think ya'd want that." Gently, he lowered her to the floor and moved his pelvis away from hers. He lifted his head and gave her an impish smile. "'Sides, yer supposed ta be in charge, yeah? I jumped the line and took command. Sorry about that. Yer just too bloody sexy to keep me hands off!"

Body protesting, her wet pussy begging for him not to be so bloody considerate, she whimpered and pulled him back towards her.

"Lavender, angel, slow," he coaxed her, resisting her attempts to drag him back into the fire with her. "You wanted slow, yeah?"

His words penetrated the fog of lust.

**Oh, Merlin, I was panting for it!**

"Slow. Right. Absolutely. Slow and steady is best." She took several deep breaths, and let them out with slow deliberation. Clearly, chemistry wasn't their problem, never had been. "Oh, hell, I can't lie: I did want you shagging me senseless right then. I still do."

Seamus groaned and shuddered. "Ya have such power o'er me, me lady. If ya say th' word, I'll do whatever ya will, but..I'm tryin' ta respect ya wishes from earlier. I want ta earn back yer trust, not just the right ta love yer body."

The sentiment hit her right in the heart.

He was trying, wasn't he?

And he was right, too. Sabotaging his efforts by jumping right back into bed with him would convolute things. If it was going to be real between her and Sea this time, her heart and body had to be earned by him, not freely given as it had been before, when they'd been younger. Giving herself
away so cheaply the first time had ended in disaster, and if there was one thing Lavender had learned over the last two years, it was that any man who wished access to her body or emotions should have to treat her with respect. She would not be used for someone else's convenience ever again.

Having decided that and feeling much more in control, she righted her dress and stepped around Seamus to give them both some much-needed distance. A short time-out to calm down seemed appropriate right then. "You're right, we shouldn't rush into things this time around. The game might force it, but we don't have to help it out and hurry things along, do we?" Stooping, she picked up both of their cards from the floor, where they'd been tossed aside earlier upon their fervent embrace, and felt a revived determination to get back to the purpose of the night's entertainment. "Speaking of which, we should start in on these now, so we don't run out of time and end up out."

She re-read the cards.

Bondage, flogging, and a hand job.

Bloody hooks and crooks! All the air left her lungs at the thought of doing each of these things to Sea in a few minutes. Her face went red hot and her body flushed with a renewed sexual hunger that had her suddenly tensing and feeling as sensitive an electrified current riding a live wire, like in one of those Muggle light bulbs she'd learned about in Professor Burbage's class.

"Do ye not want ta touch me so, love?" her sexy, tempting partner asked as he came up behind her to whisper in her ear his naughty enticements. "Do ya not want ta own me in such a way?"

Swallowing, she nodded. "I want. A little too much, I fear."

Gently, he kissed he throat, at the point where her pulse was currently rabbitting out of control. Tingly electric shocks raced around the spot making her shiver. "Take me where ya will, Lavender. Move me as ya see fit. I'll follow yer lead, sweet angel."

Merlin, give her a minute to get her heart back under control! The thing felt like it might pulse right through her chest right then.

Get your wand in a grip, girl! You are not some little, shy virgin!

It was true, she knew what to do and how to use her body in an effective manner with a man. Having seen to her own pleasure countless times, she'd also enjoyed Ron between her thighs for the better part of this whole school year. In between their casual interludes, she'd "gotten her freak on" with a certain wicked Slytherin in a series of secretive serial one-offs that were both fun and quite educational. With such a résumé of experience, she could most certainly handle Seamus, too.

Taking in the whole of the room, Lavender realized things were going to have to change for what she intended; this just would not do.

The couch was gone with a mere thought, and in its place appeared two sturdy columns connected with an overhanging arch, all made of slab stone. Hanging from the arch were two lengths of strong, black velvet rope. Next to the set-up was a small table with a small bottle of lubricant and two floggers, the first made of thick, spongy buffalo hide straps, the second made of thin bull hide strings with metal balls tied at the ends.

Behind her, Seamus chuckled. "Done this a'fore, have ye?"

Once, but she wasn't sure telling her partner the truth would be wise, as Blaise Zabini was a tough act for most men to follow and she didn't want to dent Sea's ego. The fact that the enigmatic Slytherin had taught her how to use a flogger properly and that she'd frequently practiced with it on
him, bringing him to climax after climax with it, might be one of those secrets best taken to the grave. It had been an interesting experience, empowering, and she'd taken a lot away from it, specifically sexual power dynamics. The most important part, Zabini had said, had been keeping in mind that using a flogger on a partner wasn't necessarily about the person inflicting that small sting of pain on the other; it was about giving the sub pleasure. He'd made it clear to her that a good Dominant understood that their primary job was to gratify their sub, and through that concentrated diligence, which included an exceptional control of themselves and of the sexual scene they created together, the Dom found their own enjoyment.

