A Fishy Tale

by Ely_Baby

Summary

A fight, a wandering spell, and a cousin-turned-mermaid who suddenly thinks he is her mate. Hugo isn't having the best of weeks, but maybe not everything is as bad as it seems.

Notes

Beta-read by Alice Helena.
Prologue

*A deceptively glorious Sunday morning in May.*

Lily closed her eyes and sighed. The warm breeze caressed her cheeks, and the inches of skin she had strategically exposed to the sun. A small smile of delight painted her face as she felt the radiant heat stroke her nose and her knees.

“Ooh! Lily's grinning again!” giggle Alice somewhere at her left. “She’s thinking about that boy she won’t talk about…”

Susan chuckled, her legs shifting indelicately under Lily’s head as her hands pulled a bit more forcefully at the lock she was stubbornly trying to braid. She loved to braid Lily’s hair, just as much as Lily hated it. She always looked like a Gorgon afterwards, with crimson snakes spurting out of her head. “Come on, Lily, tell us about the boy you like…” she added to the tease.

Lily didn’t even open her eyes. “I’m not grinning, I’m smiling,” she pointed out, “and I was just enjoying the sun.” She cracked an eye open to look up at Susan, still busy braiding. “And the quiet,” she added meaningfully.

“Bo-oring,” sing-songed Alice.

Lily glanced at her and rolled her eyes. “Not as boring as you are. Studying Transfiguration on Sunday morning…” She shook her head.

Alice looked back at her. “I bet one Galleon that you’ve already finished your homework,” she replied sharply, “otherwise, knowing you, you’d be in the library now, hunched over all the tomes you managed to put on your table.”

Lily sat up slowly, ignoring Susan’s protestations about her hair. “Knowing me?” she asked with a pout in her voice. “You talk as if I spend tons of hours studying.”

Alice looked cheekily at her. “You do. You’re just like your cousin.”

“Which one?” asked Lily nonchalantly, brushing some grass from her skirt. “I have nine, remember?”

“Well, not Fred,” chuckled Susan as she rummaged her pockets for an elastic band, two fingers firmly pinched on her lock.

“Rose,” replied Alice, “all prim and studious. Little Miss Perfect.” She grinned at Lily, tugging some of her blonde hair behind her ear.

Lily snorted in a very un-prim like manner. She loved Rose with all her heart, but she recognised the teasing in being compared to her under those circumstances. “Except, I’m not Head Girl,” she pointed out, “and I’m not taking thirteen N.E.W.T.s, like she was.” She turned to glare at Susan as her friend tugged her hair and added, “And I want to play Quidditch professionally, not become Minister for Magic.”

Alice giggled. “Then your other cousin. You know, the fit one who is still at Hogwarts and who spends all his time with you…”

“Hugo!”
“Exactly, Hugo,” said Alice with a vigorous nod. “See? Even Becky knows who we’re talking about and she just got here.”

Becky O’Donnell was gasping loudly, trying to catch her breath, with her hands on her knees as she stopped in front of Lily, her round face all red for the run up the hill.

Lily chuckled. “No, I’m Lily,” she told her. “I know we have the same hair, but Hugo is the very tall one with the long nose. Oh, and he’s also a boy.”

Becky glared at her as best as she could from behind her tumbled hair. “No!” she gasped. “Hugo! Mark Goldstein! Fighting!”

“Breathe, Becky,” sighed Susan, finally trapping Lily’s braid into a tight band, “use some verbs.”

Becky gulped down some more air. “Hugo and Mark are fighting near the cliff,” he finally gasped, “for you, Lily!”

Lily’s lips parted in surprise. “Me?” she asked in a murmur. “Why?”

Becky threw her hands in the air. “I don’t know!” she told her impatiently. “Something about what you did last Hogsmeade weekend with Mark.”

Susan and Alice seemed to perk their ears up. “Oooh, what did you do?” asked Alice.

“Something naughty?” giggled Susan.

Lily pushed her hands on the ground to stand up and glared at them both. “No, we didn’t do anything, only got a Butterbeer at the Three Broomsticks while we were trying to study,” she replied curtly.

Alice snorted, as if she had expected something like that from Lily. Trying to study while she was sitting in the Three Broomsticks with a boy… Except that was exactly why she had met him there, to study. He had asked her to help him and she had agreed, and that was all.

“You need to come now!” insisted Becky. “They’re firing hexes like they are firing insults.” She shifted her weight on her feet as if she was ready to run all the way back down from where she had just come right at that instant.

Lily nodded slowly not quite managing to fathom why Hugo and Mark would be fighting over her. Quidditch maybe, but Lily? “Oh Merlin!” she sighed. “Okay. Let’s go.”

All three girls jumped up and screeched in excitement. Alice snapped her book close, and Susan started babbling about how she really wanted two wizards fighting for her, too, at least once in her life.

Lily did her best to ignore their silly comments – “Whoever wins is going to get a kiss, right Lily?”, “Do you think I can console the loser?”, “Who do you think is better-looking? Hugo or Mark?” – and hurried down the steep hill that led to the cliffs overlooking the lake.

She tried to think of all the reasons why her cousin would start a fight – Lily had the distinct feeling that Hugo was the one to blame there, and she didn’t even know why – with a boy she had only agreed to go to Hogsmeade to for a couple of hours, before she met her friends in Honeydukes.

She remembered Hugo being a bit disappointed when she had told him that she was going to the Three Broomsticks with Mark. They were supposed to go to Spintwitches Sporting Needs that
weekend, to buy her new arm-length gloves with the money she had gotten for her birthday. Hugo had been not-so-unusually excited about new Quidditch gloves that weren’t even for him, but Lily just hadn’t understood how into those pieces of equipment he actually was until he had snapped at her that if she preferred to spend an afternoon with Mark instead of listening to very interesting trivia facts about gloves, it was perfectly fine with him.

Then he had screamed at her during all their Quidditch trainings, and she had felt the urge to send a Bludger his way more than once, luckily she was not a Beater, otherwise she might just have acted on her desire. And to top that, he had bossed her around at all the Prefects meetings that week, and paired her with the most annoying people for patrol. In those moments Lily couldn’t help thinking that he was a far meaner Head Boy than Scorpius Malfoy had ever been – although that was partly because of Rose’s good influence on her boyfriend.

Lily endured the rough treatment because she was sure that Hugo was just stressed out about his N.E.W.T.s. They all were after all. Lily cried herself to sleep when she remembered that she had to scrape at least an A in Potions.

“There!” Becky’s finger shot right in front of Lily’s nose and pointed at two small figures sending hexes in each other’s direction and calling each other names in-between. A small crowd had already gathered around them and more students seemed to hurry to take a look at the show.

If possible, Susan and Alice screeched even more excitedly than before as they ran the last few feet towards them.

As the girls neared the scene, Mark cried a Full-Body Bind Curse, but Hugo jumped to his left and the crowd gasped and cheered, nodding in approval as Hugo pointed his wand to him and hissed a “Densaugeo.”

Mark ducked quickly and the spell almost hit a first year straight in the face. A few people gasped again, some went to check on the little girl who stepped back with a scared face. Mary Breen, the Head Girl, looked furiously from the Ravenclaw young man to the Head Boy as she shouted at them to stop.

They didn’t even seem to notice that she was there.

“Bloody sodding hell,” Lily heard Mary mutter under her breath as she hurried past. The Head Girl gasped softly as she noticed Lily. “Oh Lily!” she sighed, apparently relieved that she was there. “Stop them before I call Professor McGonagall and ask her to expel them.”

Lily glanced at her, nodding and trying not to look as lost as she felt. She had no idea what to do to stop them, but probably the best thing she could do was letting them know that she was there and that if they had any problems with her – or about her – they could all talk like ordinary people instead of hexing their brains off.

“Go, Lily!” cheered Alice in her ear, while Susan murmured a “So exciting!” near her.

She tried to focus on channelling her mother’s expression when she was angry and furrowed her brow in a hard scowl as she stepped in front of the crowd and between the two young men, hands on her hips, just like Grandma Molly did when Uncle Charlie left mud all over her kitchen floor.

“Hey!” she cried, her head going from Hugo to Mark. “What the hell is going here?” She could feel the eyes of all the students there trained on her and she felt her cheeks become hotter as she spoke in front of all those people.
Hugo looked at her, surprised as if he hadn’t expected that interruption, least of all from her. His blue eyes widened for a moment before he pressed his lips together in a thin line. “Stand back, Lily,” he said darkly, “I’ll take care of him.”

She looked back at him a bit irritated that he would talk to her like that. “No, no, no,” she told him, “you’re not going to ‘take care’ of anybody. Put down your wand.” She turned to look at Mark. “Both of you.”

Mark smirked at her from behind his long, brown locks. “Whatever you say, baby,” he replied, lowering his wand.

Lily glared at him. “Don’t call me baby,” she hissed, “I’m not your baby.”

He flashed her a smile. “But I thought you were, after last weekend,” he told her, causing some girls in the crowd to murmur and giggle at her back.

She blushed crimson, her eyes sending sparks in his direction. “We just had a Butterbeer at the Three Broomsticks,” she snapped, “because you said you needed help with your Transfiguration essay, that’s why I brought mine, remember?”

“And do you remember what happened next?” he asked her, winking.

She felt as if her face was on fire. “Yes,” she spat, “I left when you kept dropping your quill to look under my skirt.”

“You pig!” snarled Hugo suddenly. He muttered under his breath and a spell flew near Lily’s ear and hit the grass at Mark’s feet.

“Hugo!” snapped Lily, stepping back.

He didn’t look at her, his wand was still pointed towards Mark. “He said that you kissed him, Lily,” he grunted, “he said that you let him put a hand under your top.”

There were more voices and gasps raising from the crowd and Lily turned to glare at the people there, before sending daggers towards Mark, who was still smirking. “You vermin,” she hissed, before turning towards Hugo and taking a deep, calming breath. “But there’s no need to fight for that.” She raised a hand and took a step towards Hugo. “And I want to be the one to take care of him.” She took another step and then another. “Alright?” she asked gently as she stood in front of him. Honestly, if Hugo took away from her the pleasure of hexing Mark silly, she would hex Hugo in retaliation.

He darkened, his wand was still pointed to Mark and he still refused to look at Lily, but she could see a faint blush creeping up his neck.

“Please, Hugo,” she said, smiling up at him.

He sighed and lowered his wand, looking down at her. “Alright,” he agreed, as she placed a hand on his arm. “I won’t touch him until you say—”

“Wingardium Leviosa,” chuckled Mark behind her.

There was a rustling of fabric, and then Lily shivered as some cold air brushed against her knickers, until finally she heard the resounding laughter coming from Mark as he told her what a nice sight she was.
There was more laughter and whistles coming from the boys in the crowd, while most of the girls were gasping and screeching and calling Mark names.

Lily just whined as she tried to push down her skirt to cover herself. She was probably going to have some steam coming out of her ears soon, because if her face was on fire before, now she felt as if she could compete with the sun. She almost didn’t notice as Hugo sidestepped her and started to fire hexes at Mark, while Mark responded without hesitation.

