Unexpected Consequences
by lauren3210

Summary

Harry was going back to school. He was going to play Quidditch, sleep in lessons, hang out with his friends, and generally just enjoy being a kid for a change. And he was also going to do it while being bonded with Malfoy, because apparently life was just going to continue throwing curveballs at him. Harry didn't know why he expected anything different.

Notes

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Author's Notes: Dear Snowgall, you should prompt way more often, because this idea just snatched me up and ran away with me, and what I thought was going to be a quick and dirty fic to go with a quick and dirty flash fest, somehow turned into this 40k monster. I fell so hard in love that I kind of turned it into a story for me, and I included a little bit of all my own favourite tropes. And I kind of love this story a lot, so I'm really nervous now, and really hoping that you like it too! Huge thanks to my beta, J for helping me out last minute, and to the mods for thinking up such an awesome fest in such little time. And a massive thanks to all the H/D writers in the chatroom, for all their cheering while I was tearing my hair out and typing my fingers to the bone. And okay, I'll shut up now! *bites nails*
Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“No! No, there’s absolutely no way I’m doing that!”

Harry stared at Kingsley Shacklebolt, waiting for that usually solemn face to crack into an inane grin and declare that yes, he was of course joking and that he would never, ever, ask something like this from Harry. It didn’t happen; instead, Kingsley let out a sigh and leaned back in his chair, somehow managing to look even more serious.

“I expected that you wouldn’t take kindly to such a request, Harry,” he said in his slow, deep voice. “Please believe me when I say that I think this is the best option for all of us.”

“And by all of us, you mean everyone who isn’t me, right?” Harry paced up and down the length of the office. “Because it’s not going to be the best for me, Kingsley.”

“I’m sorry, Harry. I wish I didn’t have to ask this of you.”

“Well, why ask me then!” Harry exploded, and then let out a frustrated sigh and sank down into the chair on the opposite side of the desk. “I’m supposed to be done, Kingsley. I did what I had to do, and now I’m supposed to be done.” He shook his head. “I’m meant to go back to school in a month, and I’m supposed to spend my last year there having fun with my friends, going on dates, sneaking down to the kitchens at night, going to bloody classes, for Merlin’s sake.”

Kingsley inclined his head in acknowledgment. “I understand, Harry. But,” he looked at Harry pointedly, “Do you not think that others deserve that chance too?”

Harry scoffed. “Are you seriously talking to me about what Malfoy deserves?”

“Don’t forget, it was you who testified at his trial, asking for leniency in his sentence.”

“Because he was a kid!” Harry leaned forward and hid his face. “We were all just kids,” he mumbled into his hands. “And now you’re asking me to give up my last chance to actually live like one.”

“You’ll still be able to go to school, you’ll still be able to do the things you want to do, Harry,” Kingsley said, tapping his fingers idly against the desk. “There would only be a few restrictions, a few differences to how you thought it was going to be, that’s all.”

“Yeah well, being bonded to bloody Malfoy is pretty far from how I thought this next year was going to be, to be honest,” Harry grumbled, sinking down in his seat. “I’d have put money on Voldemort coming back to life while wearing a pink tutu and singing Somewhere over the Rainbow happening before me spending any quality time with that git.”

Kingsley’s mouth lost a bit of its seriousness at that, and Harry wondered if he was suddenly imagining what that would look like. Then he sighed. “It’s only for a year, Harry. And then you can go back to your normal life.”

Harry muttered normal life on a breathy laugh, and rolled his eyes. “Why me, Kingsley? I’m sure there are lots of witches and wizards who would jump at the chance to have a Malfoy under their thumb for an entire year.”
Kingsley raised an eyebrow. “I think you’ve just answered your own question; there aren’t many I would entrust not to take advantage of such a situation.”

Harry thumped back into his chair, suddenly feeling winded. He hadn’t thought of that. And now that he had, he knew he wouldn’t be able to say no. Malfoy might be an arsehole, but even he didn’t deserve that.

“Besides, Draco asked for it to be you.”

Draco sat in the uncomfortable chairs outside the Minister’s office and listened to the heated conversation going on behind the closed doors. His guards had taken their sweet time bringing him here from Azkaban, seeming to want to stop and speak at length with everyone they passed on their way, so Draco hadn’t been able to see Potter before he arrived, and he had missed the very beginning of the conversation.

Draco had had to grit his teeth and concentrate on staring at nothing as he was effectively paraded around for everyone to gawk at, his hair greasy and far too long, dark circles under his eyes, the ill-fitting prison robes he’d been forced to wear for the past month hanging off his shoulders. The people in the Atrium and the corridors of the Ministry had made no effort to hide their staring, or to keep their comments to whispers behind hands. His guards had laughed and joked with the people they met along the way, loudly pointing out how far the Malfoy family had fallen, jokingly wondering what Draco’s fate was going to be, making bets on who would get the honour of delivering his punishment. But now that there was nobody around to show off to, the two guards were perfectly happy to dump Draco outside Shacklebolt’s office and leave him there, while they went back out to the reception and tried and failed to hit on the Minister’s assistant.

Their behaviour had been the exact reason why Draco had requested that Potter be his bonded guard for the duration of the year; he was the only one Draco could trust. He’d been told the specifics of the spell when his choice had been laid out before him: either join his parents in Azkaban, or submit to being bound to someone who would have almost complete control over him for a year. He’d balked at first, because he couldn’t imagine anything more horrifying. Having someone else control his every move was too reminiscent of his time spent with the Dark Lord in his home, watching everything he and his parents did, forcing them all to do things through fear of being hurt, of being made to watch each other hurt. But then he’d spent a week in his cell in Azkaban, listening to the cries of the prisoners around him, and he knew he wouldn’t be able to last out his sentence, not chained up in the cold and the dark, with nothing but the moans of others in despair for company. With both his parents locked up as well, he wouldn’t even have the luxury of the occasional visit to break up the monotony. No, at least if he was outside, he would be able to have access to some creature comforts: a warm bed, good clothes and hot food, the sun on his face and the wind in his hair. There wasn’t really a choice to make, once Draco realised that.

It wasn’t until after he had agreed to the bonding spell and he’d heard the guards talking about volunteering for the position of being his bonded guard that Draco had started to worry. The tone of their conversation, held loudly in the corridor outside his cell, had held suggestions of just what they’d like to be able to force him to do, should they get the chance. It made Draco think: who out there could he trust not to take advantage of him while he was bound to them? The answer was, very few, and out of all of them, only one was in a position to be able to take the responsibility on.

Potter might hate him, might want to break his nose or call him names or laugh as he watched Draco
get what was coming to him, but he wouldn’t want to take advantage of Draco in any way. He was a Gryffindor, he was too noble, too good.

Draco wanted to believe that this was the sole reason for him requesting Potter to be his bonded guard, but he’d had plenty of time for soul searching while being detained ever since his trial. The truth was that Draco had longed for some of Potter’s attention since the moment he’d heard that the other boy was on the Hogwart’s train, their very first year of school. It hadn’t seemed to matter if it was good or bad, he'd just wanted Potter to see him, to acknowledge him in some small way. And now, if Potter agreed to this, Draco would have a whole year of that attention, and maybe once it was done and he was finally a free man, that craving to be noticed by Potter will have finally been sated.

He could hear Potter yelling on the other side of the door, the words indistinct but the unimpressed tone more than evident. Draco scowled in the direction of his guards; this was why he’d wanted to get here in time for Potter to see him before he went in to talk with Shacklebolt. Draco wasn’t above playing the pity card, and he’d known that if Potter had been able to see how pathetic he looked, and more importantly, how predatorily his guards looked at him, that what Potter was being asked to do would be an easier sell. But now all Draco could do was hope that Shacklebolt would be able to convince the Hero of the Wizarding World that he was in need once more.

The room on the other side of the door went quiet suddenly, and Draco strained to lean forward, to try and glean the answer to his fate. The chains holding his wrists together clinked loudly with his movements, and the guard with the wart on his nose popped his head around the corner at the noise.

“Oi! You were told to sit there and not move!”

“Won’t be long now till you’ll have to do as you’re told,” the guard with the comb-over added slimly, sidling up next to his partner. “Things that might not be as pleasant as sitting still.”

Wart-nose laughed nastily. “Oh I don’t know, Marv, I think pretty boy over there might like some of the things he’ll be asked to do.” He leered at Draco. “Like getting on your knees, don’t you, pretty boy? I bet old You-Know-Who had you bending over for him a time or two while your family was busy kowtowing to him, eh? I bet your pretty lips was half the reason why he chose to hole up on your family’s estate.”

“Can’t say as I blame him, really,” Marv chimed in, the both of them stepping a little closer. “I’d like to have a bit of fun with him myself, to be honest. After he’s done scrubbing my kitchen floor, that is.”

Wart-nose had come close enough to lean down and whisper in Draco’s ear, and it took all Draco had to sit there stiffly and not recoil away in disgust.

“That’s what your next year is going to be like, pretty boy,” he said softly, but the hallway was quiet and his words sounded out loud enough for his partner to hear and laugh to himself. “On your knees for most of it, either cleaning up after people or sucking cock, and the spell’ll make you want to do it, too, make you beg on your hands and knees, gagging for it like the piece of filth you are.”

“What the fuck do you think you’re doing?”

The angry voice echoed loudly down the hallway, and both Draco and his guards jerked back, looking up to see Potter standing there in the now open doorway, glaring at the guards and looking absolutely furious. Draco didn’t blame the two men for cowering where they stood.

“We won’t be needing your services any longer,” Shacklebolt intervened, looking sternly at the two
guards. “You may return to your posts at Azkaban.”

Wart-nose took a step towards Draco, reaching to undo the shackles around his wrists, but Potter jumped between them. “I’ll do that,” he said firmly, still sounding angry, although Draco could no longer see his face. Which was a pity, because an angry Potter was definitely a sight to behold. When it wasn’t directed towards Draco, that is.

The two guards nodded and backed away, waiting until they were at the end of the corridor to begin mumbling to each other.

“Blimey, they got the bleeding Saviour to do it?”

“Heroes get all the perks, Marv. It’s probably why they become heroes in the first place.”

Draco wondered if it was just the adrenaline talking that made him suddenly want Potter to view him as a perk. Being taken advantage of didn’t seem too bad really, not when Potter stood over him protectively like that.

Harry glared at the retreating backs of the two guards. He couldn’t believe what he had just heard, and he had to fight the urge to run after them and hex them both into slugs. The things they had been saying... Harry felt sick.

“Are you going to take these things off me now?” Malfoy said, and Harry turned to find him holding up his chained wrists. “Now that you’ve run off the man with the key.”

Harry rolled his eyes and pulled out his wand; he supposed it was too much to ask that Malfoy actually be grateful for Harry stepping in. He waved his wand and the chains undid themselves, collapsing down into smaller and smaller links before disappearing entirely. Malfoy looked up at him as he rubbed his reddened skin, a smirk pulling at his lips. “Thank you, Potter,” he murmured, tone dry and amused, but when Harry looked up to glare at him, he saw something open in Malfoy’s eyes, that said the words were genuine. Harry didn’t know if it was for chasing off the guards, removing his shackles, or for obviously agreeing to do the spell, or maybe a combination of all three. Whatever it was, if hearing what the guards had to say hadn’t told Harry that he was doing the right thing in agreeing to this, then that look might just have done it instead.

“Perhaps we should all step into my office?” Kingsley said quietly, interrupting the moment. “It might be a little more private for what we’re about to do.”

They had indeed drawn a bit of a crowd; Kingsley’s assistant, Alice, and what looked like half the secretarial pool had gathered at the end of the hall, unabashedly staring down at their little group. Harry cleared his throat and stepped away from Malfoy. He couldn’t get the words of the guards out of his head, and he wondered if everyone else was thinking them too, if that was what people were going to think Harry would be subjecting Malfoy to. It made Harry want to yell that he had a girlfriend, thank you! and that he wasn’t interested in seeing Malfoy on his knees in any capacity. He waited for Malfoy to stand up and follow Kingsley into the room, suddenly nervous that it would seem to all the onlookers that he was expecting Malfoy to follow him even before they’d completed the bonding spell. And then he realised that this put him in a prime position to notice Malfoy’s arse. Harry briefly closed his eyes and contemplated going after the two guards once more, before taking a deep breath and closing the door behind them.
Kingsley conjured another chair, and Harry watched as Malfoy sank into the soft looking cushions, a look of relief on his face. It was only then that Harry took in what Malfoy was wearing: tattered and badly fitting prisoner’s robes, the plain grey colour washing out Malfoy’s usual pale skin tone even more, giving it the look of watered down milk, rather than the creamy perfection he usually sported. Harry realised that until this point he hadn’t even thought about where Malfoy had come from, had just assumed that he would have been kept on house arrest, or maybe in the holding cells beneath the Ministry. The fact that he’d actually been in Azkaban until this point, renewed Harry’s decision that he needed to do this, despite what others might think as to the nature of their... arrangement. Malfoy might be a grade A git, but he didn’t deserve Azkaban. It was why Harry had decided to testify in defence of both Malfoy and his mother; they may have made a lot of bad choices between them, but Narcissa had done something to redeem herself towards the end, and Harry didn’t think that Malfoy should be punished for being forced into that life by his parents. Who knew what kind of person he would have turned out to be had he not been raised by a pair of pureblood supremacists. Maybe Malfoy deserved a chance to find that out for himself.

Harry felt a bit guilty now that he thought about it, because the fact was that he hadn’t thought much about either Narcissa or her son since giving his testimony at their trials. He’d heard that they’d been given reduced sentences, Mrs Malfoy receiving five years to her husband’s twenty, and Malfoy two years. Harry had thought that fairly just, but he hadn’t thought about exactly where they’d be carrying out their years of imprisonment. The dementors may have been removed from their position as prison guards, but still, it wasn’t a very nice place. Harry didn’t think it was the kind of place to put someone from whom they were hoping for a change of attitude; he thought it should be kept for those criminals who refused to change their ways.

“I’m going to read out the particulars of the spell,” Kingsley said, breaking the silence between them all. “So that we all know and understand what is being entered into here. You’ve both been told before, but this will be the last chance either of you have to back out of the agreement.” He looked at Malfoy. “There will be no penalty if you wish to change your mind, Mr Malfoy.”

“I won’t,” Malfoy replied, managing not to look at either Kingsley or Harry.

“Be that as it may, I’m still going to go over it with you both once more, just to be on the safe side.” Kingsley picked up the file he’d given Harry to read earlier. “Then, if you are both still agreeable, I’ll ask Harry to perform the spell.

“The bond will last for one year, precisely from the date and time that it is set. During that time, Mr Malfoy will be subject to certain restrictions that he must adhere to, or suffer very painful consequences. However, such is the nature of the spell that he should not want to stray from those restrictions, in order to make it easier for both parties involved. There will be a physical proximity restriction, in that Mr Malfoy must not stray further than fifty feet from Mr Potter at any time, unless Mr Potter has ordered him to do so, and has voiced said order explicitly. Mr Malfoy must also adhere to any order given by Mr Potter, as long as said orders do not endanger the life of either himself, or of any sentient creature. Mr Malfoy must not, in any fashion, attempt to harm Mr Potter, others, or himself, for the duration of the spell.”

Kingsley looked up from the file and turned serious eyes first on Malfoy, then on Harry. “It must be noted that this bond only goes one way, from Mr Malfoy to Mr Potter, and that a great deal of trust is being placed on Mr Potter, by both the Ministry and Mr Malfoy himself. Mr Potter will have no such restrictions placed upon him, save that he must not cause any serious harm to Mr Malfoy for the duration of the spell, and that it will be up to him to judge his actions with regards to Mr Malfoy’s welfare. Apart from occasional visitations to the Ministry, we shall have to rely on Mr Potter’s just nature and sound judgment.”
Kingsley lifted out another piece of parchment and placed it on the desk in front of them both.

“Are you both still willing to consent to the spell?”

Harry watched Malfoy out of the corner of his eye, waiting for him to make the first move. He didn’t want to consent first and look too eager; he didn’t want it to seem to either Kingsley or Malfoy that he actually wanted to do this. Because he didn’t, he just couldn’t see any better option. Kingsley had been right; now that Harry knew about this, there was no way he would have been able to sit by and watch Malfoy being handed off to anyone other than himself, with intentions less than honourable. Intentions like the ones those guards had been muttering nastily about. It had to be Harry if it was going to be anyone at all, but it would only be Harry if Malfoy really wanted to do this.

Malfoy hesitated only for a moment, and Harry glimpsed that same something in his eyes that he had seen out in the corridor. It made Malfoy look open, almost vulnerable for a moment, until a wall seemed to come down and Malfoy steeled himself. He nonchalantly reached out for the quill resting on the desk and signed the parchment with an easy flourish, and then sat back in his seat, crossing his arms and looking at Harry with his eyebrows raised. It came across as a challenge, and Harry knew that was exactly what it was, and yet he couldn’t help but respond to it. He grabbed the quill and scratched his own signature right next to Malfoy’s.

“Okay,” Kingsley said, once he had added his own signature as witness. “Now that we are all agreed, it’s time to perform the spell.” He indicated the space behind the chairs, and both Harry and Malfoy stood up. “Harry, you know what you have to do?”

Harry swallowed, suddenly very nervous. He knew what he had to do, he just wasn’t sure how to do it. “Yeah, I think so,” he said, voice scratchy. He swallowed again.

Malfoy also knew what had to be done; he lifted his left arm and began rolling the sleeve of his robe back methodically, slowly revealing inch after inch of his pale skin. He held it with the inside of his forearm facing down, his eyes never lifting from where his fingers pulled at the grey fabric. Harry felt kind of sick, because he knew for certain now what Malfoy was trying to hide, and in a moment, Harry was going to have to get up close and personal with it.

“Go ahead, in your own time,” Kingsley murmured behind them.

Harry licked his lips and swallowed hard, twice, then gathered his courage and stepped up close to Malfoy. He reached out with his right hand, then remembered and changed his mind, slipping his wand out at the same time as he lifted his left hand and wrapped his fingers lightly around Malfoy’s arm, just below the elbow. He slowly turned the arm over, until he was looking at the tattoo.

He managed to hold in his gasp, but only just. The Mark was even uglier up close, the skin surrounding it still pink and slightly inflamed looking, as though it had never fully healed. Harry could almost feel the dark magic emanating from it, imagined he could feel its insidiousness sliding through the veins he could feel beneath his fingers. Even now, in its dormant state, the skull looked as though its maw could open wider at any moment, could force the snake inside of it to start writhing, intent on its wearer doing its Master’s bidding, despite the fact that it no longer had a master. At least, not for a few more minutes.

The spell itself had been developed by the Unspeakable department, Kingsley had told Harry. They had been investigating the purpose and effects of the Dark Mark in the later stages of the War, wondering if they could devise a way to make the Mark follow a different master. It had been too late to try it by the time they had it perfected, with most of the Ministry under Voldemort’s thumb, so instead they had offered it as an alternative to either Azkaban or house arrest for Voldemort’s followers. Malfoy was the only one to have been offered the option, the rest either too dangerous to be let loose or too likely to try and use it to make a run for it.
“Come on, Potter, we don’t have all day,” Malfoy suddenly spat, surprising Harry enough that he dropped his hold on Malfoy’s arm.

Harry was about to snap back that Malfoy could always go back to Azkaban if he’d prefer, but Kingsley beat him to it.

“I realise this is uncomfortable for the both of you, Mr Malfoy, but this spell shouldn’t be rushed. Tests will be done afterwards, and should the bond not take, we may have no other option but to have you finish your sentence in Azkaban.”

Harry looked up, and noticed that Malfoy had gone even paler. “It’s fine, Kingsley, it’ll work. I was just memorising the words.”

He reached for Malfoy’s arm once more, determinedly not looking anywhere but at the tattoo. The quicker he got on with this, the quicker he could get back to some semblance of a life. A life that somehow now involved Malfoy. He rolled the words around in his mouth a few times, before gripping his wand tighter and pressing it to the middle of the Dark Mark. Malfoy sucked in a quiet breath, and Harry almost faltered again. He couldn’t remember a time when he had ever been standing this close to Malfoy. They were close enough that if he raised his head, Harry was sure their noses would brush. He cleared his throat and clasped his fingers tight on Malfoy’s arm, wanting to tell Malfoy without words not to move, but in reality using it to stop himself from turning and running out of the door. He gritted his teeth, and cast.

“*His verbis, tollendum omnem veterem dominus vestigium. Adiuro vos nunc est, et solum.*”

Blue-green light spilled out into the room from the point where Harry’s wand pressed against Malfoy. Tendrils of something dark and ugly began to coalesce, seeming to slide out of the snake’s mouth and scales, only to be swallowed up by the bright light surrounding it. Harry concentrated hard on the tattoo before him, but he heard Malfoy’s small sigh of relief, as though pain he hadn’t even known he was carrying was suddenly leaching out of him. The dark ooze dripped away into nothing and was then replaced with a golden hue, only this time the tendrils were coming out of Harry’s wand and sinking slowly into Malfoy’s skin. The tattoo flashed a bright gold for a moment, before going dark once more, and the blue-green light slowly faded away.

Harry blinked hard against the spots forming in front of his eyes, and turned, almost instinctively, to see how Malfoy was faring. He was looking away, his head bowed and his eyes closed, breathing hard. His hand clenched into a fist, fingers brushing Harry’s wand hand, and Harry jumped, letting his grip on Malfoy slide away. There was silence for a moment, only broken by Malfoy’s heavy breathing, as well as Harry’s own, he only just realised, before Kingsley spoke.

“The Wizengamot will require that an Unspeakable attests to the bond forming, but I think we can safely say that we were successful.”

Malfoy gave himself a little shake, and then looked at Harry. “Well go on, Potter,” he drawled, smirk firmly back in place, although his grey eyes glittered with something Harry couldn’t place. “Give me an order. Shall I shine your shoes? Perhaps direct you to a clothing store that could teach you how to dress yourself properly? Or maybe-”

“Shut up, Malfoy,” Harry snapped, unthinkingly.

Malfoy immediately closed his mouth, and something like surprise came across his features, as though he wanted to be furious and couldn’t work out why he wasn’t.

“Yes, I think it worked. Well done, Harry.”

Harry closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose. It was possible that this was going to be even harder than he thought.

Chapter End Notes

This novella-length story will be posted over the course of the next seven days.

Comments are ♥. Leave one here (if so inclined) or at the post at LiveJournal.
As soon as Kingsley had declared the bonding spell a success, Harry decided that he really needed to talk to Hermione. He told Malfoy to wait in Kingsley’s office for him, only realising once he’d fled from the office that Malfoy would have to wait for him now. Harry would have to be careful how he phrased things from now on. He left Kingsley to write memos to the Unspeakable department and the Wizengamot, and walked as fast as he could to the bank of fireplaces in the Atrium, gasping out the Burrow! before flinging himself into the flames.