Could she do that with Seamus, though?

*Can you accept submitting to me, if I wanted?*

*Can I accept submitting to you, if you asked?*

In truth, her sexy partner made her want to be both submissive and Dominant to him. He made her *want* to switch, to give up a little bit of her precious control to experience the pleasures he was promising to show her. Yet, at the same time, there was the nagging, admonitory voice in her head reminding her of the vow she'd once made in regards to returning to a position of emotional and physical vulnerability with any man, specifically that she would *not* allow it.

After the fiasco that had resulted from the loss of her virginity, Lavender had decided to be a take-charge girl, to own her pleasure and not to be ashamed of it. She'd determined she wouldn't be one of those girls who used sex as a weapon to climb ladders or to intentionally harm others, but she'd also made herself a promise that she would not allow sex to be used against her in such a way, either. Hence all the research she'd done on the subject since that cold, unforgettable night in the abandoned dormitory room, two years ago.

From all her reading on the subject of sex and in her personal experiences with it, generally speaking, she'd discovered that men were inherently selfish lovers, and a woman's pleasure wasn't foremost on their minds, or even something they were naturally compelled to give unless there was a better return for them on that investment. Sexual fulfillment was, therefore, something women had to find for themselves, either during the act by demanding attention to specific erogenous zones or outside it via masturbation.

That revelation had led her to one, clear conclusion: if she was to be forced to have to work harder to get a man to please her, she might as well truly embrace the role of the Dominant in the sex act itself. At least then she would be guaranteed as satisfying an orgasm as her partner.

...And now here she was, come full circle with the man who had been responsible for her sexual awakening two years prior, who had set her on this path of self-exploration and personal determination, and she was going to be given the opportunity to top him.

*Ironic, huh?*

Even more so, now that she was face-to-face with this demon that had haunted her for so long, she was unsure as to whether her prior commitment to herself could stand against her deeper feelings for the man, the ones that had pretty much defined her from the first moment they'd met.

The fact was, for reasons she'd never quite understood, Seamus threatened her ability to maintain the emotional wall she'd built up around herself for her own protection. He made her feel...soft, unassertive, ruled by her needs and desires. Worse, she found she *wanted* to be all those things while in his arms.
Would that be so very bad?

"Angel?"

Concentration snapped by the concern in his voice, Lavender realised she'd been standing there mute and inactive long enough to concern her partner.

"Sorry, lost in my head," she admitted, and then was all business. They were here to play the game, to see if it was even possible for them to have a second chance...and part of that was seeing if Seamus was telling the truth about his willingness to do whatever she needed to find sexual fulfillment with him at long last. Without turning, she commanded him, "Strip for me. I want you naked now."

Willing a stool into place before her, she hopped up into it, crossed her legs and waited for her partner to obey.

Coming around to face her, to give her a good show, Seamus did what she demanded without complaint or hesitation.

Slowly, he began unbuttoning his shirt, his eyes locked on hers. Lavender followed the path of his hands, feeling her heart skip with each button freed from its captive hole. Sliding the shirt from his shoulders, he willed a chair into existence to place his clothing upon. Leaning down, he removed his shoes and socks next, using the back of the chair for balance. He had nice feet, well-groomed, she noted before the action of his hands caught her attention once more. He was taking his tank off, and underneath... oh, gods. He'd filled into his adult body and was all hard-edged muscle from neck to hips. He had the build of a perfect Beater for Quidditch: broad, significant shoulders and biceps, pecs that were all power, washboard abs. Of all the men here tonight, he was the most potently built, despite being an inch or so shy of six feet.

Standing there before her, loosening his belt buckle without any sort of bashfulness, he seemed the most unassailable man she'd ever known.

It made her knees weak.

Good thing she was sitting down.

"Like what ya see, Lavender?" he purred in a low, smooth tone, rolling her name around his tongue with that lilting brogue that sent her toes curling and her body tightening with need.

Don't stop there, you tease.

"Yes, but I want more," she replied, her voice husky with desire. Their eyes met and the room sizzled as she leaned forward on the stool, keeping herself from launching across the distance only by digging her nails into the wood at her side. "Show me all of you, Sea. Show me that hard cock I've heard so much about. I want to finally see what was once inside me. I've waited long enough to know what you look like in the light."

There was a momentary pause, and his expression shifted, filling with a sexual hunger she'd only barely glimpsed in him before. This was a darker, more dominant side to his personality—the masculine predator that lurked behind his sweet words, teasing smiles, and easy-going jokes. He was finally letting down his full guard, showing her the other half of him.

The tension in the room shot up by degrees.

Gods, she wanted him! And it wasn't just the thought of her riding his cock that had her squeezing
her thighs together. No, it was him leaning over her, gorgeous muscles flexing and straining as he pounded into her cunt with all the strength contained within him.