She didn’t pay them any attention as she tried to keep her skirt down and find her wand in her pocket at the same time. She could still feel some people looking at her, but luckily most of the students were staring intently at the two boys running around and dodging spells.

“Finite Incantatem!” She pointed the wand at her own skirt and it finally went down all around her legs again.

“Are you okay?” asked Susan, hurrying at her side with Becky and Alice.

“Merlin, what an idiot!” muttered Becky under her breath.

“I hope your cousin hexes his arse,” gritted Alice through her teeth, “I’ll do that too!”

“Oh no,” snapped Lily, glaring at Mark. “I want to be the one to do that! Bloody hell, what a vermin, I’m going to… I’m going to…” She growled and threw her hands up in the air. “I don’t even know what I’m going to do to him, but I’ll do something!”

“Lily!”

She could feel Becky try to grab her arm to keep her there, but she wriggled free and walked towards Hugo and Mark, wand still in her hand and a furious expression over her face.

She came to stand between the two boys again, dodging spells in the meantime. “Now, stop this right —”

“Stand back, Lily!” snapped Hugo as he pushed her away.

“Hey! Don’t push me!” she snapped back. “And you stop firing hexes!” She looked at them with a disgruntled expression. “I’m a Prefect, and I’m going to take away points if you don’t stop, no matter if you’re the Head Boy and a fellow Prefect!”

Mark laughed at her, and sent innocuous sparkles at her feet. She started though, and jumped back near the edge of the cliff.

“Lily! Be careful!” cried the Head Girl.

She stepped away from the border and finally raised her wand. “Stop it!” she shouted. “Stop it right now! You’re acting like children! Both of you!”

A spell hissed near her ear and she jumped out of its way, bumping into Hugo as she did.

“Lily, stand back!” he repeated for the third time. His arm wound around her shoulders and he hissed a “Ducklifors!”

She stared as the spell brushed against Mark’s left arm and some feathers sprouted from it.

Mark stared at it too. “You’re going to pay for this,” he hissed. “Entomorphis!”
Hugo ducked, and seemed to look even more furious for the fact that Mark was using one of Uncle George’s hexes against him. “Engorgio Skullus! Let’s see if we can do something for your microscopic brain!” he snarled.

“Reducio!” snapped back Mark as he stepped left. The spell hit a tree behind Hugo and the poor plant was miniaturised in a matter of seconds.

“Hey!” snapped Lily, stepping once again between the two boys. “That’s dangerous! There are people here! Stop it, right this—”

Everybody probably knew that she wanted to say “instant”, nobody got to hear that though, because at that moment two, or maybe three, spells hit her right in the chest. She didn’t even know what kind of spells they had fired. What she did know, was that she tried to gasp for air, but suddenly she couldn’t breathe. She took a few steps back, and her hands went to her throat as little cuts opened behind her ears. Suddenly, her legs felt cold, and the ground seemed to have become slippery.

Then she was slipping back and off the cliff.

The last thing she saw was Hugo’s terrified face as he stretched a hand and tried to grab her wrist.

Then came the impact with the water.

Then nothing.
Chapter I

A not so glorious Sunday afternoon.

Professor McGonagall was seated in a towel that she had Transfigured into a comfortable chair. Hugo was standing at her left, and he was looking particularly abashed as he stared at the huge bathtub that lay in the middle of the Prefects’ bathroom.

“Have I already told you how disappointed I am, Mr Weasley?” she asked him for the umpteenth time, her voice calm and collected.

He nodded disconsolately. “Yes, Headmistress,” he replied quietly.

The water sloshed around and a fin emerged, before disappearing under the surface again.

“You’re Head Boy,” she continued, “you shouldn’t get into fights just because Mr Goldstein provoked you. You should call a Professor to deal with the situation.”

“But he was—”

She raised a hand to quiet him. “Enough excuses, I’ve listened to the two of you trying to blame each other of the past hour,” she told him. “Can we focus on Miss Potter now?”

Hugo sighed and looked at the bathtub again. Everything was quiet. “Yes,” he replied in a murmur. “Good.”

There was a resounding knock on the door, before Hagrid almost pushed it down with a graceless shove. “They’re here, Professor,” he said, as he peered inside and smiled faintly at Hugo.

Hugo tried to smile back, but he suddenly didn’t seem able to control his facial muscles. Actually, now that he thought about it, he didn’t feel all that well. And when his mother walked inside, let out a shout of relief at seeing that he was alright and threw herself at his neck, he somewhat felt even worse.

“Oh Merlin and Morgana! You’re alright!” she cried, hugging him as if life depended on it. When she tilted her head back, she kissed his cheeks and took his head in her hands as if to check for injuries. “They said there was an accident! Oh my! Are you alright? You look alright, but are you alright? You’re so pale! Oh Merlin! You feel hot! Are you sick?”

“I’m fine, Mum, seriously,” he replied weakly.

His mother’s eyes narrowed suddenly. “Then what did you do?” she asked sternly. “You’re Head Boy, you know you should not get into trouble, right? You should be the one the other students look up to. Am I right, Professor McGonagall? When I was Head Girl—”

“Oh my darling wife, not again,” sighed his father with a playful smile upon his lips as he nodded a greeting to the Headmistress. “Ginny is still scarred by the year you were Head Girl, Hermione.” He made his way towards Hugo and placed a hand on his shoulder. “I’m glad to see that you’re okay, Hugo, but what the heck did you do?”

“Ron!” snapped his mother, but it was only half-hearted. “But yes, Hugo, what did you do?”

The water in the bathtub sloshed again – almost angrily, Hugo noticed – and a fin splashed the
surface. Hugo couldn’t see it, but his parents’ attention seemed to be drawn to it.

“What the heck is that?” asked his father, brow furrowed in concentration.

“That, Mr Weasley,” said Professor McGonagall, as she stood from the chair and looked seriously from his parents to Hugo, “is what the heck your son did.”

His mother let his head go and took a step towards the bathtub. A tail splashed around again, and she stopped suddenly. “Oh Merlin! That’s a mermaid!” she exclaimed, before turning to Hugo. “I’m the Chief of the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures; tell me you have not hurt an endangered species.”

Hugo took a deep breath. “I have not hurt an endangered species,” he solemnly swore, “kind of…”

“What is that even—”

Hagrid’s ungraceful knock resounded in the bathroom again, cutting off Hermione’s retort. “They are here too,” he said as he poked his head inside before retreating.

Aunt Ginny and Uncle Harry hurried inside, eyes wide. Uncle Harry was still wearing his Auror Uniform, as if he had been called from work. Aunt Ginny, just like his mother, seemed to look relieved when she spotted her nephew.

“Oh Hugo! You’re alright,” she said, hurrying to his side and hugging him tightly. “Where’s Lily?” she asked, before turning to Professor McGonagall. “Headmistress, is everything alright? Is Lily okay? Where is she? Oh, is she in the Hospital Wing?”

Uncle Harry patted Hugo’s shoulder, but he seemed distracted by the myriad of questions that his wife was asking.

Professor McGonagall took a deep breath. “She’s not in the Hospital Wing,” she replied calmly, “and Madam Pomfrey healed her concussion and her broken arm. So she’s in no danger at the moment.”

Aunt Ginny gasped out loud, and so did Hugo’s mother. “A concussion and a broken arm?” she asked horrified. “What happened? Did she fall from her broom?”

Professor McGonagall looked pointedly at Hugo, as if she expected him to answer their questions. He shook his head, looking positively worried of having his parents and Lily’s jumping on him every word he said.

“Mr Weasley,” said Professor McGonagall firmly.

Hugo let out a small whine, but now everybody was looking at him and Aunt Ginny’s eyes seemed to send daggers in his direction, just like Lily’s had done earlier that day. He closed his eyes for a moment and the water sloshed again, almost indignantly, it seemed now. Could she hear them from the tub?

“Hugo, what happened?” asked his mother impatiently.

When he opened his eyes again he tried to look as contrite as he could. “Lily fell off a cliff and into the lake,” he suddenly replied.

Aunt Ginny gasped out loud. “What? Oh my baby…”
“Damn it,” muttered Uncle Harry, “she should be in the Hospital Wing then, Professor McGonagall!”

“We didn’t have a space apt for her in the Hospital Wing,” replied Professor McGonagall.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” asked his mother, who looked like she would have instantaneously produced Ministry-approved parchment out of her pocket, to start a petition for a bigger Hospital Wing.

“Mr Weasley,” said Professor McGonagall again.

Hugo took a deep breath. “She fell off a cliff,” he continued, “because she stood between Mark Goldstein and me while we were fighting, and… I… we… we don’t know who did it, to be honest… but we might have turned her into… into…”

The water sloshed around again, and there was a blueish-green fin that emerged and splashed water everywhere.

“A mermaid?” asked his mother in a horrified whisper.

Aunt Ginny let out a gasp and hurried to the bathtub, as did Uncle Harry and his parents. Hugo followed them and peered into the tub as well.

What once was the smooth and spacious Prefects’ bathtub was now an aquarium that mimicked the bottom of a Caribbean sea. Rocks, seaweed, little colourful fish and sand could all be visible under the clear water. And so was Lily, very visible as she sat at the bottom of the tub and pouted.

Her long, red hair was a cloud around her pale, almost greenish face. She had a majestic tail that occupied most of the tub, blue-green in colour, shiny and covered in little, beautiful fins that looked like silk veils as they curled around it. She also seemed to have little cuts on it, as if she still couldn’t control it that well and bumped into the sharp rocks that had been placed there to recreate her habitat. She was wearing one of Hugo’s Chudley Cannons tee-shirts, because her own had seemed too tight underwater, while his left her free to swim around. She looked ridiculous in it, but nobody had told her that. She was opening her mouth and little bubbles were reaching the surface as she talked to herself, looking supremely unhappy of her new situation.

“Oh my…” murmured Uncle Harry.

Aunt Ginny placed her hand into the water and flapped it to attract her attention. “Lily,” she called anxiously, “Lily, it’s Mum! Lily!”

“I wouldn’t do that, Mrs Potter,” said Professor McGonagall, “she’s been having very mermaid like behaviours.”

Aunt Ginny withdrew her hand as Lily’s eyes looked up at her. She pushed on the bottom of the tub and swam to the surface. When her head emerged from the water, she snarled at her mother, before snapping her teeth together and growling in an animalistic way.

“Lily!” exclaimed Aunt Ginny, stepping back.

Lily grabbed the edge of the tub and tried to grasp her mother’s hand, growling ferociously at her before showing two sharp rows of teeth once more.

Hugo stepped back too, she had already tried to bite him as he told her that he was sorry, and didn’t quite care to give her another chance to taste his flesh.
“Oh, poor Lily!” said his mother sweetly.

“My baby,” sighed Aunt Ginny, as Uncle Harry nodded slowly.