Ron and Hermione were still sitting at the kitchen table where he had left them earlier that morning, when he’d got the summons to come and meet with Kingsley. They both turned at the sound of his clumsy arrival, their eyes widening as they took in his crumpled appearance and harried expression.

“Hermione,” Harry nearly moaned, slumping into the chair opposite them both. “Tell me I did the right thing.”

Hermione raised an eyebrow. “Tell me what you did this time and I might be able to.”

“You alright, mate?” Ron asked. “You look a bit sick.”

“I feel it,” Harry mumbled, grabbing gratefully for the mug of tea Hermione had poured for him. He took a fortifying sip, the burn in his throat helping him focus. “Okay, so, you remember during the trials, that bonding spell the Unspeakable department brought in as an option for sentencing?”

“No,” Ron said.

“Of course,” Hermione said. “Although nobody was given the option; they were all deemed too dangerous.”

“Not- not all of them,” Harry said, unable to look her in the eye.

Hermione frowned. “Who? And why would they...” She trailed off, and she stared at Harry accusingly. “Oh, Harry, tell me you didn’t agree!”

Harry bit his lip.

“Agree to what? What are we talking about?” Ron asked, looking confused.

“A spell that binds a prisoner to the will of another witch or wizard for the length of their sentence, instead of putting them in Azkaban,” Hermione explained. “And of course, Harry had to go and agree to it without thinking it through first!”

“Hey! I thought about it,” Harry said, stung.

“So, who are you bonding with?”

“He’s already done it,” Hermione replied shrewdly, and Harry flushed guiltily. “And who do you think?”

“I don’t...” Ron said, before a look of revolted comprehension slowly crept up on his face. “Fucking hell, Harry, tell me it wasn’t Malfoy.” Harry shrugged helplessly, and Ron swore loudly again.

“Hang on though,” Ron mused, suddenly looking thoughtful. “It might not be all bad. There’s a few things I wouldn’t mind forcing that twat to do myself, now that I think about it.”


Hermione’s lips turned up in a moue of unhappy understanding.

“Wait, doesn’t that spell mean you’ll have to spend all your time with the git?” Ron asked. Harry nodded. “But what are you going to do about Hogwarts?”

Harry shrugged. “He’ll be coming with me, I guess. Kingsley basically said as much.”

“That sucks.”

“Yeah, but it’s not like I was going to be able to share a dorm with you, anyhow.”

Ron grinned. “True enough.”

Hermione asked about the particulars of the spell, and Harry explained them as best as he could. He was grateful when Hermione began listing ways he should phrase certain things in front of Malfoy so as not to take advantage. An hour had gone past before Harry remembered that he’d left Malfoy in Kingsley’s office without the ability to leave until Harry came back, so he drained his mug of tea and stood up from the table.

“I’ve got to get back, we need to see the Wizengamot before Malfoy can leave the Ministry.”

“And I’ve got to get going to the shop,” Ron said, patting Harry on the back. He kissed Hermione on the cheek and stepped into the Floo with a wave.

“Harry, I really wish I could cure you of this obsession with Malfoy.”

“I’m not obsessed with Malfoy!”

Hermione just raised her eyebrows at him. “But for what it’s worth, I think you did the right thing.”

“Thanks, Hermione.”

It seemed to take forever for the Ministry to first find an Unspeakable to test the bonding spell, and then to convene the Wizengamot and get them to sign off on Draco’s release. Draco had been bored stiff, stuck in Shacklebolt’s office until Potter’s return. It hadn’t been the greatest start to their time bonded together. Potter had arrived back just in time to be poked by the Unspeakable’s wand as he stood next to Draco, and had then escorted him down to the courtroom to once more sign his agreement to the bonding. By the time they were ready to leave the Ministry, it was nighttime, and the Atrium was thankfully devoid of onlookers as they made their way to the Floos.

Potter handed Malfoy a slip of parchment as he grabbed the Floo powder. “Read it and memorise it,” he muttered, then winced. He seemed to do that a lot whenever he was forced to speak directly to Draco. “Otherwise the Floo will just eject you somewhere else, my house is under a Fidelius.”

Draco looked down and squinted at the chicken scratch masquerading as Potter’s handwriting. Harry Potter’s address is no.12, Grimmauld Place, London. The name seemed familiar, but before Draco
could remember why, Potter had snatched the piece of parchment back and Vanished it with a flick of his wand.

“Let’s go, then,” Potter said, and threw a handful of the glittering powder into the flames. He stepped through and the flames turned green for a moment, and then he was gone. Almost immediately Draco began to feel an intense twisting sensation in his stomach, and he was reaching for the powder and stepping into the fireplace before he could even think to make himself do it.

Potter was waiting for him on the other side, dusting off his tatty jeans and distractedly accepting a cup of tea from an incredibly old house elf, who also looked somehow familiar to Draco. Potter grimaced at him, hand fluttering in the air before diving into his messy hair.

“We should probably try to travel by Floo as little as possible,” he said haltingly, as though he was choosing his words carefully before speaking them. Draco imagined that must be quite a feat for Potter to attempt. “I’m sorry, I didn’t think about what that might do to you. We’ll apparate from now on, whenever we can.”

Draco just nodded, the pressure in his stomach having begun to ease the moment he stepped out behind Potter. He looked around the room instead of replying, taking in the large stone kitchen with its scrubbed wooden table and mismatched chairs. Gleaming copper pots hung from the high ceiling next to bunches of drying herbs, plates and cups dancing in the air by the sink, dunking in and being scrubbed clean before laying down to rest in the drying rack. Over in the corner, clothes were merrily squeezing themselves out over a large barrel of soapy water, before hanging themselves out to dry on a rack beside the fire. Draco took it all in with wide eyes. He had never set foot in a working kitchen before; his mother had believed that good house elves should never let their work be seen, and his family had always used the fireplace in the parlour for travelling.

“You must be tired, and hungry,” Potter said suddenly, then winced again. “Why don’t I show you where you’ll be sleeping, and you can get yourself settled in while Kreacher makes us some supper?”

He walked away without waiting for an answer, and Draco felt the compulsion to follow him. It was a strange feeling; half of him wanted to do the opposite of what he was asked, simply because it was Potter who was doing the asking, but the other half wanted to do whatever Potter told him to do, and his body began complying to the requests even as the two halves of his mind were arguing about who to listen to. Draco didn’t mind it, actually. If he could still argue, even if only in his own head, then he knew that he was still himself, that the spell hadn’t removed his free will, just his ability to follow it. It wasn’t much of a distinction, but it was an important one for Draco none the less. He needed to know that he was still in control of his own thoughts, even if his actions were under someone else’s command.

He followed Potter out of the kitchen without complaint, looking around in surprise at the old and peeling decor. “Good God, Potter,” he drawled as they entered the hallway. “Why the hell are you living in such a dump?”

“No, don’t-!” Potter began, but was cut off by a loud bang and an unearthly screeching noise.

“Filthy half breeds! Blood traitors! Despoiling my family’s name and honour!”

Draco jumped in surprise and turned around, coming face to face with a portrait of a very familiar old woman, her hands pulled into claws and her mouth open around an elongated moan of despair and outrage. Potter ran forward and began pulling frantically at the curtains that had been ripped open with a bang. The woman’s eyes rolled in her head, glaring at Draco and then at Potter, before her entire body stopped almost comically mid-screech, eyes wide as they fell back on Draco.
“You! You’re a Malfoy,” she said, almost accusingly, pointing at Draco.

“I am,” Draco replied.

The woman began wailing again. “Filthy half breeds, tainting the blood of my descendents, despoiling the most noble and ancient House of Bla-!”

“For fuck’s sake, Walburga, shut up,” Potter huffed out, giving a final yank on the curtains and managing to shut them. The screeches fell abruptly silent, and Draco stared at where the portrait of his great aunt was now covered.

“This is my mother’s ancestral home,” Draco said quietly, as all the familiar pieces fell into place. He vaguely remembered visiting here once, when he was very young. He remembered now the old house elf, and the grumbling that had ensued from him as Draco had imperiously ordered him about. He’d been old and wrinkly even back then. There was a portrait of Great Aunt Walburga hanging in the foyer of Malfoy Manor.

“Yep,” Potter replied, also quietly. “Sirius left it to me in his will, so it’s mine now.” He turned and started up the stairs, and Draco followed him instinctively. “You have to be quiet in the hallway, otherwise she wakes up and starts screaming. I still haven’t worked out how to get her off the wall, so until I do we just have to keep her behind the curtains.”

They reached the landing and kept going up, until they came to the top floor. There were three doors leading off the hallway, and Potter indicated the first with a wave of his hand. “This is my room, that’s the bathroom,” he pointed at the door next to it, and then moved over to the one opposite. “And this is your room. At least until we go back to school.”

He turned the handle and pushed open the door, and Draco walked closer to have a look inside. He didn’t know what he expected to see, but he was incredibly surprised to see most of his own things, somehow transferred from his rooms at the Manor.

“I asked Kreacher to get some of your things while we were held up at the Ministry,” Potter explained. “I figured you might like to have them, I hope that’s okay.”

Draco did like having them, and more than that, he needed them, having arrived at the Ministry straight from Azkaban with nothing but the horrible robes on his back. But he hadn’t expected Potter to have as much forethought, and he was strangely touched by the gesture. He reached out and ran his fingers over the walnut armoire that had sat in his dressing room, pulling open the top drawer to find all of his clothes packed neatly away, smelling fresh and clean and like a little slice of heaven.

“This was one of the first rooms we redecorated,” Potter rambled on behind him, as Draco moved further into the room. “So you’re lucky, otherwise you’d have found yourself kipping on one of the mouldy sofas in the parlour.”

“It’s nice,” Draco muttered distractedly, because it was. The wallpaper was striped a pale mint green and grey, the colour bright enough that it was almost silver. Draco felt at home almost instantly, among the muted colours of the school house he had spent seven years with. “It looks like a Slytherin’s room,” he murmured, almost to himself, reaching out to trace a carving of a snake on the bedstead.

“That’s because it was,” Potter replied, still standing in the doorway. “This was Sirius’s brother’s room, Regulus. He was a Slytherin, in his time. I didn’t want to change it too much.”

“What happened to him?” Draco asked.
“He followed Voldemort, and then he died,” Potter said shortly. Draco nodded, not even remotely surprised. “And I wouldn’t bring Regulus up where Kreacher can hear, if I were you,” Potter continued. “Not unless you want to get smacked with a frying pan.”

“Duly noted.”

“Right, well.” Potter suddenly began fidgeting in his place by the doorway. “I guess I’ll leave you to get cleaned up then. I’ll call you when supper’s ready.”

He turned away and almost ran down the stairs, and within moments Draco felt a twinge in his gut and his feet began moving of their own volition. He sighed and called down the stairs. “Potter!”

“Yes?” The pulling feeling in Draco’s stomach eased as soon as Potter’s head popped around the banister, and Draco breathed out in relief.

“This house is larger than fifty square feet,” Draco said pointedly.

“Oh! Fuck. Right,” Potter seemed to cast around for the right words for a moment, before saying, “Please feel free to go anywhere you like within the boundaries of this house.” he stopped, then looked up at Draco. “Did that work?”

Draco cocked his head consideringly, then took an experimental step backwards. There was no pull in his stomach, so he backed up more, step by step until he was back in his room. Then he smiled. “It worked!” He called down to Potter.

“Good,” came Potter’s voice. “See you in a bit for supper then.”

Draco listened to the sound of footsteps fading away, the mention of food making his stomach growl in anticipation. Then he stood up and began rifling through his drawers, looking for supplies. He was hungry, but even more desperately he needed a hot bath, hopefully with some soap that didn’t feel like sandpaper against his skin.

The following few weeks passed with surprising ease for Draco. He had been provided with a Ministry issue wand. It was too short and too inflexible, but Draco used it to the best of his ability. A wizard’s magic wasn’t in his wand after all, and Draco had felt his magic flooding through him the instant Potter had removed the magic-dampening chains surrounding his wrists at the Ministry. Now that Draco was of age, he could do rudimentary spells wandlessly, and as there wasn’t much else for him to do, locked up as he was inside Grimmauld Place, he didn’t miss the rest too much. He did worry slightly about how he would be able to practise for and pass his NEWTs without a proper working wand, though.

After bathing himself that first night, in all the oils and potions he could find in his armoire, washing and carefully cutting his hair with the dodgy Ministry wand, Draco had joined Potter down in the kitchen for a supper of Shepherd’s Pie and treacle tart. Draco had watched Potter often enough during their time at school to know that these were some of his favourite foods, and he’d wondered how Potter had managed to get a House of Black house elf to become so devoted to him. Around mouthfuls of mashed potato and minced lamb, Potter had told him about his plans to redecorate more rooms in the house. He’d explained to Draco, very explicitly, that he was in no way going to order Draco to help him, although the help would be appreciated should he feel so inclined. Draco had a feeling Potter had sent an emergency owl to Granger while he had been in the bath, to ask for some
tips on how to phrase things.

Draco had spent the first week holed up in his room, part of him testing to see if Potter truly meant his declaration against ordering Draco to help, but mostly just to savour the peace and quiet that he’d not been able to find while locked up in Azkaban. There had always been noises there, moans of distress, or the occasional banging of the guards on the cell doors, just for their own amusement. Draco hadn’t had a proper night’s sleep in what felt like years, going from sharing his home with a madman straight to a cell in Azkaban, where the guards seemed to take great delight in banging the bars just as he was about to drop off. He’d been so exhausted that he hadn’t even dreamt as he slept, although nightmares began to plague him after the first week of deep and uninterrupted sleep.

It was the nightmares that had eventually forced him out of his room and into the rest of the house, hoping that a day of working with Potter would make him tired enough to sleep deeply enough again. Then, once he’d started, he found he didn’t mind the work so much, despite having never even attempted any kind of manual labour before. It also helped to make him feel more comfortable in the rest of the house, rather than just the bedroom that had been given to him.

He supposed he should feel at home here, welcome even, what with the way Great Aunt Walburga cooed at him whenever she was accidentally awoken, but he couldn’t. It wasn’t only that this had been the headquarters for the Order of the Phoenix, although he could feel their presence in almost every room of the house. It was just that it was so obviously Potter’s house. He was everywhere: stray jumpers left on chairs, spare pairs of glasses in the bathrooms, school books littered across surfaces. There was even a folded up tent on the sitting room floor, smelling strangely of cat urine, despite the fact that Draco had never seen an animal near the place. He was in the very air that Draco breathed, as though the house itself had gone against Walburga’s wishes and welcomed its new owner with open arms, leaving hints of Potter’s aftershave in rooms that he hadn’t been in in days, along with that faint honey-grass smell that Draco always noticed after a confrontation with Potter. It wasn’t as though Potter had tried to make him feel unwelcome, despite the stilted conversation - something which still left Draco feeling confused and wrong-footed, constantly waiting for an order to be given, or maybe the odd hex thrown his way - but it still felt strange, unnerving, to be in a place that was so permeated with his arch enemy. He found himself glad of the dark magic artefacts they kept finding as they made their way through the house, stroking them slightly before throwing them away with the rest, finding comfort in the knowledge that he wasn’t as completely removed from his past as it seemed.

They had planned on continuing with the dining room that week, and Potter was already there when he arrived, facing away from him and stretching up on tiptoe to pull the long drapes down from their hooks. The doxies and their eggs were all gone by now, but Potter had decided that the curtains were too dark for his tastes. Although he said nothing out loud, Draco had privately agreed. Today they were replacing them, changing out the thick dark velvet for a pale gauzy linen. Draco thought that at least he would come out of this sentence with a possible future career, even if it was in interior design.

“Oh good,” Potter puffed out, muttering a curse as the pole slipped in his tenuous grasp. “Malfoy, you’re taller than me, could you grab this end while I work on undoing the Sticking Charm?”

He always asked Draco to do things in that manner; politely, and in a way that brooked no argument that he was being asked, rather than ordered. When Draco had thought of what the next year would be like being bound with Potter, he’d had visions of the Weasel and his bushy haired girlfriend sitting around in the kitchen, laughing at him as Potter made him do things not even fit for a house elf. While he had been right in his assumption that Weasley and Granger would be common fixtures in Potter’s kitchen, the few times that Draco had come across them they had been nothing but distantly polite, the same as Potter always seemed to be. He seemed constantly wary of what he was saying,
aware that he could inadvertently order Draco to do something against his will. Draco found himself torn between feeling grateful for the gesture, and wanting to ridicule Potter for not taking advantage of a situation that a Slytherin would have lots of fun with.

He reached over Potter’s head to grab the pole, his throat constricting as that faint honey-grass smell wafted over him. Potter’s shoulder brushed against his as he let go with a relieved sigh and reached for his wand.

“Okay, pull hard when I say so, okay?” He muttered an incantation as he pointed his wand at the bracket embedded deep into the wall. “Okay, pull!”

Draco pulled, and Potter reached up again to lend his weight to the action. Draco raised his other hand up, pulling out as Potter pulled downwards. The pole groaned in protest and Draco heard Potter curse under his breath as he reset his feet and pulled harder. With a crack and a snap, the wall finally gave up its prize, and both Draco and Potter staggered backwards, landing in an ungainly heap on the floor, the pole resting on their tangled legs. Draco had a moment to panic at the realisation that his hand was splayed against the hot skin of Potter’s back from where his t-shirt had ridden up, before Potter chuckled and pulled himself into a sitting position.

“I don’t suppose you know a spell to mend holes in walls, do you?”

Draco looked up and saw the damage they had created; a large hole where the bracket had been stuck. There were chunks of plaster littered across the floor, and dust in Potter’s black hair. He looked as though he’d just aged thirty years. Draco resisted the strange impulse to reach out and knock the dust from the unruly strands and got back to his feet.

“Unfortunately, no.”

Potter shrugged. “I’ll ask Hermione, she’ll find me something.” He shrank the pole and stuck it in the bag of rubbish in the corner of the room, pointing his wand and vanishing the rubble that had fallen to the floor. Then he looked over at the large dining table they had shoved against the far wall when they’d begun the renovations. “I’d like to transfigure it into something a little less...”

“Ostentatious?” Draco supplied, his breath catching in his throat when Potter threw him a small grin over his shoulder.

“Exactly.” He pointed out the elaborately carved table legs and the smooth etchings pressed into every inch of the outside of the table top, intricate designs of vines and serpents and rings and leaves. It was a beautiful piece of work, really, but Draco had to agree that it didn’t really fit with Potter’s lack of -style.

“What did you get in your Transfiguration OWL?”

Draco started, unsure of why Potter would ask him that. “Outstanding, why do you ask?”

Potter looked at him for a long moment, his tongue sliding over his teeth as he thought through whatever was going on in his head. Finally, he must have come to some kind of decision, because he nodded to himself and then held up a hand. “Wait here.” He disappeared out of the room before Draco could even formulate a reply. He didn’t have long to wait however, because Potter was slamming his way back through the door only minutes after he left, stumbling to a halt a foot from Draco’s face. Again he was treated to one of Potter’s searching looks, although Draco had no idea what he was hoping to find. He bit down hard on his lower lip, and Draco watched as the skin around his teeth became pinker, more plump. “This is yours.” Potter finally said, quietly, and it took Draco a moment to realise that he was holding his hand out between them, a familiar piece of wood.
It was his wand. The wand that Potter had pulled out of his hand that fateful night at the Manor, moments before the Dark Lord descended and managed to hit Draco with the Cruciatius Curse before his mother could bundle him safely out of the room. The wand that Potter had held before him in the Great Hall, circling with the Dark Lord and explaining to everyone watching in a loud clear voice exactly how he was going to win, and it was all because Draco himself had Disarmed the last owner of the Elder Wand.

He reached forward to grab it, instinctive, because it was his wand, it had chosen him seven years ago, as Ollivander had muttered nonsensically about choices to come. Perhaps it hadn’t been nonsense after all. His hand stopped before it reached the wand, the reminders of the Wizengamot ringing loud and offensive in his ears. *You will only be permitted to use this Ministry appointed wand at any time, until your sentence has ended.*

“I’m not allowed,” he said quietly, his heart pounding with how weak and uncertain his own voice sounded. Potter gave him a small smile and placed the wand between Draco’s outstretched fingers.

“I figure you’re going to need some practise before we get back to school,” Potter said quietly, his eyes back on the table at the far end of the room. “Plus I only got an Acceptable in my Transfiguration OWL, so anything you do is bound to be an improvement on anything I can come up with.” He looked down at his feet. “Besides, it’s yours. It’s about time you had it back.”

Draco didn’t know what to say, so he said nothing, instead concentrated on the familiar feel of his wand against his skin. He wasn’t sure if he wanted to rail against Potter for his reserved kindness or fall into a grateful heap at his feet. He shook the troubling thoughts out of his mind and turned to face the table in question, holding out his wand and testing his grip. When he had finished, he turned back to face Potter, surprised to see a real smile on his face for the first time in longer than he could remember. He looked back at the table; he’d Transfigured it into something that resembled the scrubbed wood of the table in the kitchen, but leaving it thinner and with a subtle sheen across its surface. It was much plainer, but still beautiful. He figured it was the kind of thing that Potter would like, but he didn’t know why it would be the cause for such a smile.

“That’s perfect, thanks, Malfoy.” Draco shrugged and held out the wand, but Potter shook his head and took a step back. “I told you, it’s yours. I’ve already talked to McGonagall, and she’s agreed to talk to the Ministry about making sure you have a proper wand for school, but until then you can use it for whatever you want.” His smile faltered slightly, as he processed his own words. He opened his mouth again, as though he wanted to list a bunch of caveats to go with that statement. But then he seemed to give up trying to work them all out, and he closed his mouth again.

“Are you sure?” Draco couldn’t believe he was asking, but then, most days he could barely believe he was living under the same roof as Potter and helping him redecorate instead of languishing in a cell in Azkaban, so, all things were relative, he guessed.

“I trust you.”

“You shouldn’t.” The words were out before Draco could think to reel them in, and he frowned down at the floor.

“I know,” the whispered reply came, but by the time Draco found the resolve to look up, Potter was gone.
The small crowd gathered at the back of Weasleys Wizard Wheezes were all busy exclaiming over the new merchandise - potion vials that made people’s hair glow in a range of neon colours; rings that caused whoever shook the wearer’s hand to break out in a rather peculiar colour of hives; a wizarding version of Muggle Tarot cards, who shouted their predictions with increasing amounts of swear words the more that people ignored their dire warnings - and Harry used the moment to sneak away and go to the quieter end of the shop. It was loud, all of their friends and family having gathered for the party before the grand reopening of the shop. Nearly everyone they knew had wanted to support George as he tentatively made steps to re-enter the world outside of his room back at the Burrow, after the loss of Fred. It had taken him a while, but he had finally worked up the courage to finish a few of the projects he and his twin had been working on before Fred’s untimely death, and he was now ready to share them with the world as the main display in the shop in Diagon Alley. It had been a lot of fun, with everyone enjoying themselves and getting a little bit drunk, but Harry couldn’t help but feel as though he should be somewhere else.