*Show me, show me, show me!*

He pulled his belt from its loops and tossed it away, popped the button on his pants and unzipped, and nudged his slacks so they glided down his legs. The green-striped short boxers were adorable, and she gave him an amused smile.

"Irish pride," she teased.

"Ta the end, me love."

His fingers slid over the huge bulge in his pants, and it was only then that she noted that he was clearly spilling over the rim. The package straining the front of the fabric was quite sizable and definitely wanted its freedom. Grabbing the edges of his pants, he dragged them down his body. His expansive flesh spilt out and Lavender's gaze zeroed in to get her first, good look at her lover's cock.

Parvati hadn't been exaggerating: he was fecking huge.

Feeling the shape of him under her hand last round hadn't given her a good enough idea of his size, obviously, because she was quite shocked by the actual sight of him. Gods, he was bigger than Zabini, who had been the largest lover she'd experienced. Even then, Blaise's prick had been quite a stretch to fit, honestly. As she considered Sea's pride now…

Had that really been inside her once? How had they even fit?

*Jesus, no wonder it had hurt!*

Having divested all of his clothing, he casually strolled towards her, his enormous shaft bobbing up and down with every step. He stopped just shy of her crossed legs and threw her a challenging look.

"This what ya expected, angel?"

Her mouth was too dry to speak, her brain too numb to work her muscles into a nod. All she could do was stare…and want.

A sensual smirk curled her partner's lips. "Soon," he promised. "When we're ready ta cross tha' line again together."

His fingers moved slowly over his body in a seductive trail, enticing her to want to reach out and join them in their roaming. One hand smoothed over a firmly defined pectoral, while the other glided down his ridged abs, dipping into the thatch of thick, black, curly hair that cradled the object of her fascination. He gripped his cock in a tight hold, holding the length away from his body so she could have an unimpeded view. Merlin, it was beautiful! Smooth skin that was straight as an arrow and a large, pinkish head that was beaded with the evidence of his arousal. A tight, heavy sac hung beneath, filled with his seed; she was betting it was as soft as butter to the touch.

Every bit of her Irish was built for pleasure, she realized. He was so gorgeous it hurt to look at his perfection, in fact. She knew she had a very pretty body, but there was no denying that her lover was the epitome of lust. He was amazing to behold.

*I want it again...ohmygod, but I want it!*

Reaching out with a trembling hand, she touched the wet tip of him, feathering across his warm flesh and imagining what it would feel like to have him in her mouth, gliding across her tongue. How
much of him could she take in one swallow? She pulled away, afraid of losing control and sinking before him to her knees to find out.

Seamus was having none of that, however. He reached for her wrist and tugged her hand back towards him. "Touch me, love," he bid in a soft, gentle voice, his hand guiding her to fully grip him. "The card allows it and I need yer touch right now."

The temptation proved too great, even for her earlier resolve...

His cock was heavy in her palm as Lavender wrapped her hand around him. Squeezing a bit, she was astonished to find that her fingertips didn't meet; his width was too great for her grasp. Working together, they moved her hand up and down over every inch of the long shaft, and she eagerly discovered this part of him that had always remained a mystery to her, despite having once known it quite intimately.

Brushing the hair from her cheek with his free hand, Sea tucked wayward strands back behind an ear in a loving caress. "Tha's it, Lavender. Own me pleasure," he whispered as he let go of her hand, allowing her free roaming access. Cupping her face, he kissed her with a sweet pull of lips. "Have me, love."

As she stroked up his solid length with increasing pressure, he groaned into her open mouth, his hands fisting through her hair to pull her closer. Uncrossing her legs, she opened them wide and he boldly stepped into the gap. The satin of her dress slid away at the sides to give her knees freedom, as the cut allowed.

So close...

Only a few strips of cloth stood between her aching sex and his, and the temptation to remove those was so great, Lavender had to concentrate to keep her hand on task, rather than allow it to stray.

He was dripping wet all over her fingers as she swiped the head back and forth, and used the fluid to create a gliding friction, priming him for orgasm. Following the rhythm she set, his hips began surging upwards to meet her downward pumping force, forcing her to slide over the entire length of him from tip to base. He hardened to solid proportions as his thrusts sped up, his excitement mounting. His hands moved from touching her to gripping the stool's back, granting him a more solid hold. His lips never left hers, though. Moans and gasps were drawn from him around their kisses, and under her free hand, she could feel his heart pounding.

"I'm gonna come," he panted, his voice a mix of pain and pleasure. "Don't stop."

She felt all of those magnificent muscles under her fingers and against her body tighten up as he prepared to tumble over the edge. His grasp on the wooden stool creaked as the pressure of his hold increased.

"Fuck… Fuck! Ah, Lavender!"