There was a chuckle coming from his father, though, and Hugo turned to him, just like everybody else, to see him grinning as he stared at Lily trying to push herself up from the water and splashing her tail around. “Well, Professor McGonagall,” he said with mirth in his voice, “I knew there was something fishy when you called us here, but I didn’t expect that…”

“Ron!” exclaimed his mother, looking apologetically at Aunt Ginny. “Don’t mind him, Ginny; he spends too much time with George.”

To Hugo’s surprise, Uncle Harry tried to suffocate a laugh without really managing that well which gained him a scowl from his wife.

“Ron,” hissed Aunt Ginny, “don’t you dare joke about my daughter! The poor thing, she must be terrified!” She looked at Lily, who was trying to creep out of the tub with all her forces now.

“Why didn’t Madam Pomfrey change her back?” asked his mother, looking at Lily and probably observing her movements with academic interest. He could imagine her going to write an essay on mermaids the moment she was back in her office.

Professor McGonagall took a deep breath. “She couldn’t find an effective counter spell,” she told them, “we don’t know what kind of spell, or combination of spells might be more appropriate, Mr Weasley and Mr Goldstein had used on her. And they were too upset to remember.”

“Oh my! Is she going to stay like that forever?” asked Aunt Ginny horrified. “I mean, we will love her no matter what, but… but…”

The Headmistress smiled reassuringly. “Madam Pomfrey thinks that the spells will wear off in the course of a week, ten days at a maximum.”

“Like when Hermione turned herself into a cat?” asked his father. Then his eyes shone with mischief. “Oh! Can you imagine if you were a cat now that Lily is a fish—”

“Mermaid,” hissed Aunt Ginny.

“—you would try to catch her and eat her, Hermione!”

“Ron!” exclaimed his mother, glaring at him. “Stop being ridiculous!”

Uncle Harry chuckled. “Thank you for the nightmares, Ron,” he said with mirth.

Hugo rolled his eyes and looked at Lily, and his heart skipped a beat. She had stopped trying to crawl out of the tub and was now staring at him. Her big, blue eyes — which was weird because Lily’s eyes were brown — looked up at him as if he was a piece of cake. Then she dove into the water again and when she came back up, she was floating near to where he was standing.

He swallowed and smiled weakly at her, and she smiled back. A bright, innocent smile that had the power to turn his guts to jelly – which again, was weird because her smiles had never done that to him; maybe pudding but not jelly.

She leant her arms on the edge of the tub and twisted a lock of red hair around her finger. She kept smiling at him as she fluttered her eyelashes and rested her head over her arms playfully. She raised her tail over the water and moved it lazily left and right, with mesmerising movements.
Hugo took a step towards her, and her smile became even wider. Damn it, she was beautiful. Had she always been that beautiful? Why had he never noticed how beautiful his cousin was? Even those little scales on her skin were beautiful, and her eyes and her face... and the way she looked at him...

She opened her mouth, but seemed to decide against trying to talk. Instead she started to hum, and it was the most wonderful sound Hugo had ever heard. The melody seemed to come from another place and another time and he just took another step towards her and then another, until she was so close to him he could have touched her.

But a hand closed on his shoulder before he could do that, and he was pulled back just as Lily jumped out of the water and tried to grab him.

“I don’t think you should get that close to her, son,” said his father, suddenly serious.

“Your father is right, Hugo,” said his mother nervously. “She looks like... oh my!”

“What?” asked Aunt Ginny worriedly. “What does she look like?”

His mother pressed her lips together. “She’s clearly trying to mate him.”

Hugo nodded as he looked at Lily staring at him, as if she really wanted him to get closer again. “Oh, alright then, I will—she’s what?”

“She’s what, Hermione?” Aunt Ginny seemed even more shocked than Hugo felt.

His mother – to Hugo’s horror – looked ready to throw herself into a very serious explanation. She cleared her throat and nodded. “She’s trying to attract him near the water, pull him inside, and copulate with the intent of conception,” she said matter-of-factly. “That’s what mermaids do. It is how they reproduce.”

Aunt Ginny looked at Lily, eyes wide. “Don’t you dare get pregnant, Lily Luna Potter! Do you hear me?!” she snapped at her. “Don’t you dare get pregnant before you finish school, and get married. Am I understood?”

Lily grimaced at her, as if she was just a nuisance, then turned her face towards Hugo again and started to hum high-pitched little mewls that somehow had the power to make Hugo feel heartbroken for her. She puckered her lips a little, and he imagined himself kissing her.

“Yes, and if she did manage to mate you, Hugo, she would then drown you. So I don’t think it’s wise for you to get too close to her; at least until she’s back to thinking with her human brain,” said his mother.

“And if she doesn’t drown you, I will!” snapped Aunt Ginny to him. “Don’t you dare get her pregnant, Hugo!”

Hugo raised his hands near his face. The conversation was too surreal for him to even feel embarrassed by what they were suggesting. “It’s not on my bucket list, Aunt Ginny, I promise,” he said curtly.

Aunt Ginny glared at him as if she didn’t believe him, as if she was sure that next time Professor McGonagall would call them there it would be to tell her that she was going to be the proud grandmother of a school of fish.

“I still don’t understand how it happened,” said Uncle Harry, looking from Lily to Hugo. “Why were you fighting?”
“Yes,” said his mother, “you’re Head Boy, you shouldn’t be starting fights with the students!”

“Who says I started it?” asked Hugo defensively.

“Did you?” asked his father back.

Hugo sighed. “Yes,” he finally admitted. “But I only did it because Mark was telling a bunch of guys that he’d kissed Lily at the Three Broomsticks last week, and that… that she had let him put his hand under her top. And she hadn’t!” He was satisfied to see the horror on their faces. “And he raised Lily’s skirt in front of everybody,” he added for good measure.

Aunt Ginny was turning as red as her hair. “That little, horrible, disgusting vermin!” she screeched. “I’m going to Floo Call his parents the moment we get home!” She turned towards Uncle Harry. “You’re going to arrest him, aren’t you?”

He darkened. “Bloody hell, if I could, I would send him to Azkaban,” he growled.

“I’ve already spoken to Mr Goldstein and his parents,” said Professor McGonagall diplomatically, “he’s been given detention from now to the end of school. What he did was despicable.” She looked at Hugo and a smile seemed to creep on her face for a split second, before vanishing again. “And I think that Mr Weasley’s intentions were good, but he shouldn’t have acted that way. He should have asked a Professor to take care of the situation.”

“Yes, Hugo,” said Aunt Ginny, apparently forgetting about the mating thing, “you should have called a Professor.” Then she smiled fondly at him. “But thank you for taking care of your cousin.”

Hugo blushed at the compliment. “Yeah, it’s alright, Auntie,” he said, grinning, “she stood in the middle to try to separate us, at some point… I should have listened to her, but Goldstein didn’t stop firing, I just wanted to protect her.”

His mother and his aunt swooned at him, covering him with compliments like a cupcake with icing. Even his father and Uncle Harry patted his shoulders and complimented him for his courage and protective instincts. A true Weasley and Gryffindor, they kept repeating.

As the adults talked, their voices blurred together though, and suddenly all he could hear was Lily’s song and the sloshing of her tail on the water. He glanced at her and saw that she was looking up at him, adoringly. He didn’t know if it was because she understood what they were talking about, or because she was trying to attract him once again. He found himself thinking that he didn’t mind either options. He wanted her to hear all the compliments, and he wanted her to try to attract him again.

“Professor McGonagall!” said Aunt Ginny suddenly, startling him out of his reverie. “Why is my daughter’s tail covered in cuts?”

Professor McGonagall looked at Lily. “Because she doesn’t have complete control over her fins, yet; I’ve seen her bump into the rocks.”

“Or maybe this tub is too small for her,” replied Hugo’s mother seriously. “You need to put an Extension Charm on it.”

“There is, Mrs Weasley,” replied Professor McGonagall, “she’s got plenty of space in there.”

“Well, then she may be more comfortable in the lake,” suggested Uncle Harry thoughtfully.

Aunt Ginny glared at him. “Are you kidding me? You would send our daughter into the lake? With
the other Merpeople? She doesn’t even look like them, they would bully her around.”

“She doesn’t look like them, because she is not one of them,” said his mother seriously, “she’s a Siren, not a Selkie. First of all, the water of the lake would be too cold for her. Sirens like warm climates and salt water, they are native to Greece and the Mediterranean. Secondly, she would probably be considered a threat and killed by the colony.”

“Yeah, she would feel like a fish out of water,” chuckled his father.

“Ron!” hissed Aunt Ginny. “Don’t go there.”

He ignored her. “Not to mention that she would probably mate every male student and then drown them in the lake…”

“Ron!” snapped Uncle Harry, not quite as amused as before now.

“That’s complete poppycock, Ron,” said Hugo’s mother icily. “Mermaids are very advanced; they don’t just behave like animals. When they choose a mate, it is for life.” She paused and rectified, “Or for until they manage to get pregnant. Then they would drown him, naturally.”

Hugo looked at Lily, she was still smiling at him and, when their eyes met, she rolled on the surface of the water and let out another mewl.

“What are you saying, Mum?” asked Hugo a bit taken aback. “That she chose me? That I’ll be her mate until she drowns me?”

“Oh no,” said his mother gently, “I expect that her mating instincts will disappear once she’ll go back to being human.”

Hugo furrowed his brow. “And what if they don’t?” he asked, not sure if he was afraid that they would never go away or scared that they would.

“They will,” replied his mother. “I was half a cat for two weeks, but I don’t crave tuna nor lick myself clean before I go to bed.”

“You did have a tuna sandwich yesterday, though,” said his father, before looking at Lily. “Oops, sorry dear,” he chuckled.

Lily didn’t even seem to have understood him, she was still flirting – there was no other word for it – with Hugo, and for a moment he wished she wasn’t wearing his tee-shirt. Just to have a peek at her naked chest.

He blinked. Why was he thinking those things? He shouldn’t have been thinking those things. She was his cousin, and she was half fish. What was wrong with him? He glanced at her and she stretched a hand towards him. It was probably the mating thing, that was probably how they attracted sailors underwater. They got into their heads until they became crazy and threw themselves into the waves, where the mermaids proceeded to mate them, and then drown them.

“So she’ll just stay here until she is back to normal?” asked Aunt Ginny a bit anxiously. “Are you sure Madam Pomfrey has tried everything in her power to turn her back?”

Professor McGonagall nodded solemnly. “Yes, she said that our best chance is to wait for her to turn spontaneously with time.”

“But she’s going to be left behind with her homework!” gasped Hugo’s mother suddenly.
“I think she has bigger fish to fry at the moment, Hermione,” said his father seriously.

“Ron!” Aunt Ginny’s tone was exasperated. “Enough with the fish jokes already!”

His father grinned and Uncle Harry grinned back at him, acknowledging that he was quite funny.

“Mr Weasley will come here every day,” replied Professor McGonagall, “after his lessons, and as soon as she is be able to understand our language and read again, he’ll start bringing her homework and help her stay up to date with their classes.”

“Isn’t it dangerous?” asked his mother anxiously. “Mermaids control their mates’ minds, they can convince them to get into the water, do things that they don’t want to.”