“Knut for your thoughts?”

Harry turned and offered a faint smile at Ginny. “Just wondering how much to bet on Ron blowing the place up within his first week.”

She laughed, pushing herself up on the shelf next to him and swinging her legs. “I don’t know. At first, the idea of him working here with George was really strange, but now I think it might suit him.” Her lips twisted in wry amusement. “He always wanted the twins to let him in on their secrets.” She looked over to where George was holding court at the other end of the room and her smile faded. “At least he still has someone to share them with.”

Harry nodded. “I think it’ll be great for them both. ‘Course, Ron’s still going to trip over something and set the place on fire, but after that it’ll be fine, I’m sure.”

“What are you two laughing at?” Hermione slid up next to Ginny.

“Just about how much of a prat my brother is going to make of himself working here,” Ginny giggled, and Harry snorted. Ron joined them at that moment, and both Ginny and Harry choked down their laughter.

“How long can you stay tonight?” Hermione asked.

“Actually, I should probably be getting back soon.”

“Ah yes, to Malfoy.” Ron gave the name a sneering twist. “How is the great git?”

Harry shrugged. “I don’t know. We still don’t really talk that much. He seemed pretty pleased when I gave him his wand,” he added thoughtlessly.

“What?” Hermione gasped, eyebrows shooting into her hairline. Harry sighed, wishing he had kept his mouth shut. “Harry, you know that’s against the rules the Wizengamot set out for you! You gave your word that you would do everything they asked when you agreed to do that spell.”

“I’m still not understanding why you did that, to be honest.” Ron threw a perplexed look at Harry and topped up their drinks.
“Because he deserved a chance.”

“He deserved a cell in Azkaban next to his parents,” Ron said archly. “Possibly also a good punch on the nose. Again. I’d have offered to do it for free.” He smirked. “Again.”

Harry let a small smile grace his lips, but he didn’t say anything in response. He’d already tried to explain, and nobody got it, except for Hermione, who somehow seemed to understand even more than Harry.

“It’s not really his anymore anyway, because I gave it to him. It’ll never work for him as it used to unless he wins it back from me, which I’d never let him do because that would mean he was Master of the Elder Wand too, despite the fact that it’s hidden.” Harry shrugged. “He can’t get out of Grimmauld Place, I’ve made sure my orders were clear that he couldn’t leave without my permission. He can’t even burn the place down, he’d only burn with it and he can’t do that because he can’t cause harm to himself. I think it’s safe enough.”

“Not like he’s not tried to burn a place down before.”

“That was Crabbe,” Harry reminded Ron. “Not even Malfoy would be stupid enough to use the Fiendfyre curse.”

“I dunno,” Ron mused, “He’s plenty stupid. I wouldn’t put it past him.”

“You still shouldn’t have broken the rules, Harry,” Hermione interrupted. “If you’re found out, Malfoy will be back in a cell in Azkaban.”

“You’d better not tell anyone then.” Harry grinned and knocked Hermione’s shoulder with his own. “I’d better be getting back anyway, make sure he hasn’t decided to redo all my decorating in Slytherin colours. I can only take so much green and silver.”

He waved his goodbyes to George and worked his way round to the back of the shop. He was just reaching out for some Floo powder when Ginny’s soft voice stopped him.

“Harry, can we talk?”

Harry stared down into the flower pot. He thought he could probably guess what Ginny wanted to talk about. They’d got back together briefly just after the battle, losing their grief and themselves in the warmth of each other, until funerals and Death Eater trials had forced them to come up for air and deal with the rest of the world. Then they had sat down and decided that the timing still wasn’t right for them, that they should both wait until they were ready to begin their relationship again. They’d been in the same holding pattern ever since.

Except that Harry had noticed that Ginny had been slowly pulling herself away from him recently. She no longer accompanied Ron and Hermione when they came to visit Grimmauld Place, no longer tucked herself in next to Harry for their weekly Sunday lunch at the Burrow. There had been a shift in the way she looked at him recently too, her gaze becoming less like she was in love with him and more like she just... loved him, like Hermione did. Like a sister would.

“Sure, Gin, what about?”

She smiled at him, that same knowing smile she always gave him when she knew he was being deliberately obtuse about something. “I think you know what about,” she said, drifting closer. “Listen, I know we said that we were waiting for the time to be right for us, and I was happy doing that, I was. But now there’s this thing with Malfoy, and I know how you can get a bit obsessed with him-”
“I don’t get obsessed with Malfoy,” Harry interjected hotly, a bit distracted; half his mind was already on wondering what Malfoy was getting up to in his absence. “Why does everyone think that?”

Ginny huffed and rolled her eyes. “Whatever. My point is that this is going to keep you occupied for another year, and I’m just not sure...”

She trailed off, and Harry finished the thought for her. “You’re not sure that you want to wait any more.”

Her smile turned a little bit sad, her eyes suddenly bright with unshed tears. “I’m not really sure what I’m waiting for, Harry. I think the fact that I’m happy with waiting, that most of the time I forget that I’m meant to be waiting for something else, probably means that there’s never going to be a right time for us.” She bit her lip. “Maybe now is just the exact right time for me.”

Harry nodded, but couldn’t think of anything to say. Ginny was right; most of the time he forgot too, that he was supposed to be looking forward to a time when he and Ginny would be together for good. And if he was honest with himself, he thought he would be perfectly happy if that time never came.

“I’m sorry, Harry.”

Harry shook his head and pulled her in for a quick hug. “Don’t be, you were right to say something. Merlin knows we would have been waiting around forever if you’d left it down to me.”

She huffed a laugh into his shoulder and patted him on the back, and suddenly it felt to Harry as though brother and sister was all they’d ever been. “See you at school?”

“Absolutely.” Harry smiled at her, and stepped through the Floo.

Kreacher was waiting for him on the other side, a cup of steaming hot tea held out in front of him.

“Thanks, Kreacher. Do you know where Malfoy is?”

Kreacher bowed low, Regulus’s locket bouncing heavily against his chest. “The Black child has been in Master Regulus’s bedroom since your departure, my Lord.”

“We’re all of age now, Kreacher, so it’s probably time you stop addressing him as a child.”

Kreacher bowed again. “As you wish, Master.”

Harry left Kreacher to his work in the kitchen and took himself upstairs to his bedroom. He was still using Sirius’s old room, across the hall from Malfoy, and although he’d kept the wallpaper in Regulus’s old room, in his own it had been the first to go, to be replaced with pale creams and light browns. He loved the colours red and gold as much as the next Gryffindor, but he thought it a little much for a bedroom, especially one only he ever saw.

He washed and changed quickly and slipped between the sheets, still wondering why it had been so easy to let Ginny go. It was probably just more proof that they were never meant to be in the first place. He sighed and snuggled down into the pillow. He had a meeting with McGonagall early in the morning, to discuss what they were going to do about his and Draco’s classes. He wondered why none of it seemed as much of a hassle as it had at the very start.
Chapter 3

The day before their return to Hogwarts saw both Draco and Potter keeping to themselves as much as possible, making sure they had everything packed. Potter had spoken to Professor McGonagall, and had told Draco that while they weren’t quite sure yet where they would be housed, neither of them would be going back to their old dormitories. All the returning ‘Eighth Year’ students, as they had taken to calling themselves, would be housed in a temporary building down by the lake. They would be sharing a common room, and would be allowed more freedom to move around, as they were all of age and therefore considered adults. Draco had no idea if he would be one of them, or if he even wanted to be.

Draco had heard Potter talking with Granger and the Weasel, and knew that while she was returning, her boyfriend was not. He’d also overheard that while Finnigan had decided not to return, Thomas would be there, as well as a few Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw names that Draco had never paid attention to in the past and so couldn’t put any faces to. He’d only ever bothered to learn the names of the people in his own House and that of Potter’s inner circle. He refused to examine too deeply why that might have been the case.

Potter had gone into Diagon Alley the week before and purchased all their school books and equipment - Draco hadn’t been allowed to accompany him, of course - and now he was ready to go back to school, hopefully for the last time. He felt slightly sick, as he sat on his packed trunk and waited for Potter to join him in the kitchen.

“Don’t you feel strange, travelling to school by Floo instead of by train?” Draco asked Potter, when he finally showed up.

Potter shrugged. “A bit, I suppose. But it wouldn’t have been the same without Ron there too.”

Draco looked away, not wishing to watch Potter missing his best friend. The clock chimed 4 o’clock, and Potter rapped his knuckles on the side of his trunk. “Okay Malfoy, you first. McGonagall is waiting for us.”

Draco stepped forward, grabbed a handful of the Floo Powder and transported himself and his trunk to the Headmistress’s office at Hogwarts. Stomach already beginning to tighten with discomfort, he stumbled out of the fireplace and onto a violently patterned tartan rug that he stared at in disgusted surprise. By the time he had dusted himself off and stood up straight, Potter and his own trunk were slamming into his back, shoving him further into the room. Draco opened his mouth to berate the clumsy idiot, but was interrupted by McGonagall clearing her throat pointedly.

“Mr Malfoy, Mr Potter, glad to see you.”

“Afternoon, Professor,” Potter said, cheerfully. “We’re not late, are we?”

“No, no, you’re right on time. I’ll have the house elves see to your trunks.” With a crack, both trunks disappeared, and McGonagall indicated the seats on the opposite side of her desk. Both Potter and Draco took the hint and sat. “Mr Potter, I’m sure you remember our last conversation?”

Potter nodded. “I do.”

McGonagall raised an eyebrow and stared at him for a moment, but all Potter did was look steadily back with a mild expression on his face, and she eventually turned away. Draco wondered how he had managed to work out how to deal with her; he had certainly never managed it.
“Now, Mr Malfoy. I’m sure Mr Potter neglected to tell you, but I was a rather hard sell on allowing you back into this school. You inflicted much damage during your time here, and not just the things you were accused of during your Wizengamot trial.” Draco tried to emulate Potter’s mild expression, but could still feel the flush on his cheeks. “I admit to being incredibly reluctant in allowing a person such as yourself back within these walls, but Mr Potter assures me that he can handle the responsibility of making sure you cooperate fully.” She leaned over her desk to pin him with a sharp glare. “Is he right, Mr Malfoy?”

Draco swallowed. “I think that there won’t be anything for Potter to handle, Professor,” he said, relief washing over him as he heard his own voice come out quite steady. “I’m not here to cause any trouble, my only wish is to finish my education.”

She stared at him over the rim of her square glasses for a long hard moment, before nodding curtly. “Good, I’m glad to hear it. Make no mistake, Mr Malfoy, you are here purely out of a courtesy that I will not hesitate to rescind the moment I hear even a whisper of you showing signs of going back to your old ways. Do I make myself clear?”

“Perfectly, Professor.” Draco inclined his head, although he wondered just how sincere her threat actually was. He was there because Potter wanted to be there, and if Draco was thrown out, Potter would have to leave too.

“Good.” She turned back to Potter. “Mr Potter, would you mind waiting out in the hallway? I have something else I would like to discuss with Mr Malfoy.”

Potter raised his eyebrows, but didn’t comment. He looked at the door, as though judging the distance, then threw a smile at the woman (which Draco was momentarily surprised to see her return) and stood, shutting the door softly behind him.

McGonagall waited until the door had closed completely before turning her attention back to Draco. “When I said that Mr Potter would be taking responsibility for you during your stay here, I did not just mean your own behaviour, Mr Malfoy.”

Draco frowned. “I don’t understand, Professor.”

She looked at him speculatively. “You must understand, Mr Malfoy, that your presence here is likely to cause a great deal of upset amongst some of the other students. There are many who were hurt by the actions of both yourself and your family, and many of them will feel as though you weren’t given the punishment you deserve. It is not unlikely that some may try to rectify that mistake.” Draco swallowed, understanding flooding through him. He could very well be in danger here. “Mr Potter has taken full responsibility not only for your behaviour, but also for your safety while you reside here at the castle.” Draco felt something in his chest tighten, and he shifted in his seat. “Therefore, I would like to receive a similar promise from you.”

Draco paused, not understanding what she meant. “You want me to promise to look after myself?” That seemed a strange thing to ask him to promise. He was only allowed his wand during lessons and supervised studying, so unless someone jumped him in the middle of class, there was very little he could do to defend himself against an attack. Besides that, his wand was going to be tested by the Ministry during his weekly checks; if he used any spell not on the list of approved curriculum spells, he would be back in Azkaban before he could blink.

McGonagall sighed. “No, Mr Malfoy. I believe in Mr Potter’s capabilities to keep you safe without needing to extract a promise that you will take care of yourself too. You are, after all, a Slytherin; putting oneself first is one of your more prominent traits, is it not?” She continued without giving him a chance to either agree or defend his House’s reputation. “No, what I want, is for you to return the
favour with regards to Mr Potter himself.”

Draco felt his eyes widen. “You want me to keep Potter safe?” He scoffed. “I’m sure the Chosen One is much more qualified to look out for himself than a wandless Slytherin. Besides, who would want to hurt the Saviour of the Wizarding World?”

“I don’t mean his physical safety, Mr Malfoy, do use your head.” She sighed and leaned back in her chair, and suddenly Draco could see just how much the war had aged her. “The nature of this bond between you is likely to put a lot of stress on Mr Potter. I know you’ve watched him throughout your previous years here, surely you can’t have missed how much responsibility he heaps upon his own shoulders.”

Draco nodded in agreement, because he had seen it. He’d just assumed that much of it was due to Potter’s wish to be in the limelight. He realised now how erroneous those assumptions had been.

McGonagall was still looking at him, a faint twist to her lips that he thought might be a smile, as though she knew what he was thinking. “What with the notoriety of Mr Potter, especially with regards to what happened last year with Voldemort,” - Draco winced - “He is likely to be under a lot of stress already, and agreeing to take on the responsibility of being your guard, will give him yet more. I would like a promise from you, that you will do your utmost to make this as painless as possible for him.”

Draco licked his suddenly very dry lips, and nodded. “Okay,” he said faintly, his voice catching in his throat. He coughed, and tried again. “Yes, I promise.”

“Very good, Mr Malfoy,” McGonagall replied, and this time Draco was almost certain that he saw a smile.

“Wow, this is really weird,” Harry said, mostly to himself, as he led Malfoy down the corridor leading to the teachers’ quarters. He’d only been down here once before, years ago when he and Ron had hidden in the staffroom waiting to hear the plan for rescuing Ginny.

The door to their rooms was just an ordinary door, although one without a handle. Harry whispered the password - aniseed twists - and a round knob appeared, shimmering gold and wriggling a bit. On the other side was a medium sized room, sparsely decorated with a sofa, fireplace, a small table with two chairs, and two empty bookshelves. Three doors led off the wall opposite, all standing open to show that they contained two small bedrooms and a bathroom.

“Wait here,” Harry mumbled to Malfoy, and left him standing by the door as he walked into the furthest bedroom, right up to the opposite wall. “Do you feel uncomfortable?” He yelled back.

“No,” Malfoy’s voice came back, and Harry nodded, walking back into the main room.

“Good.” He flicked his wand, directing his trunk into the bedroom he’d just been in, deciding on using that one for himself. “I think the apartment has been magically set so that no matter where we are, we’re always within fifty feet of each other. That should make it easier to deal with the restriction of the bond, while we’re in here at least.”

Malfoy nodded and began dragging his trunk towards the second bedroom. “What about everywhere else? Am I to join you for all of your classes?”
“Oh, about that.” Harry sat down on the sofa and pulled the letter he had received earlier that morning from his jeans pocket. He jumped a little when Malfoy sat down next to him, close enough that he could feel the heat from his arm against his shoulder. “I spoke with McGonagall and Kingsley a few days ago, and McGonagall sent me this timetable this morning. I forgot to show you.”

He spread out the timetable on his knee, the scent of Malfoy’s shampoo under his nose as Malfoy bent down to take a look.

“We’re not always together,” Malfoy said, surprise and something that sounded almost like disappointment in his voice.

“We are as much as possible, for the classes we both take, like Potions and Transfiguration.” He pointed out where their shared classes would take place during the week. “But you’ll be in Ancient Runes or Arithmancy when I’m in Charms and Defence, see?”

“But how? If I can’t be more than fifty feet away from you?”

“Well, that’s what Kingsley and I were talking about. Kingsley asked the Unspeakable department, and they said that I can put down some specifically worded blanket rules that I wouldn’t have to keep repeating every day, so we can both go to the classes we want to study, rather than you having to go wherever I go.”

Malfoy turned to look at Harry, his knee brushing against Harry’s thigh. “Whose idea was this?”

Harry felt a bit wrong-footed. “Well, mine. I figured you wouldn’t want to study everything I am, we only had three classes in common back in sixth year.” Harry frowned. “Why? Don’t you want to study those subjects?”

Malfoy looked down at his hands, which were twisting in his lap. “No, I do. I just...” He trailed off, biting his lip. “I didn’t think you’d care all that much.”

Harry felt a bit insulted. “Of course I care, Malfoy! D’you think I like the idea of you having to trail around after me all the time?”

“No, I didn’t mean that,” Malfoy said, his grey eyes wide. “I just didn’t think you’d remember what subjects I took two years ago, that’s all.”

Harry swallowed and looked down at the parchment, spread out across their laps. He didn’t know how to respond to that without revealing just how much time he’d spent watching Malfoy in the past.

“I remember what classes we shared and didn’t share, Malfoy,” he mumbled at last.

“Me too,” Malfoy said quietly.

“Okay,” Harry said loudly, to break the uncomfortable silence that had grown between them. “Blanket rules. While we’re in here, you can do whatever you like, you don’t have to ask for permission. The only thing you can’t do is leave without talking to me first, but the proximity restriction would kick in anyway, so that shouldn’t be a problem.

“When we have separate classes, I will walk you to them and leave you there, and you can wait for me to come and pick you up afterwards. You can go to the closest bathroom, and you can go in the hallway, or anywhere that the teacher wants you to go, but no further. Any other time, you have to stay with me.” Harry closed his mouth, picking back through his words to make sure he had said it right. “Does that sound okay?”

“It sounds as though you’ve been practising saying it,” Malfoy responded, amusement evident in his
half smile.

Harry flushed. “I might have asked Hermione for help with it.”

“She should be a lawyer, she’s very good.”

Harry laughed in surprise. “A compliment? For Hermione? You really are changing, Draco.” He heard the stuttered breath of surprise as the name slipped out.

“Draco?”

Harry blinked, and then nodded. Now that he’d said it, he might as well go with it. “Yes, that’s another blanket rule. Hearing you call me Potter all the time is just going to remind me of the past, so from now on we’re going to call each other by our actual names, okay?”


Life at school as an Eighth Year student was both exactly the same and completely different, Draco found out quickly. He still ate his meals in the Great Hall, still got bored during classes. Madam Pince was still a little bit weird about her books and the rumour mill still ran quicker than an open tap. It felt the same, moving from one class to another, putting on the same tie and practising the same wand movements, waiting until the last minute to finish up the last two inches of homework for the next day’s class.

But that was where the similarities ended. Draco no longer sat at the Slytherin table for his meals, glaring over at Harry on the other side of the hall. Now they sat next to each other, at an extra table designated for all the returning students, next to the teacher’s table. Instead of sitting with his Slytherin friends during classes, Draco now sat either on his own, or close to Harry. The situation was definitely having a negative effect on his Potions mark, being forced as he was to partner with Harry. But the biggest difference came in the hours between classes. At the end of the day, instead of going back to socialise in the Slytherin common room, he followed Harry back to their rooms, doing homework at the table or playing chess on the sofa. Draco had had to give Harry quite a few lessons in order for him to play well enough for it to be an actual game though. Draco suspected that Weasley had been delighted to find something in which he was superior to Harry, and had therefore not bothered to teach him properly. The more he played with Draco however, the better Harry was becoming.

When Draco had first requested for Harry to be his bonded guard, he had assumed that it would be outright denied. Then, he had thought that Harry himself would say no to the request. There hadn’t been much time for Draco to think about what it would actually be like, to spend so much time so close to Harry, but if he had, he didn’t think he would have envisioned this.

He probably would have thought it likely to be boring, a lot of time spent sitting in silence, either because Harry wouldn’t want to talk to him, or because they just had nothing to say to each other. All those years that Draco had spent, imagining what it might be like to be Harry’s friend, and he had never once imagined how easy and... domestic it almost seemed to be. In his younger days, Draco had imagined himself ordering Harry about, just as he had with the other Slytherins, with Harry desperate to do whatever Draco wished. Then he’d gotten older, and his imaginings had turned into Harry realising that he was fighting for the wrong side, and coming to Draco for help.
And then Draco had found out what war was really like, and just what the wrong side were capable of, and he had dreamed instead of Harry coming to his rescue.

But he hadn’t ever expected there to be an equal sort of balance between the two of them, like they had in their rooms. The rules that Harry had laid out their first day there had rendered the bond almost moot whenever they were there. Draco could move about whenever he liked, do whatever he liked, say whatever he liked.

Draco was surprised by how not surprised he was to find out how much he enjoyed spending all of his time with Harry. It didn’t matter if they were sitting at the table silently, finishing their homework for different classes, or sitting on the sofa arguing over the order of ingredients for a potion they were working on together, Draco loved it all. He loved the mornings, when Harry would stumble out of his room towards the bathroom, cursing loudly as he banged into furniture he couldn’t see without his glasses, his hair sticking up even more unruly than usual, pillow creases across his sleep-reddened cheeks. He loved the early evenings, when Harry would drop onto the sofa, groaning over how much he’d eaten at dinner, subconsciously leaving just enough space for Draco to sit down next to him. He loved the late evenings, when Harry would slowly start slumping down in his seat as he tired, his head getting closer and closer to Draco’s shoulder until he finally staggered off to bed with a yawn.

The only things Draco didn’t love were the weekends, when Harry would ask him if he wanted to stay there or go to the library, and would then disappear off to spend time with his friends, leaving Draco alone.