He exploded, throwing his head back with a cry. Hot spurts of sticky, white semen burst across the front of her dress and flowed down their combined hands in a rush. As if his hips had a mind of their own, they savagely kept thrusting upwards, forcing his reddened cock between the tight clasp of her fingers, his body offering every last drop he had to give to her.

Merlin, he's so beautiful!

As his shudders finally began to subside, Lavender glanced down, watching a final, smaller burst of cum erupt from the darkened head to paint her fingers white. Seamus gasped as if in pain and
dropped forward, sinking into the cradle of her shoulder with a heavy groan. Panting hot air against her throat, he managed to choke out, "I swear ta Heaven, woman, ye'll be the death o' me!"

When she reached down between his legs to cup his testicles, he jerked in her arms.

"I liked that," she admitted, carefully petting his sensitive sac. "You didn't hold anything back."

He chuckled against her ear. "Tol' ya I wouldn't."

Lavender's heart pounded at that.

He'd done as he'd promised and submitted to her, at least partially. There was still the other card to perform, however, and it was the harder task to endure... Would Seamus truly not resent her for controlling him in this way? Some fellas thought being under the thumb of a Dominant female in bed somehow unmanned them, that they lacked all masculine dignity for bending their backs to women.

Something told her Seamus, for all his pride, would not be like that, though. He seemed, now that she was really thinking about it, the type to do anything for love.

Will you someday hate me for putting you on your knees tonight?

"Seems ya always get me ta come so fast, me angel. I canna control me body and me head spins when we're like this." He nuzzled her throat with his nose, pressing soft kisses over her pulse. "It was th' same that night two years ago. I had no mind ta stop meself then, no will. Not enough experience, yeah, but also I think it's always gonna be this way wit' ya, love. Ya undo me as no other ever has."

Heart...melting...

He pressed a playful kiss to her cheek, then her lips, and suddenly the mood was lightened. "And I think I've made a mess o' yer pretty dress." He chuckled. "Sorry, but not too sorry, lass."

Lavender glanced down at her lovely dress, now wet with the evidence of his satisfaction. With an impish sort of curiosity, she swiped up one creamy finger of his essence and brought it to her mouth. "Mmm," she moaned as his flavour passed over her tongue and little sparks of electric energy shot through her once more. Eagerly, she licked away his seed. It wasn't bitter or bleachy in the least, as most men's cum tasted. It was sweet, almost like... "Honey."

When she glanced up at Sea, his eyes had gone dark again, his focus on her lips absolute.

"Do it again," he bade.

She did, lapping at her fingers, which had been coated in his release, enjoying his taste.

"Fuck," he hissed. "I'm hard again, jus' like dat."

She looked down at his monster-sized cock and felt her mouth water, fought the urge to get down there and suck him until his seed filled her mouth and flooded her throat.

"Keep lookin' at me like tha', lass, and we'll have ta forfeit th' game this round."

It would sooooo be worth it.

He gently slapped her knee. "Come, me wicked angel. Ye still have yer card ta do."

"Shit," she whispered. He was right. If she got his cock in her mouth now, it was over for them both,
and she still had things she wanted, needed to know about him before things went that far.

With an easy mental thought, she conjured a small, damp towel and wiped her hands and the front of her outfit clean and then passed the cloth off to her randy partner. That done, she hopped off the stool and sauntered over to the table of fun goodies that she’d earlier conjured, holding her soggy dress up and away from her legs as wet satin felt weird against her skin.

Behind her, Seamus wolf-whistled as he cleaned his lower abs off with the towel. "Such pretty legs, darling. I aim ta lick them later, ya know."

She glanced over her shoulder at him and tossed him a playful wink. "Lick between them, you mean."

His green eyes sparkled with anticipation. "Yeah, tha' too."

Reaching for the bison leather flogger, she picked it up, turned, and swung it into her palm, cracking it against the open flesh. "You talk too much, Sea. More action, fewer words." With a chin nudge, she indicated the archway. "Hold tight to the velvet loops for me, lover."

Finnigan dropped the towel without further ado, made his way over to where she'd indicated and looked up at the dangling velvet ropes with the hoop ends. Putting a hand through each side, he stood with his back to her, winding the sturdy velvet up around his wrists so that he was holding on to it, as well as captured by it.

Hot damn, but his backside was as delicious as the rest of him, she thought. And in a few minutes, it would be charmingly blushing for her, too.

As she made her way to the front of him, she looked him over from head to toe. Even exhausted and beginning to relax again, his manhood was exquisite. As was the rest of him.

*Gads, you're so fit and fly you make me feel fat and ugly.*

"You said you've never been flogged?"

He shook his head.

She considered that, along with the rest of her plan. "Alright, then this is what we're going to do," she said, gently pressing the hard knob at the top of the flogger against one of his nipples and gently rubbing it to stimulate it. "You gave me one question to ask you every round and promised me the truth, yes?"