Hugo looked at Lily; he couldn’t imagine anything that she wanted him to do, that he wouldn’t want as well. Maybe he would mate with Lily after all. He could already imagine himself sitting on a beach, Lily splashing around with their child…

Hugo blinked and shook his head to send those thoughts away. What was wrong with him?

He focused on his cousin; Lily was still smiling and making those cute little sounds… She looked so cute all wet like that…

“Come on, Hermione,” his father’s voice broke into his fantasies, “I’m sure it’ll be like shooting fish in a barrel, for Hugo to take care of Lily.”

“That’s enough!” growled Aunt Ginny. She didn’t even take out her wand, but instead just jumped on his father’s back, her arms going to his neck to choke him. “Stop joking about my daughter’s condition!”

His father swayed as he tried to untangle Aunt Ginny’s arms from his neck. “Well, just because it’s… ouch… it’s a pretty kettle of fish, it doesn’t mean that we can’t joke about it,” he gasped.

“Stop it!” snarled Aunt Ginny. “You insensitive git!”

Hugo looked at them with his lips parted. They were worse than children.

Even Lily was looking at them, her eyes wide as she stared in wonder at what they were doing. She grinned and let out some high-pitched noises every time Aunt Ginny managed to grab onto something, like his father’s nose or his hair, and pulled.

His father took a step and slid on the floor, falling on top of his sister, and they both whimpered at the impact with the floor.

Lily let out some little noises that made her sound like a dolphin, and splashed her tail on the water, clapping her hands. She was probably laughing at them, enjoying the scene immensely.

“I think I’m fishing in troubled waters,” sighed his father as he stood up, and helped his sister to her feet.


The smirk disappeared, and they both nodded demurely. “You shut up, though,” hissed Aunt Ginny to her brother.

“And you stop being such a cold fish,” he retorted.
“Ron,” she growled under her breath.

“So you’ll keep us informed about Lily’s transformation, Professor McGonagall?” asked Uncle Harry. “You’ll owl us the moment she goes back to being herself, right?”

“Maybe I could stay here,” suggested Aunt Ginny suddenly, “I could take care of her.”

“That’s not necessary, Mrs Potter,” said Professor McGonagall calmly. “Miss Potter will be perfectly fine here. She’ll be looked after day and night by Madam Pomfrey, and Mr Weasley, and myself, and... Hagrid too has asked to look after her. He was very excited.” She smiled at them. “And other students will be allowed to come and see her when she feels better.”

Aunt Ginny looked at her daughter and sighed. “Alright,” she murmured.

Lily blinked at her, but now that her mother wasn’t fighting with his father anymore, she had lost all interest with her, so she went back to looking lovingly at Hugo.

He smiled at her, and she mewed contentedly.

“Marvellous,” said Professor McGonagall suddenly. “Now that everything has been taken care of, we can go to my office for a nice cup of tea.”

The four adults murmured their agreement and looked at Lily, saying their goodbyes to her and waving their hands with bright smiles and promises that everything would be better soon. She stared back at them without understanding what they were doing.

“You too, Mr Weasley,” said Professor McGonagall, as they all walked towards the door. “Come, let her rest and get acquainted with her temporary home. You’ll see her tomorrow.”

Hugo nodded too, but the idea of leaving Lily there alone broke his heart. He looked at her and she seemed to sense either his feelings or the fact that he had to leave her, because her beautiful face changed to scared and miserable all of a sudden. She let out more high-pitched mewls, and now she sounded like she was crying.

“Oh Lily,” he murmured, “don’t cry. I’ll come back tomorrow, okay?”

She cried a bit more loudly, her hands grasping the edge of the tub as if she was trying to get out and reach him.

“Let’s go, Hugo,” said his father, patting his back, “she’ll be more than fine.”

Hugo hunched his shoulders. “She looks so sad, though,” he complained.

“That’s her mating instinct,” replied his mother seriously. “It’s called Mating Magic, and it’s very powerful. Pay attention, okay?”

He nodded and the moment they stepped out and closed the door at their backs, a loud wailing sound could be heard coming from the bathroom, and some kind of glass object shattered.

“Very powerful indeed,” agreed Professor McGonagall. “Now, how many of you want milk in their tea?”
Chapter II

A very annoying Monday lunch.

Mark Goldstein had had to apologise to Hugo, in front of Professor McGonagall, and he would have to do that again to Lily as soon as she was able to understand English again. To Hugo, the boy’s apologies hadn’t felt sincere at all though. Proof of that was that he was laughing with his mates at the Ravenclaw table, right at this moment, surely talking about what had happened the day before to Lily.

Hugo was glaring at him over his glass of pumpkin juice. He felt an almost wild desire to haul Mark into Lily’s tank, and let her drown him for what he did to her. Only, he didn’t want him, or any other male of any species, anywhere near her.

He placed his glass back on the table and furrowed his brow. Any other male of any species? What was he even saying? What was wrong with him? Damn it! He hated that mating thing already! He had slept like crap; dreaming about Lily, water, mermaids, and dead bodies abandoned on beaches, waking up every few hours wanting more than anything to go back to the Prefects’ Bathroom.

And he had been distracted for the whole morning, partly because he still couldn’t focus on anything but his cousin, and partly because every second people were whispering to him to ask more information about what had happened to Lily. He had taken a very meagre amount of notes, and he knew that Lily would be extremely disappointed the moment she was able to reason again, and he presented her with three measly lines about the Second Wizarding War.

Luckily, she already knew everything about it, and about Harry Potter.

He sighed, and started when a colourful bracelet dangled in front of his eyes.

“I made this for Lily,” said Alice seriously, “but Professor McGonagall wouldn’t let me give it to her. She said that only the staff and the Head Boy are allowed to see her.”

Hugo raised his eyes on the girl. “I… yeah, she’s right.”

“Well, can you give it to her?” she asked curtly. “It’s a friendship bracelet, I want her to know that I think about her, and I miss her.”

Hugo looked at the piece of jewellery. He doubted that a bracelet could convey all those feelings, and he seriously didn’t think that Lily would understand what a bracelet was to begin with, let alone that it was from Alice and that it meant all those things.

“I… maybe in a week?” he asked diplomatically. “She doesn’t understand much now.”

Alice darkened. “No, give it to her now,” she insisted. “She needs to know that her friends are thinking about her.”

“She doesn’t even know who you are,” replied Hugo calmly. “In a week, Alice.”

Alice’s bottom lip started to tremble as her eyes filled with tears. “You’re horrible!” she exclaimed unexpectedly, running away and leaving a flabbergasted Hugo behind.

A group of first years down the table looked at him as if he was a troll, at which point he glared at them until they flinched and turned away.
“Great, Weasley,” sighed the Head Girl, as she walked towards his table, “you fight with a student, turn your beloved cousin into a mermaid, and now you make a girl cry while simultaneously scaring off the first years. What’s next? Are you going to punch someone who wears glasses?”

Hugo glared at her too, but then he hid his head in his hands and sighed. “It’s all Goldstein’s fault,” he lamented.

“I told you not to start fighting with him,” she reminded him, “he’s slimy. He should have ended up in Slytherin.”

Hugo looked at her. “You’re in Slytherin,” he reminded her.

“Which means I know what I’m talking about,” she grinned.

He chuckled softly, before glancing at his watch. “Listen, I have to go,” he told her as he picked up his books and notes. “And I’m not sure I’ll make it to the meeting tonight.”

“I can imagine that,” said Mary, “Professor McGonagall told me you might be otherwise engaged for a couple of weeks. I’ve asked Todd to act as a substitute Head Boy while you’re busy with your cousin.”

Hugo looked at her a bit taken aback. “Oh,” he replied, “and he said yes.” Of course he had said yes, he was her boyfriend after all, why wouldn’t he say yes to that?

She nodded. “Do you mind?”

He did mind, she could have asked him first. “Not at all,” he tried to sound calm, he didn’t have time to start another quarrel now, “I’m sure he’ll do a great job.”

“Great,” she replied with a smile. “Say hi to Lily from me, okay?” She stopped before adding, “Shouldn’t you bring her something to eat?”

He shook his head, looking around himself not to let anybody hear him. “For a few days, Madam Pomfrey said that she’s going to get all the food she needs from her tank… hem, I mean the tub…”

“Eww,” said Mary, looking disgusted, “she eats where she swims?”

Hugo shrugged a shoulder. “That’s what mermaids do,” he told her matter-of-factly. “I’ll see you later, Mary, okay?” He stood up, and made his way towards the big door that led out of the Great Hall.

Professor McGonagall smiled and nodded at him as he passed by the teachers’ table.

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A short visit on Monday afternoon.

When he pushed the door of the Prefects’ Bathroom open, the first thing that Hugo noticed was that everything was quiet. There were no high-pitched noises, nor was there water sloshing around in the tub.
The bathroom was perfectly tidy, no shards of whatever had shattered the day before could be found on the floor. Similarly, the tiles all seemed dry; as if Lily hadn’t splashed around in the tub at all that day, or as if someone had cleaned before he came in.

He imagined her curled on the bottom of the tub, maybe crying silently as she waited for him to come back. He sighed in delight at the thought of seeing her beautiful face brighten up as she saw him.

He left his bag near the door and made his way to the tub, his steps echoing in the room. He stopped a few inches from the tub and peered inside, with a smile upon his face.

He was startled when he was splashed from head to toe. He gasped and stepped back, spluttering salty water and rubbing his eyes vigorously.

When he could open them again, he found Lily’s pretty face staring at him with shiny eyes and an amused smile over her lips. She had fastened a strand of seaweed in her hair, somehow managing to tie it up in a nice bow without breaking it, and she was making her dolphin-like noises at him. She clapped her hands as she emerged to her shoulders from the tub.

“Hey, that was not nice, Lily,” he told her seriously. “I’m all wet now!”

She smiled at him and let out some of her cute mewls.

Hugo sighed and smiled back at her. Then he stared as she grabbed a scorpion shell, from a nearby rock, and started to use it to comb through her long locks, looking supremely cute even as she did that. Honestly, had she always been that cute? Or was her Mating Magic trying to confuse him? He didn’t seem able to find an answer to that. He had always thought that she was pretty, but that was most guys anyway… she was really pretty.

She started to hum her melody and fluttered her eyelashes at him. Then, she emerged a little more from the water and stretched a hand towards Hugo, moving her fingers in a gesture to come closer.

He looked at her and shook his head, grinning. “I’d love that, Lily,” he told her, “but I’d rather wait until you don’t feel the urge to drown me, okay?”

She blinked at him, not understanding a word, probably. Then, she pushed herself a bit more over the edge, and Hugo’s lips parted in surprise.

His Chudley Cannons tee-shirt was gone, and Lily was naked in front of him. He swallowed loudly. He knew that he should tear his eyes away from her pale chest, but he couldn’t. He told himself that it was because he wanted to look closer at the pretty little scales near her collarbone and around her navel, but he wasn’t really looking at her scales as much as he was staring at her breasts. They were little and perky and pale, and had dainty, beautiful nipples on top.