The rumour mill had changed slightly, too. Harry’s notoriety hadn’t changed, of course, had only gotten stronger and more obvious since the last year. His name was still the only one on everybody’s lips, the only one anybody seemed to want to gossip about. The difference now was in how often Draco’s name came up in the whispers about Harry Potter. The bond between them and the sentence handed down to Draco was supposed to have been a Ministry secret, but of course, almost everyone had heard all about it by the time they came to sit down for the welcoming feast. Someone’s friend’s brother’s mother’s neighbour’s brother had been in the courtroom when the Wizengamot had agreed to the bonding spell, and someone else’s father’s sister’s hairdresser’s girlfriend had been in the hallway outside Shacklebolt’s office when Harry had performed the spell. Despite the facts being second, third, even fourth hand, and despite all the crazy theories as to what the spell had entailed - Draco having to wear a shock collar, as an example - everyone seemed to know the one very important fact: Draco had to do whatever Harry ordered.

It had started out innocent enough, with people wondering between themselves the sort of things that Harry would order Draco to do. He had to scrub the floors of all the Gryffindor dormitories, Draco had heard one third year Hufflepuff assert confidently, going in during the night with all the house elves so as not to disturb everyone else. A Ravenclaw had decided that Draco was at school purely to do all of Harry’s homework for him, now that the Chosen One was above such things. A fifth year Slytherin had been busy telling everyone who would listen that Draco had become Harry’s manservant, and had to feed and clothe him.

Draco privately suspected that that was what had spawned the other rumours that had come swiftly afterwards. It had quickly become an unspoken rule between Draco and Harry that they wouldn’t discuss whatever they had managed to overhear about themselves during the day, but judging by the shade of red Harry would sometimes turn, Draco suspected that he heard almost as much as Draco did. People weren’t quite so loud whenever Harry was around as they were the rare moments that Draco was alone; they didn’t care so much what Draco heard as they did their precious Saviour. But still, Harry heard enough, and it frustrated Draco to no end.
The loud whispers and terribly thought out innuendoes didn’t bother Draco in the slightest. He’d heard all of the comments, wondering how often Harry ordered him down to his knees for him, if Harry ordered him to walk upright afterwards so as to hide the evidence. He’d heard all the snide remarks from the older students, wondering if they’d be allowed a turn, if Harry really enjoyed the chance to put the Death Eater in his proper place.

Absolutely none of it bothered Draco, because he’d been thinking much along the same lines, ever since he and Harry had spent their first night in their rooms together.

The surprise that Harry had known enough about him, had thought about him enough to make arrangements for him to study the subjects he wanted, had given way to a gratefulness that burned in Draco’s veins. He’d watched Harry for so many years, and yet he’d still managed to miss just how much Harry had watched him back. It made Draco wonder if Harry had ever just watched him, not to see if Draco was up to something, if he could catch him out in any wrongdoing, but just because he wanted to watch. The way Draco had often watched Harry.

The easiness of their interactions, the glares Harry sent at the odd whisperer he overheard saying unpleasant things about Draco, the way that Harry looked at him whenever he thought that Draco wasn’t paying attention, it all added up to Draco feeling things he’d told himself long ago that he shouldn’t feel. He’d known for some time that he found Harry attractive, ever since the Yule Ball back in fourth year and he’d realised he liked boys much more than he would ever like girls. But Harry had been Potter back then, had been nothing but a pointless fantasy that real life had made sure could never be anything more. But now Draco was close enough to Harry to see. See the way his eyes flicked down to Draco’s mouth whenever he licked his lips. See how he flushed and moved away whenever Draco got too close. See the shy smile lift his entire expression whenever he said something that made Draco laugh. See the protective way Harry stood next to him when others were looking at Draco, like they couldn’t wait to get him alone for a few moments.

It all made Draco want. He wanted to get down on his knees, to put his mouth around Harry. He wanted to slide into bed next to Harry, to feel his skin against his own. He wanted to wrap his hand around Harry’s hard length and stroke him to completion. He desperately wanted to feel Harry’s fingers opening him up before sliding inside, hot and hard and filling him completely. He wanted all the things the whisperers said, and so much more.

He wanted Harry to want the same.

And yet Harry didn’t, because he was only there because of the bond. Without it, Harry would never have wanted to even look at Draco again, much less spend any time with him. Much less actually want to fuck him. The only reason he looked at Draco now, talked to him, sometimes looked like he wanted to put his hands all over him, was because he was being affected by the forced proximity of the bond.

And Draco knew this and still he wanted. He remembered his promise to Professor McGonagall, that he would try to make everything as easy as possible for Harry. He could see how wound up Harry would get, after a day of being followed around by his adoring and simpering fans, could see how stressed he was as he sank down onto their sofa after yet another dinner spent trying to ignore the muttering and staring. Draco wanted nothing more than to slide to his knees between Harry’s legs, open his trousers and set to work on sucking all of the tension out of him, using his lips and tongue and throat to render Harry sated and relaxed. Draco wanted to then climb onto Harry’s lap and let Harry kiss the taste of himself from his mouth, slide his hands into Harry’s hair and keep them there, until they were ready to strip each other bare and fuck all night.

Draco knew it was wrong, but sometimes he couldn’t help himself. Sometimes, when Harry looked
at him when they were sitting together, Draco couldn’t stop himself from reaching out, brushing his fingers across Harry’s thigh, leaning close to whisper in his ear, curling his bare toes over the top of Harry’s socked ones. He knew it was wrong, but those fleeting moments, before Harry would mumble something and move quickly away, were enough to send electricity flowing down Draco’s spine, make his skin tingle and his breath catch. He knew that Harry didn’t really want it, that if it weren’t for the bond, Harry would look at him with disgust instead of frustration, but all of that faded away when they were in those moments.

Knowing it was wrong didn’t stop Draco from wanting.

The library was quiet, as usual, and Harry had finished his homework, which was slightly unusual. Hermione, of course, was buried beneath a pile of books. If Harry leaned a little to his left, he could just see the tips of her bushy hair, peeking out from behind the teetering stack. Harry sighed for what felt like the thousandth time and slumped down further into his seat. Going back to school had seemed like such a great idea, back when the three of them had been gathered around Ron’s kitchen table, wondering what they were going to do with their lives. It hadn’t surprised either Ron or Harry when Hermione had suggested the option; during their desperate search for horcruxes, she could be heard mumbling occasionally in her sleep, fretting about failing her NEWTs. What had been a surprise to both the boys was how eager Harry had been to agree, while Ron had been reluctant. At the time, Harry had assumed that Ron would want to do anything Hermione suggested, now that they had finally got their acts together. For his part, Harry had been feeling a bit cut off from everything - and understandably so, according to Hermione - and hadn’t thought he would be able to dredge up much enthusiasm for anything.

But then the suggestion had been made, and Harry had found himself warming to the idea. A whole year before he had to make any real decisions. A year to behave like a kid, one year where he could actually be a kid, without anyone trying to kill him. Twelve months of laughing with his mates, playing Quidditch, eating in the Great Hall and then flopping down in the squashy armchairs in the Gryffindor common room. It had seemed like heaven.

Ron had felt differently. He didn’t think he could go back to school after a year away, having to conform to rules and go to classes and learn things he’d already had to learn while in hiding and running for his life. But he hadn’t wanted to join Auror training without Harry either, so he had deferred the offer from Kingsley for a year, so that he could join once Harry had finished his NEWTs. Until then, he was helping George out at the shop, and having a great time.

Harry had felt a little weird at first, thinking of returning to Hogwarts without Ron. But he’d figured the rest would be similar enough that it wouldn’t make much of a difference, even though he knew he would miss his best friend. He still had Hermione, and he still had Quidditch, along with a new broom.

But Harry hadn’t reckoned on the effect Ron’s absence would have on his own social time. Hermione wasn’t interested in laying about the common room, playing exploding snap or chess. She didn’t know enough about Quidditch to argue pointlessly over teams and who was going to win the World Cup. She didn’t want to grab food from the table and go down to the pitch and watch the teams practise. No, Hermione wanted to go to the library.

Harry had realised quite quickly that without Ron there to distract him, he would likely never have to scramble to get his homework finished on time. There was literally nothing else to do, stuck as he
was sitting next to Hermione as she continued her quest to read the library dry. Ginny, now that she had been made Quidditch captain, was often far too busy to hang out with Harry, and if he was honest, it felt a bit awkward between them whenever they were alone together, as though they were both acutely aware of the fact that there was some unfinished business between them that neither of them were inclined to finish. When she wasn’t busy with Quidditch or schoolwork, Ginny was spending all of her time with Dean now. Harry wasn’t surprised by how okay he was with the situation.

Neville hadn’t bothered to come back to school; he’d got a glowing recommendation from Professor Sprout, and had gone off to the South American School of Herbology in Argentina. Harry saw him occasionally, when they both happened to be in Diagon Alley, Neville there to meet Hannah who worked in the Leaky, and Harry there because he was feeling listless and had nothing better to do. Seamus had gone straight into a job at the Ministry, in the Magical Games and Sports department, and by all accounts his internship was going incredibly well. Neither Parvati nor Lavender had come back to school, had instead opened up a treatment centre for people physically scarred by the war. Like Lavender had been herself. Not that their absence made a difference to Harry; he’d rather boil his eyes in yak bile than have to sit and listen to the two girls gossiping all day long.

So Harry really only had two places to go when he wasn’t either in lessons or eating in the Great Hall. He could sit in the library with Hermione and watch her get lost beneath piles of books, or he could sit in his own little common room and share space with Draco. Which was why he was in the library, because sharing space with Draco was a bad idea.

Draco was irritating, annoying, frustrating. It was the way he moved, hips swinging delightfully as he rearranged their books on their shelves, trousers pulled tight around his arse. It was the way he always removed his shoes and socks the moment they entered their rooms, pale skin and fine bones left tantalisingly on display. It was the way his white blond hair gleamed gold in the firelight as he bent over the chessboard, frowning down as he decided his next move. It was the way his fingers would curl around Harry’s wrist to stop him from moving the wrong pawn, gently guiding him towards a better play with an amused smile on his lips. It was the way his grey eyes blinked sleepily in the mornings, teeth biting down into his bottom lip as he tried to remember the charm to warm his coffee. It all captivated Harry, and it was irritating, annoying, frustrating.

It made Harry think things, things he shouldn’t be thinking. Like what it would be like to turn his hand over in Draco’s grip, slide his thumb over the pulse point. What it would be like to run his fingers through that baby fine looking hair. What it would be like to reach out and touch those bare feet, slide his hand over the almost translucent skin, follow the line of blue veins with the tip of his finger. What it would be like to look into those sleepy grey eyes and soothe that abused bottom lip with his tongue. What would happen after if he gave in and did any of these things.

They were terrible thoughts to have, and Harry was slightly disgusted with himself for having them. Draco didn’t want Harry. The real Draco, Malfoy, hated Harry, always had. The only reason for Draco’s soft smiles and genuine laughs was the bond. He had no choice but to do whatever Harry wanted, and he had no choice but to want it too.

Even just entertaining thoughts of kissing Draco, of sliding his hands under his shirt and feeling his smooth skin was wrong. Harry could feel it; the more time they spent forced together, the more Harry thought about the things he’d like to do to Draco, and the more Draco responded. He’d sit too close to Harry on the sofa, let his fingers trail over the back of Harry’s hand as he let go of his wrist, cross his legs and curl his bare toes over Harry’s feet. His hands would linger on Harry’s shoulder when he showed him how to reach the bathroom without bumping into things. His smile would stay on his face for too long and he’d just sit there, smiling at Harry for no reason. It was because of the bond, because Draco could feel what it was Harry was starting to want and the bond was forcing
him to want to give it to Harry.

So Harry spent his free time in the library with Hermione as much as possible, hoping that the distance would lessen the effects his thoughts were having on Draco, while Harry sat quietly behind a pile of books and miserably carried on wanting from a distance. It was deathly boring, but at least he could live with himself the following morning, even if he did spend most of the night wishing that it would be okay for him to creep into the room next to his and slide into bed behind Draco.

The rules had seemed like a good idea, when Harry had laid them out their first day at school. It meant that Draco could at least go to the classes he wanted to study for his own NEWTs, rather than having to follow Harry around. It meant he could study Arithmancy and Ancient Runes, both subjects that Harry had never taken and didn’t have a clue about, judging by the bewildered looks he often shot Draco’s textbooks. It also meant that he got at least some time to himself, when he wasn’t tuned in to Harry’s every movement. He could tell where he was in relation to Draco still, could count the distance in feet between them as easily as he could count the fingers on his hands, but the need to follow Harry, to wait with baited breath for his next command, was dulled down to only a slight itch in the back of his mind, one that he could ignore if he concentrated hard enough.

The upsides to the rules definitely outweighed the downs, in Draco’s opinion, and if Harry didn’t ask if anything happened while he was waiting for him to show up, then Draco was under no obligation to tell him. So he kept to himself the snide remarks made in his direction, the occasional kidney punches and kicks to his knees. He said nothing about being cornered in the bathrooms or in alcoves, nothing about being pulled back behind the classroom door, nothing about the dozens of hexes thrown his way, leaving him sore and dizzy and close to vomiting.

He said nothing, because he didn’t want Harry to know. Harry already saw him as weak, as a thing to be protected, and Draco wouldn’t voluntarily give him any more reasons to think so. It wouldn’t help him get what he wanted. His silence was worth the pain he endured, and the snivelling idiots who thought they could break him were nothing to what he had been put through in the past. If the Dark Lord hadn’t broken him, then a bunch of Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs certainly weren’t going to.

At least, that was what he told himself every night, once Harry was asleep and Draco was able to move quietly around their apartment, tending to his wounds and keeping his mouth clenched shut against the hisses of pain threatening to come out. It’s what he told himself as he watched Harry walking up to him after his lessons, his back screaming at him as he forced himself to stand upright, to not give away a single clue as to what had recently transpired.

It wasn’t so easy to do when he was laying on the cold bathroom floor, his back in flames from the stinging hexes thrown his way, hands aching from being stomped on, stomach writhing in agony from being forced outside the boundaries Harry had set. That was when Draco thought he might give up, that the next time his mouth clamped down around a scream, he would instead scream for Harry, even if it would make him look at Draco with yet more pity in his eyes. Draco was a coward at heart; he knew this, and he knew it would only be a matter of time before he caved. But until that moment, he wanted Harry more than he was afraid of the pain, and it was that thought that kept his mouth firmly closed, only allowing himself to speak when he could be sure the words weren’t going to be a cry for help.

His silence only seemed to infuriate his attackers more, even though they must know what would
await them should Harry come to Draco’s rescue. They really were quite repetitive too, Draco thought, as he slid an inch further along the wet tile floor. Always the same slurs, always the same hexes. No wonder Hufflepuffs were so boring; they obviously had very little imagination.

“Where do you think you’re going?”

A booted foot came down on his hand, and Draco bit his lip against a yelp.

“Trying to slither away, are you? We’re not done with you yet, we’ve still got five more minutes before your master comes to get you.” Smith got down on his haunches, leaning over Draco as he fired yet another stinging hex at Draco’s back. “Think you can hold on for that long, Malfoy?” He flicked his wrist again; Draco shut his eyes against a wince. “I’ll make you scream yet.”

“Maybe he’s saving up his screams for someone else,” Smith’s cohort said, from somewhere to Draco’s left.

“Who do you mean?”

“Maybe he keeps them all for his master.” The last word was said with a lewd tone.

Smith laughed, the sound echoing off the bathroom walls. “Is that something he’s ordered from you, then?” Smith poked Draco with the tip of his wand; a flare of pain screamed down over his shoulder. “Our Golden Saviour, ordering you to get on your knees for him?”

He’d heard such comments before, of course, people wondering exactly what the nature of the bond between Draco and Harry was. Some had been whispers behind hands in the corridors, but more had been whispered directly into his ear, asking Draco what it was like to suck the Saviour’s cock. Some had actually seemed like genuine interest, the eyes behind the questions bright with curiosity, maybe even a touch of envy. Mostly it was said with a tone of derision, often with the word \textit{whore} tacked on to the end.

But it was a new direction for Smith and his friends though, who seemed more inclined to causing Draco physical pain than settling for simply mocking him. The irony of the situation was too much to bear; Smith wondering if Draco was being \textit{forced} to have sex with Harry, while Draco kept their little meetings to himself in the faint hope that it would make the possibility \textit{more} likely.

He couldn’t help it; he let out a wheezing laugh, the first sound he’d made since Smith’s little group of wannabe trolls had dragged him in there.

“Something funny, \textit{whore}? Do you like it, getting down on your knees for the Saviour?” Smith grabbed Draco’s chin, forcing his head up. “Or maybe it hasn’t got anything to do with Potter. Maybe you just like getting on your knees.”

The words and tone were similar to the things his guards had said, all those weeks ago, and Draco couldn’t hold in a shiver. He saw the gleam in Smith’s eyes, and cursed himself for showing his hand.

Smith grinned, tapping his chin with his wand in mock thought. “You know, I doubt Potter would mind sharing a bit. I mean, he is a Gryffindor.”

“I don’t think he’d care either way,” the boy to his left said.

“Good point, MacMillan.” Smith’s fingers shifted higher on Draco’s chin, slipping into the groove between his jaws and pressing in, hard. He leaned in closer to Draco’s ear. “I doubt he even really gives a shit about what happens to you at all, Malfoy. You’re just his little sex slave, something
useful to pass the time until he can be rid of you.”

It was the kernel of truth that finally had Draco opening his mouth, the fact that Harry probably didn’t care about Draco; it was just the bond between them that made him protective, that sometimes made him look at Draco the way he did. Once it was over, Harry would never want to see him again.

“Is that how you’re going to try and make me scream?”

Draco laughed, inwardly pleased that the sound didn’t come out shaky. The rules of the bond were clear: he couldn’t do anything to defend himself, except to save his own life, and Draco was certain that this situation didn’t count. He couldn’t do anything to stop Smith from doing whatever he felt like. The bond might not stop Draco from trying to defend himself without magic, but he didn’t have a chance against Smith, not for long anyway, and especially not if his two cohorts decided to help out. Harry wasn’t due to arrive for another five minutes, and Smith could do a lot in that time. Draco was scared now, so he did the only thing he could.

“Are you sure you want to try that, in front of your friends?” Draco sneered, yanking his chin out of Smith’s grip. He pushed with his hands, settling into a sitting position on the wet floor, and did his best to look unimpressed. “Because I really doubt anything you do could get me worked up enough to even offer a moan, let alone a scream.”

Smith narrowed his eyes dangerously, and Draco knew another Stinging hex was on its way. He shrugged inwardly, and leaned forward slightly.

“After all, once you’ve been fucked by the Saviour, there’s not many people who can measure up,” Draco nudged Smith with his elbow, and mock whispered, “If you know what I mean.”

Smith’s face started to take on a red tinge, and he stood up. Draco continued, the widening space giving him enough courage to make his head spin.

“I mean, have you seen Harry’s dick?” He let out an appreciative whistle, leaning back on his hands. “I’m talking masterpiece. long and thick and curved to hit all the right places. So do I like getting down on my knees for him? I fucking love it. I love it so much, I’d happily scream it from the rooftops.” He raised his voice, letting it echo off the tiles. “I am Harry Potter’s whore, and I love it!”

Smith had backed up a step, closer to his friends, giving Draco more and more room to warm up to his theme.

“My mouth waters every time he orders me to suck him, because I know it’s going to hit the back of my throat, cut off my air so sweetly that I could come in my pants just from that. When he tells me to bend over, I can’t assume the position fast enough, because he’s so big it feels like he could break me in half, and it feels so good that I want him to, I want him to just shove it in, hard, and break me apart.”

Draco was on his hands and knees now, leaning up into Smith’s face, and it was intoxicating. He couldn’t fight back with magic, had no chance fighting back with physical strength, but he’d forgotten that he could fight back with words.

“So really, if you want me to scream, I’d suggest doing something else, because that way lies nothing but embarrassment for you. Compared to what Harry does to me, you couldn’t possibly measure up.” Draco shrugged. “But then, against the Saviour, you never have, have you, Smith?”

Smith’s face darkened into a shade of red so violent it was almost purple, and he lashed out with his foot with a snarl. Draco had been expecting something, but he had assumed Smith would go for his
wand, and he didn’t move fast enough. The tip of Smith’s boot caught him on the side of his jaw, snapping his head round and making blood burst out of his lips. The first note of his scream of pained surprise was out before he had a chance to clamp his mouth shut again, but he managed to take the next kick to his ribs soundlessly. He was glad of it, otherwise he might have missed the glorious sound of his rescue.

"Stupefy!"

Red light bounced off the walls, the thumps of bodies hitting the ground around him sounding like thunder. Draco was sorry he’d been looking at the ground when the door had been flung inwards; the sight of Harry so angry had never failed to send electricity singing through his veins. He coughed, once, the sound loud in the sudden quiet, and Harry was on his knees beside Draco before he’d even had time to lift his head.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After three separate students had managed to make the classroom windows explode, Professor Flitwick had sighed and let his NEWT class go five minutes early. Harry had just been grateful that he hadn’t been one of the students currently being yelled at by the tiny professor, and he had enjoyed a leisurely walk through the corridors with Hermione, until she had left him to visit the library. It had been nice, to not have to rush to collect Draco for once, to take his time instead of having to run through the hallways so that Draco wouldn’t be left for too long. Draco’s Ancient Runes class got out ten minutes earlier than Harry’s Potions lesson on a Friday, and Harry didn’t like the idea of leaving him alone for too long. Harry wasn’t oblivious, despite how often Hermione and Ginny might sometimes lovingly insist he was, and he’d seen the way some of the students eyed Draco. As though he was a prime victim, and they were just waiting to get him alone to exact their revenge on him. They never did much more than hurl insults at Draco whenever Harry was around though, and even those were whispered quiet enough that Harry couldn’t hear, so he suspected that most of them passed by Draco unnoticed, too. At least, there was never anything to suggest that Draco ever heard anything; his face remained as impassive as ever whenever they were outside the confines of their small apartment.

It was when they were inside their rooms that things got complicated. Which was where Harry now found himself, sitting on Draco’s bed and looking at a very quiet and very bruised Draco.

“Have they done this to you before?”

Draco’s eyes cut away, and Harry could see he was trying to figure out how much he could get away with not telling him. Harry scowled, grabbing Draco by the chin and forcing him to look at him. “Tell me the truth, Draco. Have they done this to you before?”

Harry felt disgusted with himself. He’d been happily wandering along, thinking about Draco, about how he looked at Harry, how he would pass by Harry too closely, sit too closely next to him on the sofa. Harry knew it was just the bond affecting him, making him think he wanted Harry, and Harry was a terrible person for wanting Draco anyway, for getting so close to giving in, every time Draco tried to touch him. But it was only for another nine months. Harry just had to hold out for that long, and then the bond would be severed and he’d never have to see Draco or his plump bottom lip again.