He nodded. "That I did."

"So, I'm going to ask you my question now, before we get down to the fun." She ghosted into his personal space and rubbed her fingers over his flagging cock with a very light scrape of nails, hoping to incite it. It jerked in response and began rising again, much to her delight. "Then I'm going to give you immense pleasure for telling me the truth. It won't seem like it at first, it'll feel like a punishment, but if you let yourself go for me again, you'll find what I'm going to do to you will be a rapture as you've never experienced before."

Sea's cheeks were dusky-hued and his eyes told her he was looking forward to such delicious wickedness at her hand.

Suddenly, she was looking forward to showing him her world, too, to sharing it with him. "What's the one thing in the world you want more than anything else?" she asked. "A successful career, a
large family, a vault full of money—"

"Yer forgiveness."

Lavender's breath caught in her throat. She stared into Seamus' face and all the blood drained from hers as saw he was one-hundred percent sincere.

*He can't be serious?*

"Tha's what I want. Jus' yer forgiveness."

It took her two false starts to finally ask, "Why?"

His smile was wistful when he replied, "'Cause I hurt ya with me thoughtless and stupid ways. I drove ya away from me, and me heart...it just canna live wit' tha' fact. It haunts me how I hurt ya."

*Oh, Sea...*

Her chest ached from such a beautiful apology, and the sense of relief that came over her as she finally, *finally* forgave him for breaking her heart, once upon a time, had tears prickling her eyes. Leaning forward, she kissed him, letting him know with as much tender feeling as she could that his prayer had been heard and answered.

"I'm here now," she whispered as she pulled away.

He jangled his hands in their restraints. "As am I, and ready ta serve yer pleasure."

She looked down at the flogger in her hand, suddenly awkward at the thought of actually using it on him. The whole mood had changed and now it felt too fragile and sweet for something so...naughty. "You don't have to do this, Sea. You don't have to prove anything more to me. I believe you."

"It's not jus' about that, angel. I...I wanna learn how ta please ya, ta be th' man ya need now."

Her head came up at that. "Because you think you weren't back then?"

As if he couldn't meet her gaze, his eyes dropped to the floor. "I wasn't, I know tha'. I buggered it all up."

"So take me out for ice cream when all of this is over," she said, a little exasperated. "You don't have to do this to make it up to me."

*I don't want you to ever resent or hate me for this.*

He was quiet for a bit.

"Sea, look-"

"So ya don't wanna teach me, then?" he asked, interrupting her from calling the round over right then and there.

At that, her breath caught and her mouth went dry. "Teach you?"

He glanced up.

The look he threw her smouldered with sexual intent. "I wanna know what it feels like, ta submit," he admitted, his eyes dropping to the flogger in her hand. "I ne'er done it before, and I want it ta be
by yer hand."

Lavender bit her lip and clenched her thighs together. He'd never given himself over to a woman's charge before. He would be all hers...

*Mine!*

"Really?"

He seemed quite resolved. "Really."

"You sure you're not-"

"Lavender." He refused to back down in this, it seemed. "I want ta try it."

*So do I.*

With a deep breath, she agreed. "Okay, then we should-"

"First I want ya ta kiss me, though," he told her with a deceptively slumberous look and a dark, enticing whisper. His arms bunched as he tugged on the velvet straps round his wrist, and his upper body flexed, showing off all his incredible strength. "I'll need somethin' soft ta take th' sting from it."

This time he hadn't even touched her, but just like that, as he'd earlier commented, her body reacted to his. Lavender trembled from head to toe as golden electric sparkles of pleasure once again rode the sensitive nerves at her nape and down her spine, causing her nipples to harden. Between her thighs, she felt slick with heat once more.

Pressing close, she reached and took her lover's mouth in a deep, drugging kiss that left her reeling and him pressing his renewed erection against her hip. As she opened for him, he plunged his tongue deep into her mouth and the taste of warm honey and spice drew her in, made her reckless and hungry for more. Sliding her hand between their bodies, she raked her nails over his hard pectorals, teased a nipple, and sucked upon his bottom lip.

*Let's just skip ahead! We can always come back to the flogging later, right?*

God, the taste of him! He was wild, nature unleashed, an addicting nectar that had her mewling and feverish for more. Lost in a haze of lust, Lavender inched her dress up and slid his bare cock between the seam of her covered sex. The stroke of satin against her throbbing, tender clit had her gasping, grinding against him, burning up...

Seamus pulled his mouth from hers with reluctance. "Ah hell, yer card, me angel," he warned her, muscles straining against her palm. "We're running out o' time, and I really wanna know how it'll feel."

*But...*

*Okay, I do too.*

Shaking and panting, she hung on him, disappointed at the thought of letting go, even as the thought of flogging him excited her further. "Last out: you're sure you want to try it?"