Hugo wasn’t really an expert on breasts, but he had seen a couple in real life and many photographed ones from Teddy and James’ secret-stash-of-erotic-magazines-which-were-not-that-secret-after-all. And Lily’s breasts were really quite cute indeed. Small, yes, but they seemed flawless, and he was sure that they would fit her mate’s hands perfectly well.

“Damn it,” he muttered under his breath. He shook his head, and then looked at her face, seriously. “Lily, where’s your tee-shirt?” he asked sternly.

She cocked her head, looking at him as if she was trying really hard to make out what he was saying. “Your tee—well, my tee—where is it?”
She let out a noise and blinked at him.

Hugo swore under his breath. He brought his hands to his shoulders and ran them up and down his chest. “Your tee-shirt,” he repeated more insistently.

Lily emerged a bit more and ran her hands on her chest too, copying him as she slowly caressed her breasts and smiled at him, probably thinking it was a weird mating ritual.

“No…” said Hugo feebly, as he stared, open-mouthed at the way her fingers ran over her nipples. “Tee… tee…” But he himself wasn’t even sure of what he was saying anymore.

She mewled a bit and fluttered her eyelashes, her pink tongue darted out as she puckered her lips as if waiting for a kiss from him.

Hugo groaned. “No,” he told her in a murmur, “tee…”

She smiled and closed her eyes, puckering her lips again. Maybe “tee” sounded like “kiss” in her mermish language. Perhaps that was why many sailors ended up in the water. They asked the mermaids if they wanted a tee, upon which time the Sirens kissed them and dragged them into the sea.

He blinked as he tried to understand where those idiotic thoughts even came from, and noticed that he was standing much closer to the tub than before; too close, if Lily’s eyes had been open she might have probably already tried to grab his arm and pull him inside.

He stepped back, his head was suddenly very light. “No,” he repeated, “no tee or kiss or whatever.”

She opened her eyes again and looked at him with an abashed expression. Then she dove suddenly into the water, until only her eyes and the top of her head were above the surface.

He tentatively took a step towards the tub to look down at her. “I’m sorry,” he told her with a sigh, “I really want to kiss you too, but I don’t think…” His voice trailed away and he blushed. “I mean, it’s not like I really, really want to kiss you… it’s more like I wouldn’t mind pressing my lips against yours. But it’s all your fault, you know, it’s the Mating Magic. So when you regain your human mind, you are not allowed to scream at me because I wanted to kiss you. Because I’d never feel like that, like… like I could die if I didn’t kiss you… if it wasn’t for you.” He furrowed his brow and added in a whisper, “Alright, maybe I once thought about kissing you, but I was like fourteen and I thought about kissing all girls! I thought about kissing Dominique too once! Of course, I’ve never felt like I wanted to smash something when Dominique went to the Three Broomsticks with another guy… but she never went with an idiot like Mark Goldstein… and I probably never stared at her in class… but that’s because she’d already left Hogwarts when we started! And I don’t stare at you, I just glance at you every now and then… I like when you bite your bottom lip and look all focused on something… and when you tug your hair behind your ear and smile at me when I help you out with a potion…” He let out an awkward chuckle. “You’re not going to remember any of this, right?” he asked hopefully. “Because that would be very embarrassing… Long story short, though, no kisses. Not now at least, okay?”

She stared at him without understanding, but then darkened and dove completely, giving a small splash with her tail as she disappeared into the depths of the tub. Hugo followed her with his eyes and saw that she curled at the bottom, squeezing his Chudley Cannons tee-shirt to her chest as she drew some circles in the sand. Then she pushed her face into the tee and seemed to start crying, even though he couldn’t hear anything from the surface.

She didn’t emerge for the rest of the afternoon, and when Hugo left the bathroom to go to dinner he
felt an irrational sadness filling his heart.
Chapter III

An unexceptional Tuesday morning.

Care of Magical Creatures was usually pretty exciting. Especially this year, when a few months back, Hagrid had managed to pull a couple of strings and asked Uncle Charlie to bring in a small dragon that had just hatched, for one of his lessons.

The girls had screamed and giggled, as the dragon coughed up puffs of smoke, and the boys had challenged each other to pet the creature and pat it on its head. Daniel Brown burnt three fingers, but then had two girls fussing over him for the whole day; he later confided in Hugo that he would have done it all over again.

Nevertheless, today, Hugo wasn’t having an enjoyable lesson. At all. Hagrid was using every excuse he could find to talk with him about Lily. He was ecstatic about the fact that he could study an actual Siren, up close and personal.

“Have you seen her, Hugo? Isn’t she a beauty?” asked Hagrid for the umpteenth time. “She’s so sinuous, have you seen her swimming around? She can go faster than the Merpeople of the lake, did you know? Almost a mile faster!”

“Great,” murmured Hugo, not feeling too comfortable with Hagrid talking about his mate—his cousin, he meant his cousin—like that, as if she was a specimen that he could study.

“And she jumps so high, have you seen her? I’ve brought her some fish and taught her all the funniest tricks,” he said brightly, “she’s more intelligent than the Merpeople too.”

“You taught her tricks?” asked Hugo horrified, looking up at him. “Like… like a seal or something?”

“More like a dolphin,” admitted Hagrid thoughtfully. “She was laughing, I think… Oh well, but isn’t she a beauty though? Her scales are so shiny, that means that she’s healthy as a horse. And her teeth are so white and sharp. And she has those beautiful, pointy—”

“How dare you talk about Lily like this!” snapped Hugo in front of everybody, feeling his rage finally reach its boiling point. “Leave her beautiful, pointy things alone!”

Hagrid blinked at him, before blushing profusely. “I’m… I’m sorry, Hugo,” he babbled, “I didn’t know you were so sensitive about her fins.”

Hugo groaned out loud, while around him his fellow classmates shorted with laughter. “Fins?” he asked feebly.

Hagrid seemed to get excited again in no time. “Yes,” he replied, “aren’t they beautiful? Pointy and long and they seem so fragile, but they aren’t actually, they are really strong. And they are smooth and a bit slimy, but contrary to actual fish fins, they aren’t cold, but warm. And they look like silk, don’t they?”

“Yeah,” he replied quietly, not wanting to look the other students in the eyes. He was sure they had all been thinking that Hagrid was about to say something about her breasts, Alice and Susan had looked horrified at their teacher, as he was talking about her, and now they were laughing at Hugo. Bunch of horrible people.

“It’d be cool to have a lesson about her,” suggested Mark Goldstein with a smirk, “bring her here in
a tank and study what she can do. Maybe we can have her jumping through hoops, or come out of the water with a ball over her nose.”

His friends laughed at that, but when Hugo pounced and punched him on his nose, they didn’t seem to find it too funny anymore.

A slightly less embarrassing Tuesday afternoon.

Hugo stormed into the Prefects’ Bathroom and slammed the door shut at his back. He let the bag fall to the floor with a loud thud, and stalked quickly to the bathtub. Lily was sitting on an emerged rock, and she glanced only distractedly at him when he strode towards her, even though she seemed to rearrange herself in a more sensual position, pushing out both her chest and her round, scaled arse, like the mermaid on the stained glass window did all the time. She looked like she was still angry with him, though.

Hugo ignored her attitude completely, he was fuming for having been called in the Headmistress’ office and having had to listen to her as she told him what a bad example he was setting for the other students. He didn’t care about setting any example at all! All he cared about was breaking Goldstein’s nose.

“You know what I want to know?” he barked at her as he circled the tub and came to stand next to her, completely forgetting about keeping a safety distance. “I want to know why you went to Hogsmeade with Goldstein!”

She looked at him, eyes wide, as if she could sense the rage in his voice and hadn’t expected him to be angry with her at all. She shied away from him a little, looking both afraid and surprised.

“He only wanted one thing from you,” he went on, pacing nervously in front of her, “did you not notice? And since you wouldn’t give it to him, he’s being a total prat and is going around telling lies about you, and making fun of you, okay?” He looked at her and snapped, “He suggested we make you jump through hoops!”

She looked at him, taken aback, and opened her lips to say something, but instead didn’t make any sound.

“I just want to break his nose,” he growled, “again. I mean, I’ve already broken his nose today, but Madam Pomfrey already healed him! Damn it! I’m going to break it again!”

He collapsed on the tub edge, breathing raggedly and looking around himself for something to kick. He didn’t find anything, and instead just hunched his shoulders and let out a frustrated growl. “Merlin, I hate him!”

He was so caught up in his rage that he didn’t even notice where he was sitting. He didn’t even realise that in less than a second, Lily could grab him and pull him into the tub with her. He was seething, and that was all that mattered to him at that moment.

There was some sloshing at his back, but Hugo was too caught up in his rage to turn or stand up, and before he even knew what was going on, a soft, wet kiss was planted on his cheek.
He turned a bit towards her and looked as Lily leant her head over his shoulder and stared at him with a gentle and reassuring smile on her lips.

“Hey,” he said softly, suddenly feeling rather calm and very happy. The rage dissipated from his mind, as if her touch had a soothing power. “Not wanting to drown me anymore?”

She looked up at him and fluttered her eyelashes. He stiffened slightly when he felt her arms wrapping around his stomach and her chest pressing against his back, but even Hugo didn’t know if it was because he was worried that she might have dragged him into the water, or because he had his mate—cousin—wrapped tightly around himself.

She didn’t pull him into the water and he smiled gratefully at her. He placed his hands on hers and felt how warm and smooth they were. He caressed her arms up and down, and she made a noise that was close to a purr, as she pressed herself more tightly against him.

“You like that, don’t you, Lily?” he chuckled.

She purred more strongly, and when she opened her mouth the sound that left her lips was almost human. “Lee,” she said, “Lee-lee…”

He blinked at her. “Yes,” he exclaimed, “Lily. That’s your name! Li-ly.”

“Lee,” she repeated. “Lee-lee-lee-lee…”

He grinned. “Almost,” he told her, “Lily.”

“Lee-lee,” she articulated with great difficult. “Lee-lee,” she repeated, then she raised her head from his shoulder and kissed him fiercely on his lips, before withdrawing and diving back into the water.

He was sure he had heard her giggle – properly giggle – but it might have also been the fact that his mind was all clouded right at that moment, all he could think about was her lips on his own and her wet body pressed against his.

Damn it, that had felt good!

He turned to look at her and saw that she was swimming in circles under the water, looking incredibly cheerful as she splashed her tail left and right.

He smiled.
**Wednesday morning.**

“Not three. Two, Hugo!” hissed Mary as she grabbed his wrist.

He looked at her and smiled dumbly. “What?” he said.

She rolled her eyes. “The eyes of newt, you’re putting too many,” she repeated. She let his wrist go and started to turn the pages of their Potions book, finally finding what she was looking for. “Here,” she said, pushing the book under his nose, “if you put too many the potion will turn yellow and then explode.” She looked sharply at him. “Just like our grades!”