And then he’d heard Zacharias Smith, and Harry’s stomach had turned over. He’d been surprised not to see Draco leaning against the wall as he usually was, waiting for Harry to walk him to their next class. Harry liked the way Draco leaned; he always slowed down right before he reached the corner, so he could take a moment to appreciate the way the pose put Draco’s lean muscles on display, the way his delicate fingers curled around the strap of his bag, the forever arrogant tilt to his chin and the haughty expression on his face. Draco was beautiful, and Harry wondered why he’d never noticed that fact all those times he had watched Draco during their previous years at school. Although maybe he had; maybe that had been one of the reasons why harry had found it hard to keep his eyes off him. It was certainly the main reason now. He just couldn’t let Draco know it. If he ever found out how Harry felt, Draco would become even more relentless, and Harry’s resolve to not take advantage was already dangerously close to crumbling.

He’d heard yelling, and somehow knew that it was Draco, and he had been running down the stairs and blasting open the bathroom door before he’d even realised his feet were moving. Harry had stopped dead at the sight of Draco on his hands and knees, blood spilling from his lip from where
Smith had just kicked him.

Draco shook his head. “Not... Not what you saw them doing. That was the first time.”

Harry breathed out a sigh of relief. The thought of Zacharias *fucking* Smith and his friends forcing Draco into doing the things he’d heard them talking about made his blood boil. *God,* even the thought of them *touching* Draco at all made Harry want to run straight back to the bathroom and turn them all into food for Hagrid’s blast-ended skrewts. Then Harry realised what Draco had said.

“What do you mean, not like I saw? Have they done other things to you?”

Draco sighed and ducked his head, directing his voice into the small space between them. “It’s nothing serious. Just some stinging hexes, the odd trip jinx. Nobody’s ever kicked me in the face before.” Harry watched his tongue gently explore where the cut Harry had just healed had been.

“Have they ever kicked you anywhere else?” Harry knew he sounded like he was interrogating Draco, but he couldn’t stop himself. He needed to know *everything* that had happened that he had somehow missed.

Again, Draco hesitated before answering, wincing slightly as the twinge in his stomach told him that he was dangerously close to ignoring Harry’s demand for the truth.

“Draco—”

“Yes, a few times, alright?” Draco burst out in apparent frustration. “It’s nothing I can’t handle, and nothing that you can do anything about, so just forget it, alright?”

“No, it’s not alright!” Harry shouted back, standing up. “I’m supposed to be protecting you!”

“But that’s just it, you’re not!” Draco pulled himself up from the bed, pacing away from Harry and then back again. “You’re not supposed to be my protector, you’re supposed to be my *guard.* I’m the one that everyone else needs protection from!”

He stopped in front of Harry, breathing hard, one hand coming up to rest shakily on Harry’s chest. “Even you,” Draco whispered. “Especially you.”

He swayed forward and Harry answered instinctively, reaching out to steady Draco and pull him in closer. Their lips touched in a feather light brush and Harry pulled away sharply, even as the rest of him yearned to get closer, deeper.

“Draco, we shouldn’t.”

Draco groaned, the sound caught between frustration and *want,* and Harry felt the echo of it in his own body. “I know you want to, I’ve seen it. And I know it’s only the bond, but I want it too, *God* I want it so mu-”

“It’s not a good idea,” Harry interrupted, forcing himself to take that full step back that he should have taken straight away. He clenched his jaw. “Now, show me what they did to you.”

Draco reached up and ran his fingers through his hair, grabbing slightly at the soft looking strands, tugging at them in frustration.

Harry scowled at him. “Now, Draco.”

Draco sighed and turned away, pulling his school jumper up over his head and tossing it over the
other side of the bed. His tie came next, and Harry found himself wishing Draco was facing him, so that he could watch the angry strip tease from the front. But then the white shirt was slipping down those pale shoulders, and Harry was suddenly so angry he couldn’t think anything at all.

Welts and cuts covered Draco’s back and shoulders, in a range of colours from deep red to pale pink. Some looked half healed through magic, as though Draco had tried to heal them himself but hadn’t been able to reach well enough. The marks from earlier overlaid older, paler ones, and Harry could see the different hexes that had been used: deep welts from the mentioned stinging hexes; speckled bubbles from itching jinxes; shallow cuts from slashing spells. More and more marks were revealed to Harry as Draco slowly peeled his shirt off, untucking the waist and letting it fall to the floor.

Harry followed its path, his eyes stopping at the sight of what Draco’s belt still kept half hidden. The hexes and jinxes obviously weren’t the only things that Draco had been hit with; his lower back and sides were mottled in various shades of black, blue and green. Harry didn’t know of any spells that left marks like that, but he didn’t have to - one of the bruises was in a quite telling shape of a boot.

“I’m going to fucking kill them,” Harry ground out, his voice choked with barely suppressed rage.

“Harry, stop,” Draco called out, and Harry only realised that he had made a start for the door when he felt Draco’s fingers curling around his wrist.

Harry was so full of rage he couldn’t speak, and he couldn’t tell who he was more angry with, the bastard Smith and his mates, or himself for not noticing and putting a stop to it sooner. He turned back to Draco, almost choking on his tongue when he saw that the bruises and cuts continued down Draco’s arms and low on his stomach. His rage peaked to incandescent levels when he realised that, but for the kick to Draco’s face that afternoon, everything else had been placed where clothes would cover any damage.

“That fucking coward,” Harry bit out, giving in to the need to reach out and trace his fingers lightly over the largest bruise. It began just to the left of Draco’s belly button and continued round his side and onto his hip, a mottled shade of blue with a line of bright purple bisecting it. It looked to Harry as though Draco had been slammed hard against something with a raised edge, like a table or a bench, considering the placement.

Harry felt sick. “You need to see Madam Pomfrey.”

Draco was already shaking his head. “I told you, it’s nothing serious. I’ve already healed the worst of it.”

Harry almost threw up in his mouth. “You mean they did worse than this?”

“No,” Draco replied quickly, one hand coming up to try and cover the large bruise. “I just meant, it looks worse than it is. Besides,” he went on, moving over to his dresser to retrieve and clean shirt, “It’s not like I’ve not been through worse.”

Harry swallowed, remembering. “At least let me see if I can help,” he blurted out, stopping Draco in his tracks. “I’m not much good with healing spells, you really need Hermione for that. ‘I’m not going to get her or anything,’” he promised, seeing the look on Draco’s face. “I’m just saying, I can’t do much. But I do have some good bruise paste, and I have some essence of murtlap for the cuts.”

Draco looked at him from where he was paused in putting on his shirt. Then he nodded, looking down at his hands. “Alright.”

“Okay.” Harry backed out of Draco’s bedroom and all but ran into his own room, sliding to his
knees and ripping open his trunk. He scurried about in the depths for a moment, before coming back up, triumphantly holding the jar of bruise paste from Fred and George’s shop and the bottle of murtlap essence he’d made sure to replenish ever since fifth year.

Draco was sitting on the edge of the bed by the time he came back. Harry set the jar and the bottle on the bedside table, and conjured up a bowl full of warm water and a flannel. He tipped the bottle up and let a few drops of the astringent smelling liquid fall into the water.

“Er, you should probably lie down,” Harry said tentatively, dipping the flannel into the bowl to soak up the solution. “Most of the deeper cuts are on your back.”

Draco rolled over onto his side, lifting up his legs and laying down on his front, his head nestled on the pillow. “That’s because I’ve already healed the ones on my front.”

Harry felt his hands curling into fists at the reminder that he’d missed seeing exactly how bad Draco had been hurt, anger rolling in his stomach that he’d missed the fact that Draco had been hurt at all. Drops of warm water and murtlap dripped out of the flannel onto his trousers. “Well, you won’t have to anymore, because I’m going to make sure it doesn’t happen again.”

Draco laughed into the pillow. “The words of the Chosen One. I wondered when he was going to show up.” Then he hissed, the sound dissolving into a surprised moan as Harry dabbed at the cuts with the flannel, letting the murtlap essence soothe away the sting.

“Don’t call me that,” Harry scolded, soaking up more water and moving onto the next cut. Already he could see the redness receding from Draco’s otherwise perfect skin. “That’s not me.”

“No it isn’t,” Draco mumbled into his pillow. “But sometimes you sound like him. Mostly when you’re trying to be all heroic and Gryffindorish.”

“And I take it that’s a bad thing?”

“I used to think so. Now it’s a bit of a turn on.”

“Draco.” Harry paused in his ministrations, frowning. The cuts were slowly closing, skin knitting seamlessly back together now that the irritation had been removed. None of the cuts were deep enough to leave a scar, and Harry found he was glad of it. Draco’s skin was absolutely perfect underneath all the marks. Like a white canvas, just waiting for someone to claim it. Harry’s hands trembled at the thought that 

Smith had tried to claim it first.

“But it is,” Draco insisted, and Harry regretted, not for the first time, his blanket rule that Draco could do and say anything he wanted within the walls of their shared rooms. “I used to think that it was all for show, you know. I thought you flashed your eyes and scowled at everyone just to show off your righteousness, so that everyone could see how fierce you were, fighting for good, and all that.”

Harry conjured a towel and wiped Draco’s skin dry. The bruise paste let out the usual foul smell as he opened the jar, but the bright yellow ointment sank easily into Draco’s skin beneath Harry’s smoothing fingers, the mottled purple and blue colours fading slowly into greens and yellows almost instantly.

“Then I realised; you don’t think at all when you’re angry. You just act, let your rage guide you into doing whatever it thinks is best, and you’re not thinking about anything except what needs to be done, what needs to be fixed.

“It terrified me, the first time I saw it.”
Harry’s hands had finished with Draco’s back and had followed the line of bruises round to his side. Draco lifted up, turning onto his back so that Harry could reach his hip and stomach. Harry dipped his fingers back into the jar, resolutely not looking up at Draco’s face.

“It was when we were in the manor,” Draco whispered, his hands fluttering where they lay on the bed. “When you threw yourself at me, took those wands right from my hand. It was terrifying, the way you were so focused, like you could do anything, *kill anyone*, if they even so much as got in your way at that moment.

“And then there was the Fiendfyre, and you had the same look, only it wasn’t directed straight at me.” Draco lifted one of his hands and wrapped his fingers around Harry’s wrist, stopping his movements.

“Why did you turn back for me?”

Harry did look up at him then. “Because you didn’t deserve to die.”

One side of Draco’s mouth lifted up in a sad smile. “I didn’t exactly deserve to live, either.”

“Everyone deserves that, Draco. I even gave Voldemort a chance, in the end. It was him who decided not to take it.”

Draco nodded, teeth biting down into his lower lip. Harry wanted to bite it for him.

“That was why I asked to be bonded to you, you know. Because of the Fiendfyre, and the way you looked. And the first time I see you, you looked like that again, only this time, you looked like that *for me*. Standing over me and staring down those guards, *protecting* me.”

Draco sat up suddenly, and Harry startled, the jar of bruise paste falling from his hand and toppling onto the floor. One hand was still curled around Harry’s wrist, and Draco lifted the other, tracing the line of Harry’s jaw with the edge of his thumb.

“Draco, don’t, I told you-”

“You do know I can tell the difference,” Draco interrupted, “Between you giving me an order you want me to follow, and an order you’re really hoping I don’t?” He pulled on the hand wrapped around Harry’s wrist, bringing him closer. He leaned forward, sliding his lips from Harry’s chin to his ear, his soft breath making Harry shudder. “If you really want me to stop, all you have to do is say the words.” His tongue peeked out, teasing at Harry’s earlobe. “You’ve just got to *mean* it, and I’ll have to do whatever you say.”

Harry swallowed down a groan at the implications of that statement; there were too many to name. The most important one was that Draco was right. Harry *couldn’t* order Draco to stop and mean it, because he really didn’t want him to. He wanted to let Draco do whatever he wanted to him, wanted to lay Draco back and run his hands all over Draco’s newly healed skin, press his mouth to all the places he’d been hurt and soothe the pain away with his tongue. He wanted to strip Draco bare and slide into the cradle of his hips, feel his pale thighs wrapped around Harry’s waist, learn the heat he carried inside of him. He wanted to delve deep into Draco’s mouth to see how he tasted, wanted to do it long enough that he could commit it to memory.

He couldn’t tell Draco to stop and have it be the truth, not when everything inside Harry was desperately trying to crawl inside Draco and claim him as his own.

“I know you want it, right now you want it” Draco whispered, and this time Harry let his groan be heard, let his fingers unclench from the fists they’d curled into in an effort not to touch, let himself
reach out and pull Draco closer to him.

“Shut up, Draco,” Harry said, and that was an order Draco had no choice but to comply with, because Harry gave in and pressed their mouths together, sliding his tongue into Draco’s mouth, eager to taste him.

Draco sighed into Harry’s mouth, finally relinquishing his hold on Harry’s wrist so that he could slide his fingers through Harry’s hair. The angle was awkward, with Draco sitting fully on the bed and Harry perched on the edge, and Harry had to twist his chest unnaturally to meet the insistence of Draco’s mouth. He shifted, bringing a knee up onto the bed as he turned fully into Draco, and he felt hands pulling at the shoulders of his jumper, guiding him downwards. Draco fell back into the pillows, hands slipping from Harry’s shoulders to his waist, shifting him over until he was straddling one of Draco’s thighs. He could feel the hard length of Draco’s cock against his hip and Harry moaned, thrusting down into the heat of it.

Draco pushed and pulled at Harry’s clothes, separating his shirt from his trousers and lifting it up, letting his fingers find the skin he bared beneath it. Harry arched up, ripping at his shirt buttons, shuddering as Draco’s mouth latched onto his adam’s apple and sucked, tongue sliding over stubble and skin. They became a frenzy of movement, Harry rocking his hips and getting his arms stuck in his shirt, Draco moving his thigh in time to Harry’s thrusts, hands gliding over Harry’s chest, their mouths constantly moving against each other, separating only long enough to draw in breath before delving in again, unable to resist the pull towards each other.

Draco bit a line up from Harry’s chin to his ear, whispering, “I really want you to fuck me, but I’m not going to last long enough.” Harry almost choked on his own tongue, his hips shoving down hard in response. He felt Draco’s fingers scrabbling at the waistband of his trousers, knuckles bumping against his stomach as he undid his own belt and button. He lifted his hips, holding himself up on one elbow as he used the other hand to push Draco’s trousers down over his hips, the cool air of the room hitting his skin as Draco did the same for him.

Harry didn’t have time to look, to appreciate the sight beneath him, all that pale skin on show just for him, the dark band of fabric pulled taught around Draco’s spread thighs. He didn’t have time, because he was already sliding into place, lining his cock up next to Draco’s, the hot, silky feel of him threatening to push Harry over the edge much too soon. He gritted his teeth to stave off his orgasm, resting his forehead against Draco’s as he felt Draco’s hand inch its way between their stomachs, fingers wrapping around them both. He let his hand press against the outside of Draco’s thigh, pulling him as close to his hip as their trousers would allow, and rocked into the grip surrounding him, his cock sliding through their mixed precome.

His lips found Draco’s again, and they were moving together, erratic and out of time with each other, both too close to coming to try and make it better. Draco came first, with a soft cry that Harry swallowed and a shudder that Harry felt right down to his bones, and the liquid warmth flooding Draco’s hand and covering both their cocks sent Harry tumbling right after him, hips stuttering, spreading their come across their stomachs.

Draco sighed into Harry’s mouth, wriggling his hand to pull it out from between them. Harry stiffened slightly, intending to get up, but Draco’s hands wrapped around his hips, pulling him insistently back in. The mess between them spread further as they kissed deeply, and Harry could feel Draco’s heartbeat as it slowly returned to normal, echoing his own. Harry didn’t want the kiss to end, because he knew that once he did, he would have to face the consequences of his actions. He wasn’t ready to do that, he wanted to pretend that what they had just done was okay, even though he knew that it wasn’t.
Finally, regretfully, Harry ended the kiss and pulled back, opening his eyes to look down at Draco. He wanted to shut his eyes again immediately, because the sight of Draco looking debauched and wrecked was enough to make his cock twitch, already getting ready for another round. Which absolutely must not happen. Harry opened his mouth, but before he could say the thing he was dreading saying, he was interrupted by a knock at the door.

“Fuck!” Harry jerked away from Draco, his trousers, still stuck around his thighs, restricting his movement so that he slipped off the bed and fell on the floor with a bump. “Ow!”

“Who is that?” Draco leant up on one elbow, looking supremely unconcerned about the fact that he was naked from head to mid thigh and was covered in bodily fluids.

“It’s probably McGonagall, she’ll be wanting to know why I left a bunch of stupefied students in the fourth floor bathroom.” Harry jumped to his feet, picking up his wand and cleaning himself off before shoving himself back into his clothes. “Clean yourself up, I’ve got to go let her in.”

“Are you going to tell her what happened?”

Harry went hot all over and Draco laughed softly.

“I didn’t mean that, I meant the thing with Smith and his friends.”

“Oh.” Harry let out a sigh of relief. “I’m going to have to, otherwise I’ll be in trouble for randomly attacking a bunch of students.”

The knock sounded again at the door, and Harry jumped.

“Go and let her in.” Draco waved his hand in the direction of the doorway, then began pulling up his trousers. “The sooner that’s dealt with, the sooner we can get back to this.”

“Draco-”

“Unless the next words out of your mouth are going to be what an excellent idea, I’d suggest you keep your mouth shut and go and answer the door. Preferably before McGonagall breaks in and catches you with that guilty expression on your face.”

The knock sounded again, and Harry sighed and did as Draco suggested. He’d deal with McGonagall and the situation with Smith first, and then he’d deal with Draco and what he’d just let them both do.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter 5 will be posted tomorrow

Comments are ♥. Leave one here (if so inclined) or at the post at LiveJournal.
“Mr Malfoy, I wish to apologise,” McGonagall said from her seat on the sofa.

It was weird, seeing her sit there, where Draco and Harry spent so much of their time, sipping tea out of a conjured china cup and reaching for a Ginger Newt from the box on the table. It almost felt to Draco as though they had invited their headmistress into their home, a place that he and Harry had moved into together. He wondered if all visits to his future home away from both the manor and school would feel as strange.

Although probably not, he reflected, as McGonagall inclined her head at him, giving permission for him to put his shirt back on. The bruises and cuts were mostly faded now, since Harry had applied his medicine. Draco had been momentarily surprised that Harry would have such things in his possession, as quick to jump without thinking of the consequences as he was. But then he had remembered that he’d spent an awful lot of time around Granger, who was more prepared for anything than any girl scout ever could be.

“It’s alright,” he shrugged, slipping his shirt over his shoulders and quickly doing up a few buttons. McGonagall’s presence felt slightly less weird now that he was no longer half naked.

McGonagall’s lips thinned into almost non-existence, and her nostrils flared. “It most certainly is not alright. No student of mine should ever be subjected to such things, no matter their circumstances, and I am sorry that this escalated as far as it did before it was noticed.”

“What are you going to do about Smith?” Harry asked, from where he was leaning against the fireplace. The anger that had burned in his eyes earlier had come back with the retelling, and he had practically yelled at McGonagall for almost five minutes before dragging Draco up to standing and pulling his shirt over his head, almost viciously pointing out the marks and describing in vivid detail just how bad they’d been before Harry had healed him.

McGonagall, for her part, had been so furious when she’d first arrived that her lips had practically disappeared they were so thin and white, demanding to know how three students had ended up stupefied in the middle of a bathroom floor and wanting just one good reason why she shouldn’t expel them both right that instant and send a letter to the Ministry instructing them to throw Draco straight back into Azkaban. Her face had paled further as she’d listened to Harry’s rant, her skin taking on a sickly green tinge when Harry had forced Draco to show her the marks on his back. She had sat down rather suddenly on the sofa, and Harry’s anger had disappeared almost instantly as he conjured up some tea and biscuits for them all, and the whole thing had somehow turned into a tea party.

“Mr Smith and his accomplices will have a week to gather their things and ask for their subject material, so that they may still sit for their exams in the summer, after which they will be asked to leave.” McGonagall sniffed and took a dainty sip of her tea. “I will not allow thugs and cowards to terrify my students and cause physical harm to them, especially ones who are already of age. And Mr Potter,” she looked over the rim of her glasses to glare severely at Harry, “I should hope that you have already instructed Mr Malfoy to tell you immediately should such circumstances arise again.”

Harry looked startled, as though the idea hadn’t occurred to him. Draco tried not to roll his eyes; he’d been hoping to avoid Harry thinking of that. The idea of constantly running to Harry whenever someone was mean to him grated on him. That definitely wasn’t what he wanted their relationship to be about. Not now.
“I’ll make sure he does,” Harry mumbled, not looking at Draco. He hadn’t looked at him since the moment McGonagall had first knocked on their door. Even while he was pulling Draco around and pointing out various points on his shoulders, back and hips, he had still managed to avoid eye contact.

“And I would like to hear it myself from you, Mr Malfoy.” McGonagall turned to Draco. “What you have suffered was not merely schoolyard bullying, but actual bodily harm. The Ministry hands out sentences in Azkaban for such offences out in the wizarding world, and you can be sure that I will be writing a letter to the Ministry this evening suggesting that they keep an eye on Mr Smith and his cohorts in the future. Such behaviour is not tolerated anywhere, Mr Malfoy, not even in the Muggle world, and it is not simply for your own safety that you speak out.” She glared pointedly at him. “If they can do it to you, then it is quite likely that they would do it to others.”

Draco nodded his understanding. “I’ll tell you if I ever experience something of the like again, you have my word.”

“You’ll tell me if anyone ever does anything again,” Harry burst out, anger quickly returning. Draco closed his eyes; he had forgotten about Harry’s quick temper.

“Well, it is time that I go and sort this out,” McGonagall said, standing. “I shall have quite a few letters to write tonight. I shall instruct the house elves to serve you both dinner in here this evening. I suspect the two of you have had enough excitement for one day. I imagine the rumour mill can wait one more day for the subjects of its gossip to be seen out in public.”

“Thank you, Professor,” Harry said, vanishing the remains of their impromptu afternoon tea. Draco nodded his thanks too; he hadn’t been looking forward to hearing what people were saying about whatever they thought had happened in the bathroom. Draco could imagine he wasn’t seen in a very flattering light in many of the theories.

The moment the door closed behind the headmistress Harry turned on Draco, jaw clenched and gaze pinned somewhere near Draco’s left shoulder. “Draco, I want you to tell me if anything happens in the future, okay?”

Draco snorted. “And I want you to look at me when you order me about.”

“Damn it, Draco, I’m serious!” Harry stalked forward, fingers curling around Draco’s upper arm and squeezing, almost to the point of pain. “If anyone does anything to you, if they say anything, if they even so much as look at you funny, I want you to tell me about it!”

“Why? So you can run in and Stun them all?”

“Yes!”

Draco laughed. “Harry, if you did that to everyone who said something bad about me, we’d be practically swimming in unconscious bodies. Think about who you’re talking to here, I’m a convicted Death Eater who’s shagging Harry bloody Potter, for fuck’s sake!”