He seemed equally as torn between desires. "Ya, it's a good idea...else I'll be shaggin' ya within a minute."

*And that would be bad again, why?*
No, she couldn't think like that. He'd specifically asked for her to introduce him to her world. So, it was time to stop before he changed his mind, and she changed hers, and... *oh god would that be so awful?*

Yes, it would, actually because she'd never be able to truly gauge their sexual compatibility until they did this together. If Sea found her topping of him to be something he simply couldn't handle, then that would put them in different lifestyle scenes, and that was a place in which she knew compromise was practically impossible. Sexual fetishes, she'd found, were a lot like musical preferences—most people dabbled across a variety of ballads and beats throughout their lives, but they tended to settle upon one or two favourite styles that they played over and over again, and never got tired of listening to on the wireless. And if you absolutely detested a certain type of music, you'd pop your own eardrums before listening to it, if given the choice.

With a sigh of regret and a full pout, she dropped away and straightened her dress again. "Bollocks, I almost want to say to hell with the game," she grumbled. "But you're right, and I...I really want to share this with you."

"Right then, me mistress. How may I serve?"

Cripes, she'd be nothing more than a pile of goo at his feet if he kept it up.

Moving behind him, she bade him lean forward until he was bent at the waist, that gorgeous arse of his just waiting for her to own.

"I'll go easy on you to get you used to it."

"Whatever ya desire, me love."

*That's twice now you've called me that...*

Carefully weighing the flogger in her hand, she gave her wrist a few twirls to warm it up and to get a good feel for the instrument she held. Finding the proper place on the handle to grip was important, as the force and accuracy of her hits would be determined by her ability to correctly balance the equipment under her control.

When she felt she was acquainted with the flogger well-enough to start, she said, "We'll begin now."

Her first strike was to his right buttock, very gently done, so he could reconcile the sensation. She was careful to make sure the strips of leather did not wrap around his flesh, and that she kept the strike on the fleshy area, and away from his lower back and the hip joint. She followed it up with another strike, a teensy bit harder.

"Okay?" she asked.

"Okay," he reassured her.

"I'm going to incrementally increase the pressure now. Don't give your wrists any slack. You're at the perfect angle. Maintain it."

He did as she bade and held on as she gently worked him up until the right bum cheek was a lovely pink. Then, she did the same to the left side. He was gasping in delight by then. His muscles were straining, and he was hanging his head, breathing a little hard.

"This... I think I like it, sweet angel."
"Good. I'm intentionally keeping it light, so it doesn't sting."

She gave another flick of the flogger, and he growled with pleasure as it snapped against his hot flesh.

Between her trembling thighs, she creamed. *Fuck,* but she'd never been this turned on, not even when she'd done this with Zabini!

"I'm so hard right now," he admitted, voice husky with need. "I ne'er thought..."

*Me, either.*

She caught her bottom lip between her teeth to keep from making indecent sounds and snapped her wrist and let the flogger ride. The hit was a little harder than the last time.

"Oh, fuck," Seamus moaned, tossing his head back on his shoulders. "Again!"

Shocked and incredibly aroused at his enthusiasm, she accommodated him, nearly coming herself from listening to his reactions and watching his blushing arse tense and relax. A thin sheen of sweat coated his body now, releasing into the air the sexy scent of his musk.

Lavender's breath was heavy from exertion and arousal. She'd been so anxious about doing this right that she'd taxed her muscles to maintain rigid control of them. Now, her arm deliciously ached and the weight of the flogger became nearly too much to hold. Perhaps it was time to pack it in for the round.

Glancing at Seamus' reddened backside, she decided it was definitely time to stop. There was an art to balancing pleasure with pain, and if the scales tipped too far in one direction, the fun ended and disappointment set in. She wanted this to be a good experience for them both, especially for her partner, and so she needed to change things up now. Helping him into an upright position required moving slowly, as Sea was stiff and nettled. "Okay?" she asked again, wanting to assure her Irish's comfort levels.

"Ya," he sighed with a silly grin. He'd entered the logy stage that novices to this game tended to favour, it seemed. "Angel, that was incredible. Ya can do that ta me anytime."

She kissed his lips quickly. "We're not quite done yet."

"No?"

*Not even close, lover boy.*

Her eyes were drawn to his red, swollen prick. He was lusciously wet from tip to base by a fount of weeping pre-cum. "You were a good boy, Mister Finnigan. You didn't complain or beg off, and so you deserve a reward now." She gripped that mouth-watering organ in her palm and began stroking it hard, with the goal to quickly give him relief. Her fingers glided over the slick length with just the right amount of friction to have him straining and gasping for release within moments.

"Can I...can I move, too, me lady?" he begged, gasping as she twisted her hand as it rhythmically moved up and down over his swollen, hot flesh.