He hummed in reply, not really caring that much about grades at that moment. He handed her the eyes of newt and started to stir the potion instead. How could he care about a stupid potion when in a few hours he would see Lily again? Honestly, did Mary not know what it meant to be in love? Not that Hugo was in love, of course, but he felt like he was in love. Naturally, it was all the Mating Magic making him feel like that, but he found himself liking that feeling more and more. He wasn’t going to fight it – not that he had tried that much anyway…

The day before, they had spent the whole afternoon playing, he had even forgotten to write his Potions essay. When the time came for him to submit said essay, he had just nodded and smiled dumbly as Slughorn told him how disappointed he was with his behaviour, not actually listening to a word the professor was saying.

Lily had even shown him one of the tricks that Hagrid had talked about. She had jumped out of the water and done a pirouette in mid-air, delighting when Hugo clapped his hands and laughed. She did it another ten times afterwards, just to see Hugo’s excitement, probably. They had spent a nice afternoon together, and when he had to leave her to go to dinner, she had kissed him again, this time winding her hands in his hair and pulling him a bit towards the water.

“Stop stirring, for Merlin’s sake!” snapped Mary. “It’s getting all lumpy! Are you even paying attention?”

He looked at her and smiled again. “Not in the slightest,” he replied cheerfully. “Sorry!”

Mary grabbed the spoon from his hand. “What is wrong with you?” she asked sharply, pushing him away. “I thought you were good in Potions!”

“I am,” he replied with a grin, “usually. Not today, I guess.”

Mary rolled her eyes. “If we screw this potion up, I’ll tell Slughorn that it’s all your fault!” she hissed.

Hugo smiled languidly at her, somehow he couldn’t really understand what all the fuss was about. Potions, grades, N.E.W.T.s. How could he care about these things when he had a beautiful naked girl waiting for him in a bathtub? And Merlin, Lily was beautiful… and naked… and beautifully naked… Surely that was not just her magic, she had always been beautiful. Hugo grinned dumbly at the wall in front of him, how lucky was he that the girl who had chosen him as her mate was actually beautiful? Damn, he felt well lucky.

“Hugo! Hugo!”
“What?” he slurred, feeling slightly drunk. Drunk with Mating Magic.

Mary’s eyes widened and she cocked her head sharply towards Slughorn, only she wasn’t pointing at Slughorn, but at Madam Pomfrey, who was standing next to their professor and was looking at him rather unimpressed. Slughorn looked legitimately impatient, and the other students were doing their fair share of murmuring at the scene.

“Yes?” he asked, looking at the Healer.

“Mr Weasley, if you’re done daydreaming, pick up your things and follow Madam Pomfrey, please,” said Professor Slughorn.

Hugo’s head suddenly cleared a little. He nodded hastily and stuffed his books and notes into his bag. “I’m sorry, Sir;” he said, as he walked up to where they were standing, “I promise you our potion is perfect, you’ll be able to turn anything into gold. I swear.”

Professor Slughorn darkened. “We’re making a sleeping draught, today, Mr Weasley,” he growled.

Hugo chuckled awkwardly, but hurried out of the class when there was an explosion and Mary’s shrieks filled the room. “Let’s go, Madam Pomfrey,” he said, closing the door at his back. “What’s… what’s happening?” He stopped in his tracks as something dawned on him. “Is Lily okay?” he gasped out, stopping in front of her. “Did something happen to her?”

Madam Pomfrey cocked an eyebrow at him, before circling him and keeping on walking. “How are you feeling, Mr Weasley?” she asked, instead of replying to his question.

Hugo furrowed his brow, before following the nurse down the corridor. “Well, right now a bit annoyed that you wouldn’t reply to me,” he hissed under his breath.

She nodded. “Is important for you to know how Miss Potter is doing?” she asked seriously.

Hugo gritted his teeth. “Very important, thank you very much, she’s my cousin,” he growled. “I do care about her.”

“I see,” she replied calmly. “How are your classes going on? Are you having difficulties focusing on any of them?”

“Nope, not in the slightest, I’m sailing through them,” he lied nonchalantly.

She sighed as if she had expected him to lie so blatantly. “I’ve just been to see Miss Potter, Mr Weasley,” she finally told him.

“And is she not well?” asked Hugo anxiously. “Did something happen to her?”

“She seemed perfectly fine, apart from still being a mermaid,” she replied calmly. She looked pointedly at Hugo. “Have you noticed any improvements on her part? Any changes in her behaviour?”

Hugo’s eyes widened as he nodded. “Tons, Madam Pomfrey, tons!” he assured her cheerfully. “She can say her name, I taught her that by the way, and… and she hugged me and didn’t even seem to want to drown me in the slightest. I was angry and she comforted me! I mean, if that’s not human behaviour, I don’t know what is!” He didn’t feel the urge to share with Madam Pomfrey the fact that he had kissed her, that was private after all.

The Healer seemed to listen carefully to his words. She smiled briefly, before turning serious. “Have
You dreamt a lot lately, Mr Weasley?” she asked calmly.

Hugo shrugged a shoulder. “Yeah, a bit more than usual…”

“What about? Do you remember?”

He took a deep breath. “Oh you know… what all teenagers dream about…”

“Your N.E.W.T.s?” she asked calmly. “Sitting through your exams and not knowing any answers.”

He shook his head. “The sea, fish, mermaids… water…” He smiled weakly at her, knowing perfectly well that that was not what all teenagers dreamt about. Especially not boys…

“I see,” replied Madam Pomfrey. They reached one of the stone stairs that led to the Ground Floor and she looked at him. “Miss Potter’s Mating Magic is still quite strong,” she told him, “but I expect it to be diminished by the end of the week. In case it doesn’t, I’d like for you to come and tell me, Mr Weasley, am I understood?”

Hugo couldn’t see anything bad with Lily’s Mating Magic, or the fact that it might persist for a few days longer, but he nodded nonetheless.

“Good,” said Madam Pomfrey. “Now, off you go to lunch and then to see Miss Potter. In case there’s any other improvement on her condition, I’d like to be informed, Mr Weasley.”

“Of course, Madam Pomfrey,” he replied promptly, a smile tugging at his lips.

She smiled back and started to climb up the stairs in silence, Hugo was right beside her, even though his mind was already a few feet away.

\[\text{Wednesday afternoon.}\]

When he pushed the door of the Prefects’ Bathroom open, Hugo was panting and gasping for air. He had stuffed his face with meat loaf and potatoes, and swigged down two glasses of pumpkin juice, before running all the way to the Fifth Floor. He felt a bit nauseous now, as if something – probably the meat loaf – was fighting its way back to his mouth, but he didn’t quite care.

And he cared even less when he opened the door and heard Lily’s excited scream. She rose from the water the moment he kicked the door shut, and placed her hands on the tub edge, she looked at him with bright eyes and cried, “Lily! Lily! Lily!” before puckering her lips and closing her eyes to wait for a kiss.

He chuckled, but threw his bag to the floor and strode towards her. In that position her breasts were pushed together and they seemed fleshier and even more smooth than the day before, he wondered what she would do if he touched them. Maybe she would purr again, maybe she would touch him back, right there.

He lowered his head and planted a soft kiss on her lips.

She shivered in delight and jumped back into the water with an elegant pirouette, before emerging
once again and asking for another kiss. “Lily! Lily!” she said, as she got into the same position.

Hugo chuckled, but complied. He had never seen a girl react that enthusiastically to his kisses. He had had a couple of girlfriends, and yes, he had snogged them profusely, but none of them seemed to be dying for more every time he just pecked their lips.

She jumped again and then got into position once more. “Lily! Lily!” she cried.

He laughed now, before lowering his head again. “You know,” he murmured, as he got closer to her, “I can do better, actually.”

She seemed to frown a little as he placed his hands on her cheeks, but she didn’t open her eyes. He closed his own and brought his lips to hers for the third time, this time opening them a little. To his surprise she opened hers straight away, and when he pushed his tongue into her mouth, she slid her own against his, copying his every movement.

She was warm and her mouth was a bit salty, but he didn’t mind it. She made all sorts of little moans that sounded very human to him, and he just delighted in how keen she was for his touch and kisses.

When he withdrew to take a gulp of air, she followed him and pressed her lips to his before he could even fill his lungs. She kissed him more and more thoroughly, as if her life depended on it, until he had to push her back a little to really gasp in some air.

“Lily!” he panted, tilting his head back.

She brushed her little nose against his own. “Lily,” she whispered. “Lily.” She smiled up at him and then descended slowly into the water until she was lying on the surface, her head propped on her arms as she looked up at him with shiny eyes. She moved her tail left and right and sighed happily.

He grinned idiotically at her and sat on the edge near her. She rubbed her face against his trousers and then looked up at him again.

“Oh Merlin!” screeched a voice. “Isn’t this absolutely revolting?”

Hugo started and jumped up, wand in his hand.

Nobody was allowed in there except for him and the staff, and that annoying voice was definitely not one of the teachers.

“Whoever you are, get out!” he snapped. “You’re not allowed in here!”

There was a giggle that ended in a snort, and then a ghostly figure wearing a Hogwarts uniform floated slowly towards the tub.

Lily snarled her teeth as she tried to jump out of the water and grab Moaning Myrtle, but the ghost just rolled her eyes and chortled. “You can’t touch me, you silly fish,” she told her from the ceiling, “haven’t you understood that yet?”

Hugo narrowed his eyes. “First of all,” he snapped, “don’t call her silly fish! Second, you’re not allowed to be in here, and third, have you been coming here to upset her?”

Myrtle looked at him and rolled her eyes. “First, she’s a fish,” she replied with her high-pitched voice, “second, students are not allowed in here, it doesn’t say anything about ghosts, and third, I might have come in here at night, on occasion, to see how she was doing…” She giggled at that and pretended to swim in mid-air.
Hugo growled at that. “I’m going to tell that to Professor McGonagall,” he snapped, “she’s going to send you to haunt the sewers under the castle!”

“Oh please,” she sighed. “Fish don’t sleep through the night, I didn’t disturb her, I merely kept her company.”

“Don’t call her that!” snarled Hugo. He threw a spell at her, but she flew away with a flutter of her ghost skirt.

Lily opened her mouth and a loud, glass-shattering scream erupted from somewhere within her little body. Hugo had to bring his hands to his ears, because he felt as if his eardrums were going to explode, while Lily stretched her hands over her head, in another vain attempt to attack Myrtle.

“Ouch!” snapped Myrtle, apparently affected by the sound as much as he was. “Put your head underwater if you want to say something, stupid fish!”

Lily looked abashedly at Hugo as he lowered his hands from his ears, he blinked and felt as if his head was spinning. He tried to shake it, but somehow the movement only made it worse.

“Worst sound ever,” growled Myrtle, somewhere above him.

He definitely had to agree with that.

“Lily?” said Lily miserably. “Lily?”

“It’s alright,” he replied, trying to smile when he still felt a bit confused. “I’m fine.”

“Except he’s not,” snapped Myrtle. She rolled her eyes and said, “Here,” before diving into the tub.

“No!” cried Hugo, but Lily had already thrown herself after her and disappeared into the water. Hugo grabbed the edge and peered inside, but before he could even understand what was happening, Myrtle emerged once more and pretended to be spluttering out water.