Harry flinched and let go of Draco’s arm. “We shouldn’t... That shouldn’t have happened,” he whispered quietly.

“But it did,” Draco said, stepping forward into Harry’s space. “And unless you can look me in the eye and tell me truthfully that you don’t want it to happen again, I think you should take me into your room and fuck me unconscious.”

Harry’s eyes were about level with Draco’s nose now, as though he were afraid to look any higher.
“But this isn’t... It’s the bond-”

“I know that, but right now, we both want it. And if we both want it, right now, then what’s stopping us?”

A part of Draco hated himself for talking Harry into it, but it was drowned out by the much larger part that needed Harry’s hands on him, needed to taste his mouth, feel his skin, hear those sharp moans as he came. Now that he’d had a taste, Draco couldn’t think about anything other than the need to have Harry right now. He would deal with the consequences once the bond was removed. The consequences of having Harry look at him with hatred and disgust once he realised just how badly Draco had taken advantage.

Harry exhaled sharply through his nose and shoved a hand into his hair, pulling at the messy black strands. His green eyes finally lifted to Draco’s own, and Draco watched as his face seemed to crumple under an enormous weight. “Fuck,” he breathed out, and then grabbed Draco’s head and kissed him.

The kiss was harsh and forceful, teeth clashing and lips mashing, their noses banging together and the edge of Harry’s glasses cutting sharply into Draco’s cheekbone. Draco wrapped his hands around Harry’s hips, fingers finding his belt loops and reeling him in closer. They stumbled backwards together, the back of Draco’s leg hitting the table and Harry’s feet getting tangled with the chair legs. Draco felt Harry’s hands slide down to his shoulders a second before his back hit the wall, and he whimpered into Harry’s mouth. It seemed that now Harry had given in, he was committing to it as much of himself as he did with everything; jumping in with both feet, one hundred percent determined. It was a heady thing, to be the focus of Harry’s attention like that, and Draco was both terrified of the intensity and harder than he’d ever been in his life. He wanted to submit fully to it, to lay back and let the heat of Harry scorch him down to his bones, and for a brief moment he wondered just how much of it was a natural reaction and how much was the bond.

But then Harry’s mouth left his and traveled down to plant teeth in his collarbones, and all higher brain function left Draco, reduced down to only the push and pull of their bodies as they staggered sideways into Harry’s bedroom, hands scrabbling to remove their clothes as quickly as possible.

Draco’s back landed painfully on a book left laying on the unmade bed, and he barely had time to throw it to the floor before Harry was crawling over him, kissing a path from his navel to his chin. “Wand,” Harry muttered, littering Draco’s jaw with biting, stinging kisses. “I need my... where’s... Accio wand...”

Draco felt dizzy as he heard the telltale smack of wood hitting flesh, because of course Harry could do wandless magic while not even in possession of his wand. And then he jumped, expecting but also not the feeling of the cleansing and protecting spells as they slid over and into him.

“Draco, I...”

Draco opened his eyes, not sure when he’d closed them, to see Harry crouched over him, fingers wet with oil and a look of frustrated worry pulling at his brow. Draco wrapped his hand around Harry’s wrist, guiding him down between his legs, and he lifted his mouth to kiss Harry, deep and dirty, just at the moment when Harry’s finger first breached him.

His eyes were fully open now, and he stared up, mesmerised by the sight of Harry concentrating so fiercely as he worked to open Draco up. Draco could feel the slight tremor in his arm against his own thigh, as Harry tried to be gentle even through his obvious impatience. One finger became two and then three in quick succession, and Draco was so turned on that he accepted them easily, thoughts of pain or resisting never even entering his head. He wanted it so badly that the preparation was almost
unnecessary, but he didn’t stop Harry, just lay back and revelled in the feeling that Harry’s intensity aimed solely on him gave him.

“I want... Can I...?” Harry asked, bending down to kiss Draco, sliding his tongue deep into his mouth in lieu of finishing his question. In answer, Draco shifted, opening his legs wider and lifting his knees, letting Harry fall seamlessly into the cradle of his hips. Harry’s fingers withdrew with a filthy squelch, and Draco felt the bed dip and sway slightly beneath them as Harry shuffled forward and lined himself up.

Draco hissed in a breath and grabbed Harry around the neck as he felt the first press of the round blunt head of Harry’s cock, pulling him down into a harsh kiss that he had no hope of getting out of to ask if Draco was okay, if he was sure.

The first slide in was hot and hard and filled Draco right to the very edge of pain. Harry’s hips jerked, as though trying to keep still, give Draco time to adjust, fighting against the urge to pull out and drive straight back home again. Draco slid his heels up the back of Harry’s thighs, pressing in at the swell of his arse, giving him permission to move with his body as he kept their lips connected.

It was all the indication Harry needed to pull out and push back in, surprisingly slow and gentle at first, the movements incongruous with the fever that had been burning through them since the moment they’d been left alone. But it was surprisingly perfect, too, the shallow thrusting of Harry’s hips kept almost in the background as they continued to devour each other with their mouths. Draco’s cock was trapped between their stomachs, the drag of Harry’s wiry hair creating a delicious barely there friction that had Draco balanced on the edge of wanting to shout for more and wanting the feeling to go on forever.

The tempo picked up slowly, Harry’s fingers digging into Draco’s hips as he began to pull Draco up to meet his every thrust. Sweat began to build up between the slide of their bodies, Harry’s chest hair scratching tantalisingly against Draco’s nipples. Their kiss turned to sharing heated breaths, ratcheting up the heat between them as they moved inexorably closer to their completion. Harry moaned once, the sound petering out into a quiet gasp as his body went taut and his hips snapped forwards once, twice, three times and then stilled, and Draco moaned at the feeling of wet warmth spilling inside him.

“Sorry,” Harry gasped out, finally separating their lips so that he could mouth at Draco’s stubble-raw chin. “Wait... Just let me...”

Draco had a brief moment to wonder at how much practise Harry had had at this and feel jealousy rage in his chest at the thought before heat and wetness enveloped him and he yelled out in surprise. Harry swallowed him down with determination, curled over awkwardly until he belatedly began shuffling backwards on his knees, slipping out of Draco with a small rush of dampness. Fingers replaced him almost immediately, and Draco shut his eyes and rocked into Harry’s mouth, grinding his arse down onto Harry’s hand. He came suddenly, held too long on the knife edge of not enough that he had no warning, and Harry spluttered and coughed and swallowed down as much as he could.

They lay there like that for a long moment, Harry resting his head against Draco’s thigh, breath catching in the fine hairs, Draco blinking up at the ceiling. Then Harry lifted his head.

Draco tensed, waiting for Harry to start backtracking, and his mind automatically began sifting through the different things he could say to prevent it. But instead, all Harry did was press a gentle kiss to the inside of Draco’s knee, tongue darting out to taste the sweat gathered in the crease of skin. Draco took a breath and looked down, preparing himself to see disappointment, resignation, even disgust on Harry’s face, but Harry was just looking calmly back up at him, a small smile gracing his
lips. Draco lifted his hand and slid his fingers through Harry’s sweat dampened hair, opening his mouth to say something, although he didn’t know what.

He was saved from saying anything embarrassing by the sound of a loud crack coming from the direction of the living room. Harry jumped, banging his head off Draco’s knee as he sat up quickly.

“Would sirs like their dinner in here or in their bedroom?” Asked a high, squeaky voice.

Harry’s eyes widened in shock and he jumped up from the bed, running over to his dresser and pulling out a pair of boxers. “In- in there is fine, thank you,” he called out through the very open door, hopping on one leg as he pulled his pants on.

Draco slid his aching legs beneath the sheet and turned onto his side, watching with amusement.

“Bitsy is happy to serve Harry Potter and his lover, sirs,” the house elf said, tactfully staying out of sight on the other side of the door. “If you be needing anything else, please to be calling for Bitsy!” Another loud crack sounded, signalling the elf’s disappearance. Draco laughed at the look of sheer mortification on Harry’s face.

Harry slipped out of the room, returning a moment later with a tray laden with two helpings of Shepherd’s Pie, a large treacle tart, and two tall goblets of pumpkin juice. “Not exactly the sort of thing you eat in bed, but it’ll do,” Harry said, placing the tray on the bedside table and crawling under the covers next to Draco.

“Why is it that your favourite things to eat always seem to be on the menu?” Draco grumbled, grabbing a fork.

“Probably because my favourites are simple. There’s not a lot of cause for the Hogwarts elves to make foie gras.” He shovelled a huge mouthful of meat and potatoes into his mouth, breathing out the steam. “Besides, I’ve had a very trying day. I had to Stun three people and rescue a damsel in distress.”

Draco snorted. “I think we just proved the fact that I’m not a damsel.”

“But you were in distress.” Harry’s voice had gone serious again, and Draco sighed. “Please Draco, promise me that you’ll tell me in future?”

Draco couldn’t help but notice the way Harry had phrased it as a request rather than an order. Not that it made much of a difference; the order had already been given an hour ago, and Draco had to comply. But it meant something that Harry was asking. “Can you promise me that this won’t be a one off?”

Harry didn’t answer, and Draco felt his stomach twist unpleasantly. He looked up to meet Harry’s eyes, and saw him already looking back, his expression slightly sad but still determined. “Yes, I can,” he said, and Draco felt the tension in his stomach leech away.

“Then yes, I promise.”

Draco was supposed to be translating a long and complicated set of runes, but he couldn’t concentrate. His eyes kept straying to the slow melting snow outside the window and his mind kept replaying the Christmas holidays, sighing happily at the memories. The entire school had emptied out
for the holidays, everyone excited to go home and spend time with their friends and family. For the 
first time, Draco had found himself with nowhere else to go, and he’d felt momentarily shameful for 
all the times he’d mocked Harry for being in the same position. This year, their roles were reversed, 
with Harry having lots of places to choose from to spend his Christmas holidays. Guilt had mixed 
heavily with pleasure when Harry had decided to stay with Draco.

Harry had woken Draco up on Christmas morning with a long and sloppy blowjob, and after he’d 
swallowed down Draco’s release, licking and sucking up every last drop until the sensations became 
painful from over-stimulation, he’d turned a boneless Draco over onto his stomach and proceeded to 
finger him open slowly, pressing insistently over the spot inside him that made Draco see stars again 
and again until Draco was reduced to a writhing mass of desperation beneath him. Only then had 
Harry sunk inside him, pressing in inch by torturous inch, until Draco was so overwhelmed that he’d come again messily into the sheets, leaving him gasping and pliant as Harry fucked him until he 
found his own release.

They’d showered together afterwards, trading lazy kisses and aimlessly wandering hands, followed 
by a brief fight over the larger towel that had ended with Draco pushing a wet and gloriously naked 
Harry back onto the bed for a quick and easy handjob. It was the best Christmas morning Draco 
could ever remember having.

And then Harry had left.

He’d told Draco about it the night before, when they’d been snuggled up together on the sofa, shirts 
discarded on the floor at their feet and their trousers undone. Draco had been fully expecting Harry to 
leave him for the day while he went to visit with his adopted family, and he’d known that he couldn’t 
go with him; Draco would hardly be welcome, showing up at the Weasley’s home, after everything 
he and his family had done. But he hadn’t been able to help feeling a little bereft, as Harry had kissed 
him deeply and thoroughly one last time, before disappearing out the door towards McGonagall’s 
Floo. It didn’t help that Draco knew Harry was going to be making a stop at Draco’s aunt’s house, to 
spend some time with his godson. Harry had gone off to visit Draco’s own family members and yet 
still he wouldn’t have been welcome. Draco had spent most of the day mentally writing a letter to 
Aunt Andromeda, wondering if his mother would mind if Draco tried reaching out to her still 
estranged sister.

He hadn’t expected Harry back until late in the evening, so he’d been pleasantly surprised when the 
door had swung open at around six and Harry had pounced on him where he sat on the sofa looking 
out on the snow covered Quidditch pitch, bringing with him the smell of Christmas pudding and 
brussels sprouts. “Missed you,” Harry had murmured, before sliding his tongue into Draco’s mouth 
and kissing the guilt right out of him. They’d fucked on the sofa that night, the heat from the fireplace 
warming his back as Draco had straddled Harry and ridden him slow and deep.

And then on Boxing Day, Harry had given Draco his Christmas present: A trip to Azkaban.

Draco had hardly been able to believe that he’d been given visitation rights, and he’d strongly 
suspected that Harry had had to throw his considerable Saviour weight around in order for it to 
happen. He’d had to blink back the tears as he’d watched his mother being led into the visitation 
room, and for a moment they’d just stared at each other, unwilling to move lest it was a dream that 
they would awake from should they disturb it too much. Mother had lost weight, her fine bones 
sticking out through the waxy skin, making her look gaunt and frail instead of her usual pale and 
ethereal. Her hair had been lank and dirty, the thin grey robes she’d been given to wear ragged and 
dusty, but she had been there, right in front of him, and Draco could hug her and kiss her cheek and 
let her know that he was alright. And he had, and then spent an hour in a tearful embrace, holding 
herself tightly as he talked about his classes and what he hoped to get in his NEWT exams, and
what it was like being bonded to Harry.

He didn’t tell her everything about their relationship, of course, but his mother had looked at him with a small smile on her face that told him she suspected. Draco had tensed, waiting for some sort of reprimand to follow - Merlin knew he needed one - but instead all she had done was hold him tighter and whisper in his ear, “I’m glad you’re happy. Tell Mr Potter how grateful I am for today.”

He hadn’t been able to visit his father, as Lucius had been sentenced to a locked down ward, but Draco had found he’d been glad of the excuse. As ashamed as he was for his own actions during the war, as sorry as he was that his mother had been caught up in it, he was angry at his father. Looking back, Draco had realised that Lucius had been given so many chances to turn back from the path he’d chosen, and each time he’d chosen wrong, and he’d condemned his family into following him.

Draco had left the prison with his arm clamped firmly around Harry’s waist, glad for the support as they’d Apparated back to Hogsmeade and begun the long walk back to the castle. He’d shown his gratefulness for Harry’s gift as soon as they’d entered their rooms, pushing him back against the wall and kissing him into a boneless mess, before sliding to his knees and thanking him properly, with his hands pressed hard into Harry’s hips and his lips wrapped around his cock.

The last day of the holidays, before the rest of the students arrived back at school on the train, Harry had taken Draco down to the Quidditch pitch. They’d spent the entire afternoon up in the cold air, playing Seeker’s games over and over until they were so frozen to their brooms that they couldn’t even lift their hands to make a grab for the snitch. They’d warmed themselves up under the hot spray in the changing room showers, Draco’s cheek pressed to the cool tile wall as Harry fucked into him from behind. Then Harry had turned him to face him, wrapping his fingers around Draco’s cock as he pressed his forehead to Draco’s, lips so close they were sharing the air between them, until the shower washed Draco’s release from Harry’s skin.

The entire holiday experience had been sublime, terrifying in its beauty. Draco didn’t know the word for the overwhelming feeling growing rapidly inside of him, but whatever it was it was swiftly overtaking him, his mind and body consumed with Harry. Even being back in the classroom, surrounded by students and teachers, the glares and mutterings sent his way once more with even more fervor than before, Draco couldn’t stop thinking about Harry.

Draco tuned out Professor Babbling’s muttered commentary on the many different ways in which Otila can be translated depending on the degree of turning, and kept staring out of the window. He could just make out the tops of the slowly defrosting Quidditch hoops, and his mind wandered again to his games with Harry, when he’d narrowly avoided knocking himself out on one of the hoops when Harry had been chasing him. He smiled widely at the memory of the way Harry had almost fallen from his broom he had been laughing so hard, his mouth stretched wide and his eyes crinkled. He’d looked beautiful, cheeks reddened from the cold and his black hair streaked with watery snowflakes.

The bell rang, signalling the end of the class, and Draco jumped, startled out of his reverie. He packed up his books and parchment, noticing for the first time that he was being glared at from across the room. It was one of Smith’s old friends, whose name Draco had never bothered to learn, who had managed to miss out on the fun in the bathroom all those weeks ago, and so had been spared expulsion along with the rest of his friends. He was loitering by his desk, seemingly waiting for the rest of the class to file out.

“I bet you think you’re something really special,” He muttered darkly, once the last of the students had rounded the doorway. “Think you’ve won something, do you, running off and crying to your master?”
Draco rolled his eyes and stood up. “That’s the thing about heroes,” he said conversationally, looking the boy straight in the eye. “They really don’t like it when people touch things that belong to them.”

The boy sneered. “You won’t be his little pet forever, you know. He’ll get tired of you eventually.”

Draco kept his expression carefully controlled, not wanting to let him know the barb had struck home. He shrugged. “Maybe, maybe not. Either way, it doesn’t make much difference to you.” He leaned forward slightly, as though he was about to impart a great secret. “He really doesn’t like you very much.”

“You ready to go, Draco?”

The boy jumped back at the sound of Harry’s voice. Draco, who had felt him coming through the bond, smirked and swung his bag onto his shoulder. “Absolutely.” He walked up to where Harry was standing in the doorway, his eyes angry and fixed determinedly on the other boy. Draco felt a frisson of want slide down his spine, and he couldn’t help himself. “Lunch first? Or are we going straight for the shagging?”

“Draco,” Harry said warningly, but he finally turned to look at him instead of the Hufflepuff, and he looked like he was fighting a smile. The boy mumbled something under his breath, and Harry’s gaze snapped back over to him. “Something you want to say, Carver?”

The boy lifted his chin defiantly, and Draco suddenly knew that nothing good would come from whatever he had to say.

“I’m just wondering what the rest of the wizarding world will have to say about their supposed Saviour, once the Prophet prints this news story.”

Draco scoffed, even as his stomach rolled. “If you think that rag is going to print a single bad word about Harry these days, then you’re even more stupid than you look. And that’s really quite a feat.” He grabbed Harry’s arm, eager to get him away before the boy could spout anything more dangerous. The last thing he wanted was for Harry to start questioning what they were doing together. Draco was in this now, and he couldn’t spend the remainder of his sentence so close to Harry and yet no longer allowed to touch. He’d deal with the consequences once the bond was lifted.

They walked back to their rooms quickly, Draco in the lead with his hand still closed tight around Harry’s arm. He could feel that Harry was upset, and he could tell by the set of his face that Harry was thinking hard about something. Draco needed him to stop thinking, and he needed him to stop immediately, before Harry came to his senses and put a stop to what they were doing. The thought of Harry saying no and meaning it made something swirl cold and unpleasant in Draco’s stomach, and that overwhelming feeling that he had no name for rose up and threatened to swallow him whole.

The door hadn’t even fully closed before Draco turned and pushed Harry back into it, covering his mouth with his own to try and stop whatever it was that Harry might be thinking of saying.

“Draco,” Harry gasped, wrenching his mouth away and pushing feebly at Draco’s shoulders. Draco latched his mouth to Harry’s jaw instead, sliding round to suck a bruise into the skin just below Harry’s ear. He used his body to keep Harry pressed against the door and shoved his hands between them, pulling Harry’s trousers open and sliding his hand inside.

“Draco, maybe-”
Draco cut him off with a vicious nip of teeth to Harry’s ear. “Shut up, Harry,” he muttered, pulling his wand from his sleeve to perform a spell to make this go faster. He tensed up as he felt the effects, felt himself becoming wet and open. There wasn’t time for them to take this slow; Harry needed to be given other things to think about right now. “Just shut up and fuck me.”

Draco ripped down his trousers to mid thigh and grabbed Harry’s hand, forcing his fingers to feel where Draco was already wet and waiting for him. Harry groaned and flipped them both, shoving at Draco’s shoulders until his face was pressed into the wooden door, pulling at his hips to present his arse for him. He felt the rough fabric of Harry’s trousers as they were pushed down his thighs, and then Harry was shoving inside him hard and relentless, pressing Draco into the door. Draco reached back to put a hand on Harry’s hip, keeping them close together as he started thrusting into him without bothering to find a proper rhythm.

Draco wished it could be that easy to hold onto the rest of Harry.
“Harry, there you are!”

Harry jumped at the loud whisper and dropped the book he’d been flipping through. Hermione pulled him into a quick hug and kissed him on the cheek. “I feel like I haven’t seen you for ages, what have you been up to?”

Harry swallowed and shrugged, trying to look innocent. “Oh, you know. Studying, mainly.”

“I would have thought I’d see you more often if that’s what you were really doing,” Hermione said with a mischievous smile. “Besides, I had no idea you were studying Arithmancy.” She nodded down at the book laying at their feet.

Harry blushed. “Draco said he needed it, so I thought I’d pick it up while I was here.” He crossed his arms across his chest, trying to hide his shaking fingers. “It’s easier for both of us to study in our rooms, that’s all.”

Hermione looked at him, frustration evident in her expression. “You know you can tell me anything, don’t you Harry? I won’t judge you.”

“Yes, of course. There’s just nothing to tell.”

Hermione sighed. “If you think I can’t tell when you’re lying, then you must think I’m as stupid as Ron does.”

“I don’t think you’re stupid,” Harry began, but Hermione cut him off.

“I’ve seen you, you know,” she said, and Harry almost choked on his own spit. “On the Quidditch pitch? In the evenings?” It became obvious that Harry could do nothing more than gape at her like a fish, so she continued. “You and Malfoy, playing your Seeker’s games, laughing and joking together.”

“Oh,” was all Harry could think to say.

“Oh,” was all Harry could think to say.

“It’s okay, you know.” She tucked a stray curl of hair behind her ear and started hunting for books, pulling them out and balancing them in a pile in the air behind her. “You’ve been forced to spend so much time together the past six months, it’s natural that the two of you would become close.”

“It is?”

“Mmhmm. In fact, I’ve always thought that if he hadn’t been raised by such awful parents, the two of you might have been friends growing up.”

“Really?” Harry stared at her, agog. Of all the things that she could have come up with, that was the most flabbergasting. “But we hated each other,” he blurted out, wincing afterwards as he realised he’d used the past tense.

“I’m not sure you really did,” Hermione muttered, face buried between two huge tomes as she searched the back of the shelf. “I think you both just hated what the other stood for. And now that’s been taken away, so it’s no longer an issue.”

Harry was thoroughly confused. “Hermione, what are you talking about?”
“I’m just saying that it’s okay if you and Malfoy become friends, like you obviously are.” She pulled her head out of the bookshelves and directed her pile to a nearby table with a flick of her wand. “And you don’t have to feel like you need to avoid me because of it.”

“I’m not avoiding you,” Harry mumbled. And it was true; he wasn’t. He’d just been too busy with Draco to remember that he had a life outside of their bedroom.