His gaze was focused on her face, not her hand, as he waited for her permission.

*You really meant it when you said you would change for me, didn't you?*
The walls she'd put between her heart and this man finally crumbled away in totality, and the wound he'd left in her heart began to close at long last.

*I forgive you.*

On tiptoe, she stretched up and kissed him, maintaining a tight grip on him, halting all movement. His tongue thrust into her mouth on a whimper as she held them both on the precipice.

"Fuck my hand now," she commanded him when she pulled away.

With an indecent lick of his lips, he replied, "As you wish, me mistress."

Despite how sore his buttocks must have been, Sea leaned back, letting the weight of the wrist restraints hold him up, and began forcefully thrusting up into her closed fist, matching her strokes. With a purr of pleasure, Lavender watched his incredible body tighten and flex as he rolled his hips, simulating sex.

God, he was beautiful even in this!

She worked his shaft and his hips rocked into the movement, slicked by the free flow of pre-cum now. He put out so much! And the scent was heady, a combination of him and sweet honey, as if the constant devouring of his favourite candies had somehow seeped into his very pours and become a part of his natural biology. It enticed her to want to taste it...

"Do ya like me cock, Lavender?"

Like wasn't the word for it. "It's...perfect."

He hummed. "Finish me, love. Let me come fer ya again."

His heavy length pulsed against her fingers as she tightened her grip and sped up the rhythm. Seamus groaned in pleasure.

*You're mine, Sea. Aren't you? All mine right now.*

Slippery, wet flesh throbbed an instant before he was about to spill over. "*Ifreann na Fola, I'm gonna come,*" he warned with a sharp gasp. His hips jerked and his cock kicked in her hand. Spurts of hot, white come released everywhere, covering her fingers and his lower belly.

When his lower body finally stilled, Lavender stepped forward and laid her cheek against his heaving chest. She kept her hold on his exhausted cock, though, playing with it until he grunted, letting her know he was too sensitive for her to continue.

"Ah, tha' was..." He sighed with happiness into her hair, quite pleased with what they'd done together. "I only wish I was inside ya ta finish." He sounded giddy, definitely a bit sex-groggy, she noted. "The thought o' me seed, wet and deep within ya, angel... Mmm."

The idea made her tingle, as licks of electrical heat shimmered up her spine in response.

She let him rest a bit, and then conjured another towel to hand to clean them both up. "You can let go now," she told him, and with a tired sigh, Seamus let his arms drop back to his sides. "We should probably get you dressed. I think the chimes should be going off-

"-anytime now," she finished with a silly grin.
Sea chuckled, pressed a kiss to her forehead, then headed for his clothes and threw them back on, leaving his shirt tails out and his jumper on the chair.

With a thought, the arch, the flogger, and the towels were gone back to the magical ether from whence they'd come. Lavender sighed in disappointment. She'd truly enjoyed the brief tip-toe into dominating Seamus tonight. Perhaps, if she was lucky, she'd get the chance to do it again. He'd certainly seemed to like giving up a little control to her, and she'd loved taking it from him only to trade it in for his pleasure.

As they made to leave the room, Sea stopped her at the door. "I know I bargained away me questions, but will ya answer me one anyway, lass?"

"Sure, yes."

Her partner suddenly seemed troubled by some thought or another, and it took him two tries to get out his question.

"Where'd ya learn how ta use a flogger?"

_Oooh, boy. Here we go._

This was one of those no-win questions, like 'how does my bum look in this dress?' or 'who'd you lose your virginity to?' Maybe she could get away with a vague answer that would satisfy enough of his curiosity for him to let go of the details.

"From an ex-lover."

He was quiet for a bit, and she was starting to get the impression from the look on his face that it hadn't occurred to him that she'd been with anyone other than Ron and him, and he was definitely not going to let the matter lie.

"Who?"

There was a decidedly dark tone in his voice, and it made Lavender's earlier good mood dissolve into tiny, uneven fragments. "That's two questions," she pointed out. At his scowl, she reminded him, "Technically, I don't have to tell you. The cards don't require it and unless they do, I only share with you what I want to, Sea, and vice-versa. Its called respect."

He seemed to struggle with that answer, before finally swallowing his pride and realising that she was correct, that he didn't have rights to her and he couldn't force her. And that if he did, it would end things between them. "Will ya tell me anyway?" he asked.

"I will if you promise not to overreact and go all 'cave-man' on me."

He took a deep breath and let it out. "Okay."

She swallowed hard, her stomach tumbling end over end under her skin as she admitted, "Blaise Zabini."

The temperature in the room suddenly plummeted and Seamus started swearing under his breath.