“She says she’s sorry,” she told him, rolling her eyes as if her apologies wouldn’t have been enough, “she didn’t want to deafen us.”

Lily emerged next to her and looked at Hugo with apprehension, nodding at every word Myrtle was saying.

“Oh,” was all Hugo could say, before understanding what Myrtle was talking about. “Excuse me? You can understand her?” he asked with a gasp.

She looked at him as if he was stupid, and then told him that straight to his face. “You’re just as stupid as your Uncle Harry,” she sighed, rolling her eyes again, “even you can understand her if you put your head into the water. Hello? She’s a mermaid.”

He blinked at her. Oh, bloody hell! Of course! He should have known that! The Triwizard Tournament! He had heard stories about it ever since he was a little boy. Especially about the second task, which his father loved in particular because he had been Uncle Harry’s most precious thing, and he loved to tease Aunt Ginny about it. And he had heard about the egg; and the fact that he could only understand the Merpeople's voices underwater.

He looked at Lily, she was staring back at him with eyes wide, still worried for having deafened him apparently. He smiled at her, jumping up from the edge. “I’ll get in there,” he said excitedly, “oh yes, I’ll get in there and we’ll be able to talk, Lily!”
She cocked her head. “Lily?”

“Yes!” He grabbed his grey jumper and tugged it over his head, before throwing it to the floor. Lily seemed to understand what he was doing because her worried expression changed into an excited one, and she rose up from the water and clapped her hands together. “Lily! Lily!”

He grinned at her and started to undo the buttons of his shirt, but he stopped after the first three. He looked at her again, she was still smiling brightly. “Ehm… if I do get in there,” he started in a murmur, involuntarily shaking his head a little, “you’re not going to drown me, are you?”

She blinked, and shook her head as well.

He wasn’t sure if she was replying to him or just copying his movements.

He narrowed his eyes. “Or, are you going to drown me?” he asked again, nodding slightly.

She smiled even more brightly than before and nodded forcefully.

Myrtle chortled with laughter next to her.

Hugo glared at the ghost, before taking a deep breath and starting to pace for the bathroom. “Well, let’s try to analyse the situation,” he said, “the very first time you saw me, you wanted to bite me, then you tried to grab me, to mate me and drown me—that’s what my mum says, I’m sorry if you’ve never wanted to drown me at all—and then you kind of tried to grab me again, but now you’re just happy with me kissing you, right?”

She blinked and cocked her head.

“Right,” he continued, “so you’re not going to drown me.” He took a deep breath. “And I’ll have my wand with me, I can always… Stun you or something if you try to drown me.” He glanced at her, he didn’t want to Stun her, and he was probably not going to do it even if she kept his head pushed against the bottom of the tub. “And I’ll cast a Bubble-Head Charm on myself, I mean, you couldn’t drown me even if you wanted to… which you don’t… right?”

She clapped her hands and cried, “Lily!” before diving a little and using her forefinger to gesture to him to get inside, her eyes crinkling up in a smile that was hidden by the water.

Hugo smiled. “Alright,” he agreed. He slipped the last few buttons out of their holes and threw the shirt carelessly to the floor. When he started to unbutton his trousers, Lily’s tail seemed to splash around more insistently in the water.

“I’m keeping my underwear, though,” he told her sternly.

She just smiled and looked at him from the water.

He kicked off his shoes and tugged down his trousers and socks, discarding them as carelessly as his other items of clothing.

He walked to the tub and sat on the edge, swinging his legs around as he dunked his feet in the water. The liquid was warm and pleasant around his ankles, and he moved them around a little to feel it properly.

Lily swam silently up to him and slid her chest against his legs, coming up to lean her head in his lap. She purred as he smiled down at her and caressed her hair.
“Disgusting,” snorted Myrtle, “I’m leaving.”

“Hold your horses,” said Hugo, glaring at her. “You stay right here and in case something happens, you go and call Madam Pomfrey or Professor McGonagall, understood?”

Myrtle giggled. “Something like what?” she said, sitting next to him and rubbing her cold shoulder all over Hugo’s. “I’ve always wanted someone with whom I could haunt the girl’s bathroom…” She looked him up and down. “And I’m sure you’d be the perfect companion to scare those girls silly while they’re sitting there crying about boys…”

He rolled his eyes and shook his head, deciding that she didn’t deserve an answer. Then he pointed his wand to his face and muttered the Bubble Charm. When he was finally ready he tapped Lily on her shoulder.

She raised her head and looked at him, badly contained excitement lighting up her face as she swam a bit back to give him some room to dive in.

He smiled from behind the bubble and finally, swallowing and crossing his fingers that she didn’t just want to mate him and drown him, he jumped in.

A curtain of little bubbles rose all around him, and he had to blink to put his surroundings into focus. The water was clear and he could see perfectly well all around him. There were sharp rocks covered in colourful anemones and seaweeds, little fish swam around them and quickly disappeared when something much bigger and faster than them made its way to Hugo.

“Oh!” sighed Lily as she jolted into him, wrapped her arms around his torso and leant her head against his chest. “I thought you’d never jumped in!” Her voice was different, it was soft and almost melodic, as if she was singing those words in his ear rather than actually saying it.

She swam forcefully against him until he was bumping into the rocks at his back, but he barely felt the sting. All he could feel was a pleasant buzzing in his ears, and excitement pooling in his stomach, as she pressed her breasts against his naked chest.

She looked up at him and smiled. “I’m so happy you’re here,” she told him gently. “Do you want to see my house?”

Hugo nodded. “Yes,” he croaked out, his voice deep and distorted under the water.

She brightened up even more and let him go, before grasping his hand and starting to swim towards the bottom. He let her drag him down, past more rocks and more fish which looked at him curiously, until they reached the sandy bottom of the tub, there she turned right and slid into a thin crack in the rocks. He had to hold his breath to pass through it, but he got scratches on both arms anyway as he swam inside behind her.

In there, there was a small cave-like alcove. It didn’t have much, only a higher mountain of sand where she probably slept at night – when Moaning Myrtle wasn’t upsetting her –, a few shells and starfishes piled in a corner, and his Chudley Cannons tee-shirt placed carefully on a rock. She smiled cutely and went to float near the tee-shirt. “It smells like you,” she told him brightly.

He nodded. “It’s mine,” he told her matter-of-factly.

She seemed unable to contain her joy at the news, she pirouetted in the water, the sloshing she caused pushing him back against more rocks.

She went to him and grabbed his hands. “I always sleep with it!” she told him eagerly. “Always!”
He smiled dumbly at her. He loved just how excited she was about him. Honestly, they had always been good friends, and very close cousins, but to see her that excited to learn that she had been sleeping with his tee-shirt and to be a witness of her bright smile at the discovery, made his heart melt.

He shook his head a little. Now that he was that close to her, he felt the Mating Magic even more strongly than up there. All he wanted to do was to touch her and hug her tightly and kiss her and…

“Lily,” he said, trying hard to push those thoughts from his mind and focus. “Do you know who I am?”

She nodded fervently, eyes wide as she brought his hands to her face and rubbed her nose all over them. “You’re the love of my life,” she replied forcefully, “my love, all mine…”

He smiled again, probably looking supremely dumb. “No, no,” he said suddenly, “do you know my name?”

“Lily,” she replied gently.

“What? No, that’s your name.”

She looked at him a bit taken aback. “Oh,” she replied, “my name.”

“Yes,” he said. He was surprised that she didn’t know her name, and a bit disappointed, if he had to be honest. It meant that the spell wasn’t wearing off as quickly as he had thought. “My name’s Hugo,” he explained, “I’m your cousin.”

She looked at him without understanding.

“Aunt Hermione and Uncle Ron’s son?”

She blinked.

“Rose’s brother?”

She cocked her head, as if he was using words that were not in her mermish vocabulary.

“Nothing?”

She shook her head, sighing a bit disconsolately.

He smiled as he caressed her face with his fingers. “Oh, never mind,” he told her sweetly, “I’m sure that in a few days you’ll remember everything, don’t you worry, okay?”

She smiled brightly again. “I don’t worry, I never worry when you are here,” she told him gently.

Hugo blushed at her words. Bloody hell, it felt good to be adored! He smiled at her and turned around to find a rock where he could sit more comfortably and talk to her. He found one, but it was a bit sharp on the edges and instead decided to sit on the sand. Once he did, Lily settled in his lap, her long tail wrapping around him as she looked up at him adoringly.

Her scales were smooth and slightly slimy, but it was not an unpleasant feeling against his skin. He settled his hands on her hip, where her human skin changed into her fish scales, and looked down at her.

“So,” he started seriously, “my mum said that you think that I’m your… your mate or something.”
She nodded solemnly. “Oh yes,” she replied, “I can feel it.”

“Yeah… what is exactly that you feel?” he asked her, his fingers caressing where the scales started. It was an enjoyable feeling under his digits, weird, like nothing he had ever touched, but quite nice indeed.

“Oh,” she replied, “it’s like a shiver that starts in my head and goes down to my fins. And when I see you, I feel something here.” She grabbed one of his hands and placed them on her chest, right above her left breast and on her pulse point. “And here.” She moved the hand down to her stomach, covering her navel with his palm. “It feels exciting and scary and beautiful,” she told him. “I like it.”

He smiled again. He just didn’t seem able to do much but smile. All the time. His facial muscles were almost hurting him for the amount of smiling he had been doing while in her presence. “That’s sweet,” he told her. “Alright, Lily, now comes the big question. Will you—”

She gasped out loud, her hands going to her mouth. “Yes!” she almost cried. “Yes, I will marry you!” She threw her arms around his neck, pushing him back and pinning him to the sand and started kissing him through the bubble as if she couldn’t get enough of him.

Hugo just blinked, shocked and confused as she pecked all over his face. He hadn’t wanted to ask her to marry him, he had intended to question if she wanted to drown him at all. He was a bit surprised that mermaids had no idea what cousins, uncles, and aunts were but apparently they knew perfectly well the concept of marriage.

It was definitely slightly inconvenient for him, really.

“No, Lily, no,” he tried to say, but when she let him go, it wasn’t because she had heard his feeble protestations. No, she swam quickly towards the highest rocks and picked a flower-like plant, before grabbing a starfish from the pile of shells. When she swam back to him, she had the flower in her hair, and the starfish in her hands.

“I’m ready,” she said brightly, coming to a stop in front of him, her hair swaying around her head.

He pushed himself into a sitting position and furrowed his brow. “Ready?” he asked. “Ready for what?”

“Marry you, of course!” she replied eagerly. She squeezed the starfish in her hands and brought it to her chest as if it was used for some sort of mermaid wedding ritual.

Hugo would have laughed at her, if it wasn’t for the fact that she looked dead serious. “I… now?”

She nodded forcefully.