“Well, good.” Hermione plonked herself down behind the teetering pile of books and looked up at him. “Now go and take your new friend his book. Oh, and ask him to give you a few pointers in Potions, you’re going to fail your NEWT if you keep writing essays like the one last week. Jobberknoll feathers dropped straight into squid ink, honestly,” she shook her head in exasperation. “I don’t know how you haven’t managed to blow your hands off.”

“Probably because I’ve always had you to make sure I don’t.” Harry gave her a quick grin, picked up the Arithmancy book, and set off from the library with a quick wave.

His smile slipped from his face as he began the walk back towards the teachers’ quarters. For an unbelievable moment, he’d thought that Hermione had been saying that she knew about Harry’s relationship with Draco, and that it was okay. But of course, she would never think that. Out of everyone, it had been Hermione who had understood the most Harry’s need to bond with Draco, to keep himself away from people who would want to take advantage of what the bond could make him do. Ron had just been confused, not able to understand why Harry would even care. Ginny had just rolled her eyes and muttered of course under her breath. Andromeda had pursed her lips and turned away, any mention of the other side of her family making her close herself off, as usual.

But Hermione had understood, had agreed with Harry that the possibilities of abuse were too great, even for a Malfoy, and she had stuck up for him when others had voiced their own confusion and disappointment. She’d even stuck up for Draco over Christmas, when lunch at the Burrow had turned into a slanging match. Tensions had been running high for the first Christmas without Fred, and the more the day wore on the more angry Molly had become, finally taking it out on the only available person: Harry and his bond with Draco. Hermione had politely but firmly told the Weasleys that she’d seen how hard Draco had been working at school, that he’d been putting up with a lot of bullying without much more than a sneer or a harsh word said in return. Then she’d reminded them all that Draco had still been a child for much of what had happened, and asked that they wait and see what kind of man he might grow into now that he had a proper chance, before they start tarring him with the same brush as his father.

Harry had been so grateful to her, because he’d been about to go on a rant about just what the so-called good side did to people like Draco, people like the guards at the ministry, and Smith and his friends. Harry hadn’t fought Voldemort for people like that, and Draco had been as much a victim as the rest of them, bad choices that he’d made aside. But Hermione had intervened before he could, and he was glad of it. It was Christmas, and Fred was dead, and Harry didn’t want to find he’d said something that he couldn’t take back once the cloud of grief had receded.

But the whole conversation had left an uncomfortable pall among their gathering, and so Harry had quickly said his goodbyes and rushed back to the school. He’d been eager to get back to Draco, to curl up on the sofa with him and watch the snow fall past their window, crawl into bed and lose himself inside him until all of the bad memories went away and he was left with nothing but happy holiday feelings. Harry thought it might say something that his safe, happy place had become being anywhere with Draco, but he didn’t like to think about it too much. He thought that whatever it said was likely to be something very dangerous.

Bumping into Hermione in the library had forced Harry to remember just what it was that he was
doing, and the sick feeling he got whenever he thought about it roiled in his stomach once more. Draco was already in their rooms when Harry pushed open the door, packing their Quidditch leathers away in the trunk in the corner and leaning their brooms together by the wall. Harry stared at them, at the way the tail twigs overlapped each other, at his leather glove laying innocently on top of Draco’s robe. They were all tangled up in each other and the evidence of it was strewn all across the room and beyond, Harry’s spare pair of glasses balanced on top of Draco’s hair potion in the bathroom, Harry’s shirts taking up space next to Draco’s shirts in their dresser, texts on Ancient Runes laying on top of Charms essays in what Harry had come to think of as their spare room...

And he’d done this, Harry, when he’d crossed the line from guard to... whatever the fuck they were now. Boyfriends? Lovers? Fuck-buddies? Harry didn’t know, and he suspected that that was indicative of the fact that he had no fucking clue what he was doing anymore. And it was all Harry’s fault. None of it could be blamed on Draco, he was just doing what the bond told him to, the way he should be. Harry had done it all himself, gotten himself so involved with Draco Malfoy that he had no idea anymore which way was up. It was absolutely terrifying.

The only thing more terrifying was the thought of what came after.

“Are you alright? You look like you’re about to be sick,” Draco asked, sitting down on the sofa so that he could take off his shoes and socks.

“Fine,” Harry said faintly. “Just tired.”

“So, not sick with jealousy that I managed to score the snitch three times out of five, then?”

Harry snorted, throwing the book at Draco’s head, who caught it deftly. “Ha, you wish. That last game was a tie.”

“It was not, you are such a sore loser.” Draco reached up and pulled Harry down onto the sofa, swinging a leg over to straddle him. “You just can’t stand the fact that I won.”

“It was a tie.”

“Was not.”

“Was too, shut up.”

“Make me,” Draco whispered. Harry lifted his chin to kiss him, but Draco pulled away. “No, I mean, make me.”

Harry sucked in a sharp breath. “You want..?”

“Yeah.” Draco leaned down, leaving biting little kisses along the collar of Harry’s t shirt. “I want it. Fuck, I want it.”

“But we can’t,” Harry gasped out, his hands already busy trying to undo Draco’s jeans. “The bond-”

“It’s not like you’ll tell me to do anything I don’t want to do,” Draco murmured, pulling at Harry’s top so that he could trail his tongue across Harry’s collarbone. “I trust you.”

Oh God.

“No.”

The word came out louder than he’d planned in his desperation. Draco stopped his movements and
leaned back, and Harry winced at the look of confused hurt on his face.

“No?”

“I mean, not now,” Harry backtracked, needing to see that look gone from Draco’s eyes. “Another
time, but not now.”

“Do you mean... After?”

Harry saw something that looked like hope flare in the pale grey depths, and he didn’t understand it. *Harry* should be the one hoping, hoping that once the bond was removed Draco wouldn’t want to
hex him into a thousand pieces. He’d have every right to, after all. He’d asked for Harry to ensure
that this didn’t happen, and Harry had let it happen anyway.

“Yeah,” Harry said quietly, reaching up to slide a hand through Draco’s baby fine hair. “After.”

Draco smiled and leaned back in again, kissing Harry slow and deep. He was so beautiful, Harry
thought wonderingly, letting his eyes roam over him as Draco pulled back, sliding off his lap and
pulling Harry up with him. His cheeks were still reddened from the cold February weather, giving
his skin a rosy glow. Firelight danced in his grey eyes as he walked backwards, leading Harry into
their bedroom. His skin was pale and unblemished once more, all the cuts and bruises faded away
and leaving behind nothing but translucent perfection. Harry stood still and watched him undress,
eyes following the path of fine dark blond hair down from his navel to where his gorgeous cock
stood, upright and flushed and mouthwatering. Harry wanted to put his hands all over him, wanted to
trace the path of his fingers with his tongue, wanted to feel those lean, strong thighs wrapped around
his waist. He felt dizzy he wanted it so much.

“You know, in order for this to work, you at least have to take your trousers off,” Draco said, an
amused smile the only thing he was left wearing. “Or are you still so shocked by my win on the pitch
that you’ve forgotten how to undress yourself?”

He didn’t wait for an answer, which was good because Harry couldn’t think of anything to say. The
words *you’re so beautiful* were stuck at the back of his throat, fighting with other words that wanted
to come out that Harry definitely couldn’t say. Draco walked the few paces between them and lifted
Harry’s t shirt, pulling it up over his head and letting it fall to the floor.

“I see a loss on the pitch makes you absolutely useless in the bedroom,” Draco said, removing
Harry’s trousers and pants, shoes and socks, quickly and efficiently. “I’ll have to make a note of that
for next time.”

*Next time.*

Harry let himself be pushed slowly backwards onto the bed, still caught in his head and trying to sift
through all of the thoughts tangling him up, trapping him. Draco grabbed his wand and flicked it,
then cast it aside haphazardly, crawling over Harry until he was straddling his waist. Harry’s hands
came up without his permission, wrapping around Draco’s hips to steady him as he grabbed Harry’s
cock and positioned them. He lowered himself down in one smooth glide, magic having already
carved out a space for Harry deep inside Draco. He felt himself bottom out, Draco’s arse resting
against Harry’s balls as he got used to the feeling, his hips twitching in Harry’s grip as he shifted and
clenched lightly, experimenting. He rose up an inch and let himself fall back down again, and they
both groaned into the silence of the room.

“One of these days,” Draco said, starting up a shallow rhythm with his hips, “I want you to tell me
what to do, take me anyway you want, just hold me down and *force* me to take it.”
“You’d - oh, God - you’d really like that?”

“Fuck, yes.” Draco added a swivel to his hips, keening out a moan as the movement forced Harry’s cock to prod against his prostate. “It’s the look you get on your face, all that fierce concentration.”

“You like that?” God, the torturously slow roll of Draco’s hips were driving Harry mad.

“I love it,” Draco assented, his breathing picking up as he quickened his pace. “And I will love it. After.”

He said the word as though he were tasting it, rolling it over his tongue and letting it slide from his lips, relishing it, revelling in it. And then the time for talking was over, because Draco’s hips were moving faster, his hands braced against Harry’s chest, thumbs flicking tantalisingly over his nipples. Harry’s hands were like vices where they were wrapped around Draco’s hips, fingers digging in so hard Harry was sure he’d leave bruises. He thrust up into Draco, the wet heat of him threatening to overwhelm him. He planted his heels into the bed, arching up and trying to get closer, deeper.

“Harry, touch me,” Draco moaned, and Harry forced one of his hands to unclench, fingers following the line of Draco’s groin until they could wrap around his cock and give him a few, uncoordinated tugs.

Draco arched his back as he came, one long, perfect arc of pale skin and lean muscle, his cock jerking in Harry’s hand and covering his fingers, stomach and chest in milky white strands. Harry worked him through it, his own hips still thrusting up even as Draco stilled in his completion, until Draco moaned lightly and batted his hand away. He leaned forward until their chests were touching, smearing his come between them as he kissed Harry messily, sloppily and perfect.

“Come for me, Harry,” Draco whispered into his ear. “Come inside me, let me feel it.”

And Harry had no choice but to comply, and he spilled deep inside Draco with a sharp cry, the feel of Draco pressed against every inch of him the only sensation left to him as everything else whitened out.

By the time he came back to himself, Draco had already moved, falling off to the side and stretching his still trembling legs. He picked up his wand and cleaned them both off, then shoved at Harry until he rolled over enough for them both to slide beneath the sheets. Harry lay on his back, his arm curling naturally around Draco as he settled himself half on top of Harry, his hand coming down to trace random patterns on Draco’s back, his skin tacky with sweat.

”After,” he muttered into Harry’s chest, so quietly Harry only just heard him.

Harry held Draco as his breathing levelled out, and stared up at the ceiling with wide eyes. I love it, Draco had said. After, he’d said. Make me, he’d said. But Harry was already making him, and because of that, there would be no after. Draco wouldn’t love anything, once he realised what he’d been forced to do. What Harry had been forcing him to do.

Harry couldn’t do it anymore. He couldn’t wait another six months before the bond was lifted, because he knew that he wouldn’t be able to stop himself from taking advantage more and more. He already was. No, the bond would have to be removed sooner than that.

As soon as possible.
“I’m afraid I don’t understand, Harry.”

Harry sighed and sunk down into the seat opposite Kingsley. He’d managed to convince the minister to come into work on a Sunday so that they could talk, but now he was actually faced with him he couldn’t find the right words.

“I’m just asking, what would happen if I wanted to remove the bond early?”

Kingsley frowned and steepled his fingers together. Harry thought he looked a bit like Dumbledore, and he smiled slightly. “I’m not sure what you mean. What would happen to you? Or to Mr Malfoy?”

Harry shrugged. “Both, I guess.”

“Well, nothing would happen to you.” Kingsley stared intently at harry over his desk. “You volunteered your services, in a way, so you can’t be held accountable for wishing to withdraw those services prematurely.”

“And Draco?”

Kingsley gave a sympathetic wince. “It’s his mandated sentence, Harry. Terminating the bond only halfway through the allotted time would mean either going back to Azkaban, or being bonded with someone else until his sentence is complete.”

Harry scrubbed a hand viciously through his hair in frustration. He’d thought as much. “Isn’t there some way around that? Let him off with time served, or paroling him early due to good behaviour?”

“The Wizengamot would have to be consulted, and I don’t think they’d be likely to agree.”

Harry chewed on his lip, a thought coming to him. “What if people were to find out about what he’s been through?”

Kingsley frowned again. “Found out about what, exactly?”

Harry thought through his words carefully. “Well, I’m assuming McGonagall wrote to you? Before Christmas? About what happened to Draco?”

“Yes,” Kingsley replied slowly.

“Well, it was bad, is all I’m saying. He was hurt, and threatened, and not for the first time, you heard what those guards were saying to him the last time we were here.” Harry shrugged. “People are tired of bullies being allowed to go free, Kingsley. I don’t think they’d be too happy to hear what the Ministry is letting people get away with, now that it’s supposed to be better, better for everyone, not just the people we like.”

“Are you threatening me?” Kingsley’s face had gone carefully blank his tone neutral, but Harry could hear the undercurrent of anger just beneath the surface.

“No,” he sighed. “I’m asking us to come to an arrangement.” Harry leaned forward in his seat. “Let me remove the bond early, with your permission. It’s only right, after what Draco suffered. It’s just. I can still keep an eye on him, make sure he doesn’t revert back to hold ways, for the duration of his
sentence.” Harry stared at Kingsley, imploring him. “Just let Draco be himself again.”

Kingsley regarded him for a long, excruciating moment, giving Harry enough time to wonder if he’d just managed to get himself thrown into Azkaban for trying to blackmail the Minister of Magic. Then he nodded once, consideringly. “Alright,” he said eventually. “I suppose Mr. Malfoy has indeed suffered enough due to the restrictions of the bond. It wouldn’t be fair to keep him in such a vulnerable state after such an occurrence.”

Harry breathed out a sigh of relief. “Thank you.”

“I think it would be best if this were to be kept out of the official channels. Better for Mr. Malfoy, for you, and for the Ministry.” Kingsley looked meaningfully at him, and Harry nodded.

“I understand.”

“I think the less change in your current situations the better for all involved. So, are we in agreement?”

“We are.” Harry stood up, and offered his hand. “Thank you, Kingsley, I owe you.”

Kingsley smiled and shook his hand. “And I’ll be sure to collect.”

Draco had just finished his last Potions essay by the time Harry came back from wherever he’d run off to that morning. It was perfect timing; maybe he and Harry could squeeze in another Seeker’s game before dinner, and with any luck the changing room would be empty and they could use up the rest of their adrenaline together in the shower. He began packing up his parchments and books as soon as he felt Harry getting closer, eager to get out of his waistcoat and shirt and put on his Quidditch leathers. He smiled and turned as the door opened and then froze, taking in the expression on Harry’s face.

He looked lost, almost broken, and Draco had no idea what could have happened to make him look like that, but he would do anything to make it go away. He walked quickly up to Harry and guided him towards the sofa. “Are you alright? What happened? Where did you go?”

“I’m fine,” Harry said, shrugging off Draco’s hands and walking over to the fireplace. It was already starting to get dark outside, and the light from the fire lit up Harry’s face strangely. It made him look sad, lonely. “I went to see Kingsley.”

“Kingsley? Why?”

Something was wrong, Draco could feel it. There was a distance between them that hadn’t been there since the bond had been put in place, as though a barrier had been placed purposefully between them. Dread curdled in his stomach as his mind raced. Had Harry realised what Draco had been doing to him? Had he realised that the bond was affecting him, making him want Draco against his will?

“Am I going back to Azkaban?” He asked, and his voice was so small and he hated it, hated how the stupid bond had got into his head and twisted everything around, made him forget that Harry would never want to have anything to do with him, making him fall too far in-

“What? No!” Harry started and reached out to Draco, but stopping before managing to actually touch
him. “No, Draco, nothing like that. We’re just... removing the bond early, that’s all.”

Draco didn’t understand. “But... why? Is it because of...” But he couldn’t finish, couldn’t voice the thought out loud. Harry looked away, swallowing uncomfortably, and that was all the confirmation Draco needed.

“We have to,” Harry said, his voice quiet but determined. “It’s the only way to stop... And we need to stop, Draco. This, us, it isn’t right.”

Draco nodded, looking down at the floor so that Harry couldn’t see the tears gathering in the corners of his eyes. Harry must already hate him; Draco didn’t want him to pity him too. “What happens? I mean... after.” Draco almost laughed as he uttered the word. After. How hopeful he’d been the night before, that there might be an after. How awfully, stupidly hopeful.

“We’ll still stay here, in these rooms. It makes sense; everyone’s already settled, we’d only mess things up if we joined the rest of the Eighth Years.” Harry stared out through the window. “It’ll all be just the same, we just won’t be bonded, and we won’t be-”

“Right,” Draco interrupted, suddenly desperate to get this over with so he could hide their room. No, not their room, because now he’d have to move back into his room, and everything would stop being theirs and go back to being his and Harry’s.

“Okay, so we’ll just...” Harry trailed off, gesturing pointlessly with his wand.

“Yeah.” Draco nodded his head jerkily. His limbs felt like dead weights, and he had to force himself to step up close to Harry, instead of running away like his head was screaming at him to do. he wished there was a way that he could be anywhere else for this, because he didn’t want to be anywhere close to Harry when the bond finally fell away and Harry truly understood what had been done to him.

And then Harry closed the distance between them and reached out, wrapping his fingers carefully around Draco’s elbow and lifting his arm. Draco forgot the need to run away, to be somewhere else, because this was likely going to be the very last time that Harry would allow him to stand so close, and he wanted to catalogue everything. He lifted his head and looked, taking in the creases at the corners of Harry’s eyes, the faint stubble on his jaw. The way his hair stuck up at gravity defying degrees except for round his ears, where the strands curled downwards, ever so slightly. The way he always bit his lip in concentration, the lower one chapped and flushed red. The way his Adam’s apple bobbed as he swallowed, the purple blue bruise just below his ear that Draco had placed there just last night.

“Stop looking at me, I can’t-” Harry cut himself off and turned into Draco. They were standing so close that their noses almost brushed, and one inch closer and they would be kissing. Merlin, how Draco wished they were kissing.

Harry set his jaw and let go of Draco’s arm, lifting his hand instead to Draco’s head. He pressed down lightly, but still with enough pressure to force Draco’s head away from him. Draco felt Harry’s fingers in his hair, thumb rubbing ever so slightly against the indent behind his ear, and he closed his eyes. He held his arm out for Harry, resigned to this happening now. His wand was in his other hand, but it was pointed at the ground, useless.

“Okay,” Harry said, his voice wobbling slightly, and Draco had a moment to wonder if Harry was as reluctant to do this as he was, before he felt the tip of Harry’s wand pressing against the inside of his arm. Words poured forth from Harry’s mouth, and Draco could see the same blue-green light from behind his eyelids as the counterspell was spoken in a firm, confident voice. A small part of him
wanted to laugh, because he was finally being freed. He’d gone from being under the thumb of his father to living in fear of the Dark Lord, to being ordered around by Harry Potter, and now for the first time he was really going to be free, when all he wanted was to crawl into Harry’s arms and stay there forever. He couldn’t decide if it was ironic, or just awful, terrible coincidence.

The skin of his arm grew warm, and he felt a slight tickling sensation. Harry’s hand tightened on the back of his head in what Draco assumed was a reminder not to move. Draco gritted his teeth and stood as still as he could, as he felt the warmth of Harry’s magic seep out of him, leaving him cold and alone. He didn’t open his eyes until he noticed the blue-green light receding, and felt Harry’s hand drop away from him for the last time.

“Well, that’s done then,” Harry said awkwardly, still standing too close.

Draco didn’t reply; he was too busy staring down at the inside of his arm. The tattoo had changed slightly. It had been stark and ugly while still carrying the Dark Lord’s influence. Draco had been able to feel it, like it was writhing beneath his skin, a malevolent force that he would never be rid of. After Harry had performed the bonding spell, the mark had seemed changed, the dark ink and smudged lines making it look almost like a work of art instead of an ugly reminder of all of Draco’s bad choices. But now... Now it was faded, dulled, the black ink turned a faint grey outline. Gone were the stark, heavy lines, and in their place sat something that merely resembled a pencil drawing.

“Right, well,” Harry said, swinging his arms and stepping back, away from Draco. “I’m just... going to go to the library. I still have that Potions essay to finish, so... yeah.”

Draco nodded, but didn’t watch him go. He stayed still, staring at his arm until long after the door closed softly behind Harry. His head felt slightly fuzzy, like he was just waking up from a really deep sleep, and at the same time he felt tired, a bone deep weariness settling over his shoulders like a pall. He dropped his arm and looked about the room, and then went to go and remove his things from Harry’s room.

He couldn’t think about anything else just yet.
Chapter 7

If Harry had had time to think about what sharing a small space with Malfoy would have been like before he’d rushed headlong into the bond, he might have thought it likely to be awkward. Two people who had never got on, had taken every opportunity to show the other up, had hexed each other and spilled each other’s blood, suddenly forced to share a living space? Harry would have considered himself lucky if awkward was all it had turned out to be. It was far more likely that one of them would have ended up killing the other, and not feeling an ounce of guilt over it either.

But it hadn’t been anything like that; instead, Draco had slipped into all the empty spaces in Harry’s life as though he belonged there, as though those spaces had been carved out specifically for him. Grimmauld Place had become less dreary, once the sounds of an extra person occupying it had started to filter through the rooms. The nights had seemed less lonely, the darkness hiding fewer shadows, with another person sleeping just a few feet away. It had felt right to sit in the kitchen with another person, someone who wasn’t just visiting but knew where the salt was kept, knew how much milk Harry took in his tea in the mornings, knew to open the window in the bathroom to let the steam out after a shower, before the paint began to peel from the walls.

It had made coming back to Hogwarts easier too. Because of Draco, Harry had had somewhere he could retreat to when all the stares got to be too much, when the polite grin on his face threatened to crack and fall to the floor in pieces, showing everything beneath that he was trying so hard to hide. He hadn’t had to be alone in order to get some peace when everything threatened to overwhelm him; so different from fifth year when he’d had to lock himself away in case he cut someone with his sharp edges. Instead, he’d had someone around whom it was easy to just be, no facade that he constantly had to hide behind. Harry could read a book or play a game of chess, he could laugh like a child over a game of tug-o-war with a cushion, or he could sit and stare out of the window in the direction of the Forbidden Forest and retreat into himself, and nobody would judge him for any of it. Draco didn’t try to analyse him, as Hermione would, he didn’t try to pull him out of his funk like Ron, he didn’t stare avidly at him and squeal behind his hands whenever Harry looked up like the rest of the students seemed to. He was just there, ready for whatever Harry needed and a source of silent companionship when Harry needed to be alone with his thoughts but didn’t want to feel lonely.

It hadn’t been awkward at all. It had been perfect.