Glancing up in shock at the pain she heard in his disappointed tone, Lavender took a step back. "Why should it matter? It was last November. Like you said, it was something fun to do, and it was nothing serious. You've certainly had your share of that kind of sex. Why shouldn't I?"
Seamus closed his eyes and leaned his head down. "You're right, I know. It's not me right ta..." He stopped, bit back what he was about to say. "It's just that the guy's good at beddin' either sex."

Lavender's jaw fell open. "You're jealous because of his status as a proficient *switch-hitter*? But you're not even into men!"

Her partner's rumbling growl of frustration stopped her from launching into laughter at the notion.

*You're serious about this, aren't you?*

With tightly pursed lips, he glanced up at her. "Listen, when it was just Ron, and I knew ya were toppin' him... He's me friend, so I knew ya were in good hands. I knew he wouldn't try ta hurt ya, and that he was basically harmless, especially since neither o' ya seemed serious. Don't like the thought o' ya together like that, but... Now, Zabini-" He swallowed, looking suddenly very vulnerable. "Dontcha see? He's a *master* at fucking. I've seen him at work, remember?" He looked away, blood flooding his cheeks.

Like a light switch turned on, Lavender suddenly understood. "You think he gave me what you couldn't."

Clenching his jaw, frowning, her wizard stared at the far wall. "I'm bettin' he made ya come hard enough ta float on air for days, yeah?" Now he looked at her, and he was clearly angry. "Pro'ly made ya scream with pleasure, I'm sure."

Lavender held her tongue. What could she say? It was true. Zabini had worked her over but good when they'd been together, and he'd been the one who'd taught her all about Doms and subs, and how to use various sex toys. He'd tied her up and blindfolded her, and did all sorts of naughty things to her that had been wonderful. But in the end, it had just been shagging for both of them. He hadn't wanted anything more serious with her, and she'd realized after a while that she hadn't cared for his leanings, which tended to put her more in the sub position in bed. They'd separated amicably.

"He knew how ta please ya right, and it just...it scunders me ta know ya had ta go ta someone else fer yer joy."

"Sea... Look, I can't change the past, and truthfully, I won't apologise for things that were done consensually and didn't hurt anyone else in the doing," she said as gently, but as firmly as she could. "All I can do is assure you this: I'm not with Zabini now and won't be again in the future. We experimented, we moved on, and I have no intention of going back there." She rubbed over her heart to soothe away the ache that had taken up residence there. "And I'm woman enough to admit I've been fiercely jealous of your conquests over the years, too. The thought of you touching another girl like how you've touched me, how you've let me touch you tonight... It riles me up and makes me feel ill at the same time. So, I guess what I'm saying is that I understand."

He tucked her hair behind her ear with a tender touch. "I'm sorry fer bein' a jealous fool. I...can't seem ta help meself where yer concerned, angel."

"Me, either," she admitted and reached up to kiss him again.

He moaned and pressed her against the doorjamb where he proceeded to ravish her mouth. "Lavender, me pretty," he whispered, pulling her in tight and holding her close while he took her lips and shared his need with her. "Ah, me love..."

Lavender clung to him and rode the wave of pleasurable electric sparks that shot through her as his tongue caressed hers again and again. Jesu and his followers, there would be no leaving Seamus this
time, would there? It would not be as easy as walking out the door where this wizard was concerned, for now, she knew that he would follow her. He'd meant what he'd said to her earlier: he wanted her back in his life, and he would do whatever it took to assure that happened. This was no casual fling for Seamus.

It wasn't for her either, she was coming to realise.

*I want you as I've always wanted you.*

*I don't think I can stop wanting you this time, my sexy, sweet Irish...*

As she tasted his kiss and relaxed in his arms she knew unequivocally that where Seamus Finnigan was concerned, her feelings could never be casual. He'd been her first love, and it was exactly as he'd said: they'd never forgotten each other, despite the time and various lovers between them. She'd never been able to let go of him either.

Which meant she was rightly screwed because now there was only one course for her to take.

She cupped his cheeks and met his eye as she pulled her swollen lips from his. This was one thing her Gryffindor heart would not cower from any longer and she wanted him to know she meant what she next said. "Sea, listen to me: neither of us can undo the past, but we can try for a future. I'm willing to do that if you still want."

"Yes."

He smoothed strands of wayward hair off her cheek. "Finally!"

He kissed her again to seal their deal.

It was harder this time to pull away.

Eventually, it was Seamus who took her hand and lead them out of their room and back into the common area to begin the next question round. There they met up with Ron and his partner, Parkinson, who were running about the place like loons in love. Settling back into the couch in their assigned spots, Seamus slung an arm around her shoulder and Lavender leaned against him, content to let him take the reins for now.

*Are we really going to try this again?*

Yes, yes they were.

Chapter End Notes

*Ifreann na Fola = Irish (Gaelic) for "bloody hell!"

Switch-hitter = slang for a bi-sexual.*
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