Now, though? Now, it was awkward, oh so very awkward. Now they tiptoed around each other, carefully avoiding spending more than the absolute minimum in each other’s company. Harry went to his bedroom every night as soon as they arrived home from dinner, and from the few times he had peeked his head into the living room and found it empty, Malfoy was doing the same thing. Harry listened at his door every morning, listening to the sounds of Malfoy going into the bathroom and then back again, after which he would run in himself to get himself ready for the day. They’d meet at the door while studiously avoiding eye contact, and Harry felt as though he couldn’t breathe properly until he could sit down in one of the lessons he didn’t share with Malfoy. He still had to walk Malfoy to and from his classes, to keep up the appearance of the bond still being in place, but they no longer talked as they moved through the hallways, no longer looked for a darkened alcove to slip into for a few minutes before their next class. There wasn’t even anymore Quidditch games whenever they felt the urge, because that would require them having to actually talk to one another.

And it was awkward, because Harry was still confused about his feelings towards Malfoy. He’d forget, sometimes, and reach out to grab his arm, or roll over in bed and wake up suddenly, startled to find his arms empty. And then he’d remember and he’d snatch his hand back, or he’d lie awake, staring at the ceiling until dawn.
It was confusing, because despite the bond being removed, Harry still found himself wanting to touch Malfoy, to hold him, kiss him, see him smile. Feel his skin sliding against his own.

It was confusing, because Harry hadn’t expected the removal of the bond to affect him as much as it had. He’d known that Malfoy was being affected, known that every piece of affection or want that came from Malfoy had just been the things that Harry had wanted being forced down the bond, making him think he wanted them too. But what Harry hadn’t realised was how the bond had changed his views of Malfoy in the first place.

For a start, he hadn’t been Malfoy at all, he’d been Draco. Draco was all soft edges and shy smiles, easy laughs and sleepy eyes. Malfoy wasn’t anything like that, and Harry should know; he’d spent enough time watching him in the past. Malfoy was made up of sharp edges that cut if you got too close, Malfoy was sneers and flashing anger, haughty glares and icy reserve. He wasn’t warm and affectionate, he was cold and aloof, he wasn’t shy and easy, he was arrogant and really fucking difficult.

Living with Malfoy should have been awkward, but Harry had been living with Draco instead. And now that Malfoy was back, living with him was confusing because Harry still wanted him.

So Harry avoided him as much as he possibly could. By some unspoken agreement, Draco spent all of their free time hidden away in their rooms, just as he had before they’d begun... whatever it was they’d shared between them. Harry felt like he’d gone full circle; avoiding the one thing he shouldn’t want. He tried sitting in the library, but Hermione kept shooting him calculating looks over the top of her study guide, and Harry felt like the guilt was written all over his face. He tried going down to the Quidditch pitch, but there was nobody to play against, and flying around on his own felt more lonely than anything else. He tried sitting in the Great Hall with his homework and revision notes spread out in front of him, but he couldn’t concentrate even when he was left alone for more than five minutes. He tried sitting in the courtyard and watching the gobstones games, but he’d never really understood the rules of the game and he got accidentally squirted with the foul smelling liquid one too many times. He even thought about spending time with Ginny, because surely even that couldn’t be more awkward than the frosty atmosphere back in his rooms, but she was now firmly entrenched in her relationship with Dean.

In the end, Harry had settled on sitting by the edge of the lake, breathing in the fresh spring air and staring down at the Marauder’s map, pathetically watching Malfoy pace up and down in his room. And it was there that Hermione found him, a few weeks into his self-enforced and rather lonely exile.

“Feeling a bit nostalgic?”

Harry jumped, dropping his half eaten apple. His fist clenched on the map. “What?”

Hermione smoothed her skirt and sat down beside him, flicking her wand to dry the dew-dampened grass beneath them both. “I seem to remember you doing a lot of that in sixth year.” She nodded down at the map. “Watching Malfoy.”

“What? No, I’m not...” Harry trailed away, caught out. His cheeks flamed with heat.

“Although why you’re doing it again now is a bit of a mystery. What with him having to do whatever you say. Seems a bit redundant, really.”

“Yeah, I know. I was just... looking.” Harry tried to shrug casually.

Hermione sighed. “I thought we’d already had a conversation about you lying to me, Harry. The
general consensus was that you couldn’t, if you remember.” Harry bit his lip and looked away. “Does the Wizengamot know you’ve removed the bond early?”

Harry blew out a breath. “No.”

“Please tell me that Kingsley at least knows.”

“He does. I went to him first. We have an agreement.”

“Are you going to tell me why?”

Harry shoved his hands into his hair and rested his elbows on his knees. The lake before him was still and flat. It looked to Harry to be a reflection of himself; seemingly still and empty on the outside but filled to the brim beneath, teeming with thoughts and emotions tangled together like weeds, a jumbled mess of guilt and pain and confusion. “I can’t.”

“Can’t, or won’t?”

“If I tell you, you’ll hate me.”

“Harry James Potter,” Hermione said, her voice losing the softness as she placed her hand on his arm, shaking Harry until he turned to look at her. “Do you really think that after all we’ve been through together, that I could ever hate you?” She shook her head. “I might not agree with you, I might tell you if I think you’ve done something stupid, or dangerous. But I could never do anything but love you. You’re my best friend, and I’m here for you, always. Even when you’re being stupid.”

Harry thought he must have been very good in a past life to have deserved a best friend like Hermione, and he sighed gratefully as he leaned into her, resting his head on her shoulder. Her arm went around him, fingers sliding maternally through his hair, soothing the roiling feelings in his stomach.

“I slept with him,” he mumbled into her hair, knowing that the statement didn’t even come close to the awful thing he had had with Draco.

“Oh,” Hermione said.

Harry lifted his head. “What do you mean, okay? Hermione, I had sex with Malfoy! While he was bonded to me, forced to do whatever I say!”

Hermione nodded. “Yes, I got that part.”

“How are you so calm about this?” Harry sat up, completely wrong-footed to see not a trace of condemnation in his best friend’s expression. “I only bonded with him to make sure that nothing like this could happen, and then I force him to do exactly that!”

“Did you?”

“Did I what?” Harry shook his head in frustration. He was starting to get angry now, because for some reason, Hermione just wasn’t getting it.

“Did you force him?” Hermione shifted, facing him fully. “Did you, at any point, say, ‘Draco Malfoy, I order you to have sex with me’?”

“What? No! I would never!”

Hermione shrugged. “Then you didn’t force him.”
“Yes, I did!”

Harry realised that he had got to his feet at some point, and was now yelling down at Hermione, as she continued to gaze calmly at him. He was angry, because Hermione was supposed to understand, Hermione always understood, and now she was forcing him to spell out all the ways in which he’d been a terrible, awful person.

“He was under the influence of the bond, Hermione, he had to want whatever I wanted! His choice to say no was taken away, and I took advantage of that! I- I abused him, I fucking ra-” Harry slid down to his knees and buried his head in his hands. “Oh my god, I raped him.”

“No you did not, Harry, stop being ridiculous.” Hermione’s voice was sharp, angry for the first time since the conversation had started. Her hand wrapped around his arm, pulling almost viciously at him. Then she sighed. “One of these days, you’re going to learn that instead of bottling things up, you should look around you and see if there is someone you could talk to who might know better than you.”

“What do you mean?” Harry asked miserably, staring hard at the ground between his knees.

“It’s like fifth year all over again. You were so certain that nobody could know what you were going through, despite Ginny being right there, knowing exactly what it was like to have Voldemort inside her head. And now you’re doing it all over again, stressing yourself out about the inner workings of a bonding spell and forgetting the fact that I have been right here all along. You, Harry James Potter, are an absolute idiot.” And she smacked him round the back of his head, hard.

Harry yelped and fell back onto his arse. “What are you saying?”

Hermione rolled her eyes. “I’m saying that all three of us were consulted during the trials and were told about this new bonding spell. What do you think I did, once I’d heard about it?”

Harry stared dazedly at her. “You researched it.” Because of course she would.

“If you’d remembered earlier, I could have told you that that spell has absolutely no control over anyone’s wants and desires. At least not to the degree you’re worrying about.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Okay, say Malfoy had been bonded with someone who actually did want to turn him into some sort of- of- sex slave.” Her lips turned down in a disgusted expression. “Malfoy would have had no choice but to do whatever they told him to do. He would do it all, with no hesitation, but at no point would he enjoy any of it. The bond just doesn’t work like that.”

Harry was starting to see a glimmer of a light at the end of his currently very dark tunnel. “So, so I couldn’t have influenced him? Made him want to want me, just because I wanted him?”

“Nope.” Hermione popped the consonant, looking pleased with herself. “Any emotions he felt, any desires he expressed, none of them came from you, Harry. They were all his; they were all real.”

“They were real?”

Harry fell back on his hands and stared up at the pale blue sky. It had been real, all the things Draco had said, all the things they had done, Draco had wanted them, Draco had...
Draco. That little glimmer of light winked out, and Harry slumped.

“No, that can’t be right, Hermione,” he said sadly. “Malfoy was different, he was, he was Draco. Even I was different under the bond.”

“Well of course you were, the bond had to change you both a little bit, in order for it to work.”

Merlin, Harry was confused. “But then, if it changed us, how could any of it have been real?”

Hermione sighed, looking out over the lake as she tried to work out how to make Harry understand. “Look, you both went into the bond with a specific reason in mind. Malfoy wanted protection, and you wanted to protect him. In order for the bond to give you both what you wanted, it made you both easier for each other to deal with. You’d never have wanted to protect him so fiercely if you’d spent the entire time wanting to punch him in the face, and Malfoy wouldn’t have wanted to stick around long enough for you to try. All the bond did was soften the edges of your personality traits that rub each other the wrong way. It stopped you both from thinking about all the bad history between you.”

Harry frowned. “So, it was Harry and Draco who had a relationship, not Potter and Malfoy?”

“No. It was Harry Potter without all the righteous anger ,who had a relationship with Draco Malfoy without all the pureblood elitist snobbery.” She smiled, a little mischievously. “I’ll bet he never once said anything bad about Muggleborns, did he?” Harry shook his head. “And you never mentioned anything about his parents?”

“No. We just kind of avoided all of those awkward conversations.”

“And that’s the bit that wasn’t by choice,” Hermione said. “All the rest that happened, that was down to just you two.”

Harry gusted out a sigh, feeling the weight that had been pressing on his chest for months suddenly leave with it, feeling lighter than he had in a long time. “What would I ever do without you, Hermione?”

She laughed lightly. “I have often wondered that myself.”

Draco had spent the last few weeks missing his Slytherin dormitory. The beds had all had heavy drapes surrounding them, a deep, forest green with silver edging, velvet fabric that fell to the floor and shut out the entire world when they were closed. His bed had always been the one place where he was guaranteed absolute privacy. Just throw a fixing spell at the folds, and he had a ready made sanctuary where he could just sit and think, all the while knowing he wouldn’t be disturbed until he was ready to face the world again. Even his bedroom at the manor hadn’t had that level of privacy; there was always the chance that his mother would knock once and then enter without waiting for an invitation, as she so liked to do. It had put quite a damper on his teenage voyages of self discovery.

If he could go back to his bed in his Slytherin dormitory, then he wouldn’t be suffering from the problem he was having now. He wouldn’t be sitting on his curtain free bed, waiting for Potter to knock on his door. His heavy green curtains didn’t have a door, and nobody could touch them and disturb him while he was locked away in there, so the thought of Potter knocking would be an impossible one, so he wouldn’t have been thinking about it.
But Draco wasn’t in his Slytherin dorm; he was stuck in this stupid bedroom in this stupid set of rooms that he shared with stupid Potter, and all he could think about was the possibility of Potter coming in and wanting to talk to him.

And he hated it, he hated the fact that he was stuck waiting, because he was Draco fucking Malfoy, and Malfoys didn’t wait for anyone to come to them. Malfoys got given lenient sentences, Malfoys got offered the chance at a new bonding spell instead of Azkaban, Malfoys got the fucking Saviour to come to their rescue, forced him to...

And there lay the crux of Draco’s current problem, and the reason for his fervent wish for his old Slytherin curtains to close around him. Because that was exactly what he’d done. He’d forced Potter into this whole situation, right from the moment he’d spoken his name and asked for him to be his bonded guard. And Potter had fallen for it, had seen the pitiful thing Draco had become - just as Draco had intended - and stepped up to help, just like the good little Gryffindor he was.

And it had all just been so easy, and it was that fact that had Draco really fuming. He’d been easy, nothing at all as he usually was, around anyone. Smiles had come easier, talking had been easier, he’d laughed more than he thought he’d ever laughed before, and almost none of them had contained that derisive tone he usually employed. Asking for things, saying what he wanted, expressing himself, all of it had just come so easily. He’d been different; he’d been Draco. And now he was himself again. The bond had taken away all of the tools he used to protect himself, and now they were all snapped back into place, as though they’d never been away. The bond had given back his defences and stripped everything else away.

So he longed for his curtains to hide behind, to help protect him while he was still feeling so raw and open and God fucking damn it, hopeful. Because there was nothing to feel hopeful about. The bond was gone now, and with it any chance of that elusive after that he had seen before, glimmering away in the distance. With the bond removed, Potter no longer wanted him, and even if by some miracle he did, he wouldn’t want Draco like this, the way he really was.

Draco was all prickles and spikes, bitchiness and snarkiness, all wrapped up together into one very difficult package. Draco knew this about himself and liked it, was proud of the fact that he wasn’t a pushover, that he made someone have to work hard if they wanted to get close to him. He wouldn’t want to be anyone else, and a large part of him cringed over the thought of how open and honest he’d been before, how vulnerable he’d left himself, and how easy he’d made it for Potter. He liked who he was, and he wouldn’t want to change even if he could. But all that meant never having Potter again, because Potter would never want him like this. And so he was stuck, sitting in his room and wishing for his curtains, and waiting for a knock on the door that would never come.

And then there was a knock on his door.

“Malfoy? We need to talk,” Harry said as he walked into Malfoy’s room.

“By all means, come on in,” Draco drawled. He was curled up in the middle of his bed, discarded revision notes and quills strewn around him.

Harry perched at the end of the bed, not quite able to look at Malfoy. It was in here that they had finally given in to each other for the first time, and Harry could feel himself blushing at the memory. “How are you feeling?” He asked, haltingly.

“I didn’t mean it like that,” Harry said.

“Yes well, words have never exactly been your strong suit, have they, Potter?”

His words were derisive, the tone more so, and Harry realised that he’d missed it, missed the way almost everything about Malfoy sent a thrill up his spine and set his skin on fire. In their younger days it had made Harry angry, itching to haul off and punch the git straight on the nose. He still wanted to put his hands on him, still wanted to shut him up and wipe the smirk off of his arrogant face, but now Harry wanted to do it with his lips instead, shove Malfoy down and kiss away all that haughtiness until he could see what lay underneath.

“I meant, since we removed the bond, how have you been feeling?”

Malfoy looked away, a muscle in his jaw jumping as he seemed to think how to answer, or if to even answer at all. “Different,” he finally said, quietly, almost unwillingly. “More like myself.”

“Good. Me too.” Harry stopped, because he really had no idea how to steer the conversation in the way he wanted it to go. “I wanted to- I mean, about what we- I think I-”

“Spit it out, Potter, we don’t have all day,” Draco spat at him, and Harry stood up from the bed.

“You were so much easier to talk to before,” he mumbled, pacing slightly.

Malfoy snorted. “Back when I was just your little puppet, you mean?”

Harry stopped and stared at him. “Is that really what you think? Is that how you think I treated you?”

Malfoy swallowed and looked away. “No. But it doesn’t matter what I think now, does it? I’m me again, and you’re you, so what’s there to talk about?”

Harry stared uselessly down at his hands. He didn’t have a clue what he was doing, and it was looking as though Malfoy really wasn’t interested either way. “I don’t know, I guess I just thought-”

“I doubt that, Potter,” Draco cut him off with a sneer. He got up and began cleaning off his bed, stacking the books neatly on the bedside table. “Thinking isn’t really something you can claim to do a lot of, either.”

“God, you’re infuriating.”

“Well, now that you’ve worked that out, can we move on?”

Malfoy was looking at him, eyebrow raised in challenge and the rest of his face carefully blank. But Harry could see the clouds in those grey eyes, telling him something and pleading with him to work it out. “I don’t want to.”

“Yes, well, now that the bond has been removed, neither of us is going to get what we want, are we?”

“What does that mean?”

“What does it matter?”

“I just want us to talk about this!”
“Well maybe I don’t! And I’ve already told you, you don’t get to have what you want anymore!”

”Merlin, you are such an asshole!”

“And you’re a prick!”

They’d migrated closer to each other as they’d been yelling, and they now stood just inches apart, breathing hard and glaring at each other. Then they moved at the same time, and their mouths crashed into each other, teeth clashing and noses bumping. Harry bit down hard on Malfoy’s bottom lip, the answering pained gasp making him push harder, shove his tongue deeper into Malfoy’s mouth. It was closer to a fight than a kiss, all stabbing tongues and biting teeth, hands pushing and shoving and gripping hard wherever they fell. Their legs became tangled and Malfoy tripped backwards, pulling Harry with him until they were slammed together, braced against the chest of drawers. Harry rutted into him, hard from the moment they’d begun arguing, shoving his hand between them to rip at Malfoy’s fly. Malfoy got there first, batting Harry’s hand away and flicking open the top button of first Harry’s, and then his own, trousers. Harry tried to sneak his hand in again, only to be shoved away once more, as Malfoy seemed to change his mind and grabbed for his wand instead.

“God, you are so difficult,” Harry muttered, pulling away from Malfoy’s mouth to leave stinging bites down his jaw.

“Yes, stellar observation there, Potter, now shut up and fuck me,” Malfoy said breathlessly, flicking his wand once.

”Fuck,” Harry moaned into Malfoy’s neck, as both their clothes melted away, hot skin suddenly pressed against his from chest to hips. “You’re going to fucking kill me.”

“Very likely, especially if you don’t get on with the fucking.” Malfoy hitched himself up onto the edge of the chest behind him, thighs coming up to wrap around Harry’s waist.

“Oh my God, shut up.”

“Make me.”

So Harry shoved his tongue into Malfoy’s mouth and licked across his teeth, his hands sliding down underneath Malfoy to find him already wet and open, ready for him. He pulled back, raising a questioning eyebrow, one finger slipping in to feel the velvety soft heat.

Malfoy rapped his wand on the side of Harry’s head in answer, then wriggled his hips from side to side. “Well? What are you waiting for, an engraved invitation?”

Harry set his jaw and shoved his hips forward, the tip of his dick catching on Malfoy’s rim before sliding in all the way into the hilt. Malfoy’s head fell backward, thumping into the mirror behind him and making it bang loudly against the wall. Harry pulled out and thrust back in again, fingers digging hard into Malfoy’s hips, pulling him down onto his cock at the same time. A wicked grin lit up Malfoy’s face, and then they were off, still fighting each other as their bodies clashed together.

It was different, so very different to all the times they’d fucked before. Gone were the slow, soft rolls of Malfoy’s hips and the shy, inviting smiles. In their place were hard lines and challenging lifts of his eyebrows, goading Harry into moving faster, deeper, harder. It made Harry’s blood boil, made his skin tingle with heat, made his heart beat sharply inside his chest as they fought one another, chasing after each other to be the first to send the other tumbling over the edge. Harry angled his hips and thrust in sharply, nailing Malfoy’s prostate. Malfoy grunted, retaliating with a hard squeeze of his
muscles, making Harry see stars in front of his eyes. He grabbed for Malfoy’s cock, bouncing red and glistening with precome between them, giving it a quick upward stroke, thumbing the slit as he knew Malfoy liked. Malfoy’s head fell back again, a high keening sound slipping from his lips.

“Oh, you bastard,” he muttered, folding himself forward and opening his mouth over Harry’s jugular, biting down hard.

Harry yelled out, the sharp pain going straight to his dick and he thrust in hard, once, twice. Malfoy moaned loud in his ear, clenching down tightly around Harry as he spurted his release all over their chests, and Harry’s own orgasm shot through him like a punch to the stomach.

They stayed pressed together for several long minutes, the only movement coming from their chests as they breathed hard. Malfoy’s mouth was still open against Harry’s neck, tonguing lazily at his pulse point. Sweat and come made their stick together as they cooled, and Harry’s back was covered in goosebumps in all the places Malfoy’s heat couldn’t reach. Harry waited until his heartbeat had slowed back down to almost normal, and then he unclenched his fingers from Malfoy’s hips, lifting one hand to smooth the damp blond hair away from his nose.

“Well, that was different,” he said.

Malfoy pushed him away, Harry’s cock slipping from inside of him as he lifted himself off the edge of the dresser. He turned away abruptly, not looking at Harry as he rifled through the drawers for a clean pair of pants. “Yes. Now that you’ve worked that out, we can move on, as I suggested earlier.”

“Is that what you want?”

Still Malfoy wouldn’t look at him. “What does it matter? I think we just proved that anything between us won’t be like what we had before.”

“No,” Harry agreed. “It’ll be better.” He felt a thrill of triumph as Malfoy whipped his head around to stare at him.

“Better? What we just did was a fist fight masquerading as a fuck, Potter.”

“Yeah, it was.” Harry grinned. “Suits us rather well, don’t you think?”

Malfoy snorted disbelievingly and bent to pull on his pants, turning back to start a search for a shirt. “You’re not listening, Potter, and honestly I don’t know why I’m surprised.” Harry reached over his shoulder, grabbing a pair of Draco’s pants and ignoring the small sound of outrage as he pulled them on. “It might have worked before, but we’re different people now.”

“All very good points, but you didn’t answer my question, Malfoy.” Harry grabbed for Malfoy’s wrists, turning him around to face him. “Is that what you want? For us to move on?”

Malfoy turned his face away, his hands clenched into fists above Harry’s grip, and Harry remembered who he was talking to. Draco might have made the first move, but Malfoy was ever the consummate Slytherin, so now it was up to Harry.

“Because I don’t.”

Malfoy shook his head. “You don’t know what you’re talking about. You think it’ll be like it was before, but it won’t. I’m difficult, and you’re annoying, and we’ll be at each other’s throats within a week.”

Harry noticed that for all Malfoy’s insistence, he still wasn’t saying that he didn’t want it, didn’t want
“Sounds like it’d be a lot of hard work, then,” he said softly, letting go of one of Malfoy’s wrists so that he could turn his chin towards him. His grey eyes were wary, but filled with emotion and a spark of what Harry thought might be hope. Harry leaned in and kissed him, slow and soft but still with a little bit of bite to it, and breathed out a sigh of relief as Malfoy kissed him back.

“It also sounds like it’ll be a lot of fun.”

FIN.

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