He smiled awkwardly. “I don’t think… now? I mean… now’s not good for me… like… I don’t think I can marry you, Lily, to be honest… especially not right now… And we need to be engaged first, don’t we? I mean Victoire and Teddy were engaged for years before they got married… And shouldn’t we wait? Just like… wait…”

Her face fell and she looked at him as if he was the source of all her unhappiness. “But why?” she whined. “You love me and I love you. And I want to marry you, and then you can free me, and we can live together in the sea…” She started her dolphin-like sobs and Hugo’s heart clenched.

“Oh no, Lily, don’t cry,” he told her, stretching a hand to pull her into a hug.

She turned away from him and hid her face in her palms, sobbing even more loudly than before as
she curled on the bottom of the tub.

Hugo sighed. Somehow, it made him suffer to see her hurt, and he discovered that it was even worse when he had been the one to make her suffer in the first place. He swam to where she was curled up and lay down next to her, covering her little body with an arm and pushing his nose in her flaming hair.

“Hey,” he whispered, “how about I’ll marry you in… a couple of months’ time? I need to finish school first—and you do too—and then we can get married and move to the sea…” He moved her hands from her face and smiled warmly at her. Her mating instinct would disappear in a week or two – they had assured him about that – so he was sure that he could tell her whatever she needed to hear to be happy and then she would just either forget about it or deem it as ridiculous as it actually was.

She looked up at him, her blue eyes filled with tears. “Promise?” she said, pouting like a child.

He raised two fingers near his face. “Solemnly swear.”

She jumped up unexpectedly and tackled him back to the sandy bottom. She kissed him a couple more times before lying on top of him, her tail swishing right and left as she drew circles on his chest with her fingers and poked him in his ribs with a carelessly placed elbow. “Two months,” she told him seriously, “I’ll count the moons.”

He nodded and smiled. “But Lily,” he said softly, one of his hands going to the small of her back to play with her smooth scales, “why did you say that I should free you? You’re… you’re not a prisoner.”

She became sad all of a sudden. “But I am!” she replied. “I’m like a fish in a tank! I can’t go anywhere, and this place is too small for me! Look at my tail!”

She curved it until it was right in front of his face and he could see the little cuts and scars on it. He stretched a hand and ran his fingers over it, it was so smooth and a delight to touch.

“And here too,” she complained, moving her tail away and pushing her hair over one shoulder to show him the other one.

There was a nasty bruise near her shoulder blade and it seemed quite recent for some blood seemed to seep out from a little cut. He sat up and looked closely at it.

“Does it hurt?” he asked worriedly.

She nodded disconsolately. “They say I’m careless and don’t know how to swim properly,” she replied, “but this place is so small, I can’t even go from here to there without bumping into something.”

He nodded back at her seriously. “Here,” he said, “this will help.” He drew out his wand and pointed it at her shoulder. “Episkey,” he said, and watched her as she stared at her cut healing.

“Oh!” she exclaimed. “Thank you!” She kissed him again. “Thank you, Hugo! Thank you!” She punctuated every word with a kiss and a giggle. “You’re such a wonderful sailor; all the other mermaids will turn green with envy.”

He refrained from telling her that he was not a sailor – his mouth was kind of busy anyway – and just smiled at her through the bubble as she proceeded to show him her gratitude for the rest of the afternoon.
Chapter V

Thursday morning.

“Mr Weasley!” Professor McGonagall’s tone was outraged as she looked at Hugo from behind her desk.

“No! No!” he retorted heatedly. “Honestly, Professor McGonagall, you need to listen to me. She feels like she’s been kept prisoner in a fish tank! I should owl my mother! She’d be furious to know that her niece is being kept in an unsuitable environment like that. I’ll tell her that that tub is way too small for her, she’s all covered in cuts and she was bleeding! I had to Heal her… yes! She was bleeding into the water! And she asked me to free her! She asked me to bring her to the sea! She’s not happy.”

Professor McGonagall’s face went from shocked at Hugo’s heated tone, to surprised, to plain furious. “Mr Weasley! You entered the tub!” she gasped.

Hugo sat back slowly on the chair across from her, suddenly well aware of his slip. “No,” he replied, trying to sound nonchalant.

The Headmistress’ eyes narrowed. “Then how did manage to understand her without putting your head into the water?” she asked curtly.

Hugo’s shoulders hunched. “Alright, I might have taken a swim with her,” he replied, trying to sound as contrite as he could. “But I was completely safe, I swear. And she was grateful when I Healed her.”

“Mr Weasley, have you not listened to a word your mother said the other day?” she asked him severely. “Mermaids are extremely strong, and they can be vicious. If her mating instinct should suddenly take control of her, what do you think would happen?”

Hugo sighed, but didn’t reply.

“Well?” she urged him.

He looked at her and blushed. “She would mate me, then drown me,” he replied in a murmur.

“Exactly!” exclaimed Professor McGonagall.

Hugo exhaled and crossed his arms. “But she’s not happy,” he continued a bit less forcefully than before, “that place is too small…”

“Mr Weasley,” sighed the Headmistress, “what you have to remember is that Miss Potter’s condition is temporary and highly unstable. What would happen if she were to change back suddenly in the middle of the night? While she’s sleeping at the bottom of the tub? Were that tub any bigger, she would probably drown. Like this, at least, she can find her way back to the surface relatively quickly, wherever she is.”

Hugo opened his mouth to reply something, but couldn’t seem able to find anything to say at all. The Headmistress made a lot of sense indeed. Suddenly, his head filled with terrible images of Lily changing back to herself and drowning at the bottom of the Prefects’ tub. “But… but those rocks are too sharp… and there are too many…”
“We’ve recreated her natural habitat, Sirens are graceful and they usually manage to swim even into the smallest places without bumping into things,” she told him, before eyeing him sternly. “She does however have a tendency to get excited quickly,” she told him, “especially, apparently, when she’s with you, since Madam Pomfrey always finds her in a particularly bad state in the evening, after you visit her.”

Hugo blushed crimson. It was true, she was particularly restless when he was there, swimming in circles, jumping out of the water, kissing him against the rocks…

“It would probably be for the best if you were not allowed to see her until the moment she regained her human mind,” she told him calmly. “For both of you, I’ve heard you’ve been very distracted lately, Mr Weasley.”

Hugo looked at her, eyes wide in surprise. He suddenly felt as if he couldn’t breathe at the thought of not being able to visit Lily every day. He felt as if McGonagall had punched him in the guts, and she had a bloody strong right.

“No, no, no,” he said resolutely, shaking his head, “I cannot not see her. I have to see her. And she does too. She’s so happy when she sees me, I swear, that lights up her day. And mine. Like, I could be sick if I wasn’t allowed to see her. Honestly… please, Professor McGonagall… don’t forbid me to see her.”

Professor McGonagall stared at him for a long moment, eyes narrowed behind her lunettes. “Her Mating Magic is really strong,” she told him finally, “many sailors have died in the past because of mermaids’ magic.”

“I won’t die,” he replied with a hopeful smile, “she won’t kill me, I’m sure, she… she wants me to marry her, I mean, mermaids don’t kill their husbands.”

Professor McGonagall’s eyes narrowed even more. “Oh yes, Mr Weasley,” she sighed, “how many times does Newt Scamander talk about mermaids’ husbands in Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them?”

He swallowed. “Never.”

“I wonder why,” replied Professor McGonagall with a growl.

Hugo lowered his eyes. “But she’s so beautiful,” he sighed, “and so sweet. And her tail is so smooth, and she’s so good at kissing…” He smiled dumbly, not quite caring that he was telling this to the Headmistress. He closed his eyes for a moment, and all he could feel was Lily and her lips and the sloshing of the water around him and the bubbles that tickled his face…

“Mr Weasley!” snapped Professor McGonagall forcefully. She sounded as if she had already called him a few times.

“Yes?” he replied, shaking off those thoughts.

She sighed. “Of course mermaids are skilled in the art of seduction,” she told him, “that’s what they do, that’s what they’ve been doing ever since the beginning of time. Seducing men, sailors most of the time, to procreate and then kill them; just because they didn’t need them anymore.”

“But when she is back to herself, she won’t want to drown me anymore, right?” asked Hugo hopefully.

“No, but clearly she’s not back to being herself yet, Mr Weasley,” she replied patiently. “And don’t
delude yourself; when she goes back to being herself, her Mating Magic will dissolve and you won’t find her either attractive or alluring anymore.”

“But Lily is attractive!” he replied stubbornly. “I mean, she’s always been. To me she’s much prettier than… than Victoire, and you know how everybody always babbles about Victoire… right?”

Professor McGonagall cocked an eyebrow at him, as if she had always ignored that everybody babbled about Victoire. “Of course, Mr Weasley,” she replied slowly. “I have to warn you that in case you’ve harboured feelings for Miss Potter prior to her change, you might find those sentiments slightly intensified even after the magic will disappear.” She smiled reassuringly and added, “Nothing that you won’t be able to push to the back of your mind at any time, though.”

Hugo looked at her, trying to look supremely outraged instead of slightly troubled that that might just be the case. “I haven’t harboured feelings for Lily!” he grunted. “Can I just remind you that she’s my cousin?”

“Can I just remind you that the Black family tree is filled with marriages amongst cousins?” she replied as if that was a perfectly fine argument.

“Can I just remind you that ninety percent of the Blacks were completely out of their minds, Professor McGonagall?” he replied curtly.

She looked at him, unimpressed. “Can I just remind you, Mr Weasley, that you descend from the Blacks?”

He darkened and didn’t find much to reply to her. Every hour that passed, Hugo found something that he liked about Lily, and every time he did, he was a little surprised to remember that he had already noticed that about her.

After all, she was beautiful and he had found himself staring at her as she threw the Quaffle around during trainings. Of course he had always told her that he was observing her movements to see what she was doing wrong, but he probably should have looked at her arms and not stare at her chest when she flew around. He smiled at the thought that he had now seen Lily’s chest without a Quidditch uniform to cover her – or any other piece of clothing at all – and that he had even felt them all over his skin. He sighed. Suddenly, he felt very dizzy… what with all that Mating Magic in the air and his head swimming most of the time.

“Now,” the Headmistress said when he didn’t reply. “I have things to do, and I’m sure you do too, Mr Weasley.”

He looked anxiously at her. “Can I visit Lily?” he asked hopefully.

Professor McGonagall sighed. “Yes, you can,” she replied, “but don’t put yourself, or her, in any kind of danger, is that clear?”

“Like water!” he replied, jumping up from his chair. “Thank you, Professor McGonagall!”

“Mr Weasley, I mean it, don’t do anything—”

But Hugo didn’t hear what he shouldn’t have done, for he was already hurrying down the stairs and towards the Prefects’ Bathroom.
Thursday afternoon.

The water was nice and warm as Hugo dove into the tub. He had foregone his underwear for his actual swimming trunks and had even brought a towel and flip-flops with him this time.

He opened his eyes just in time to see Lily swimming quickly towards him, and she was on him before he could even take his first mouthful of air from the bubble around his head.

“Hello, my brave sailor,” purred Lily as she wrapped her tail around his waist and started to shower him with kisses. “I missed you.”

He slid his hands on her back, and pulled her even more tightly against himself, kissing her back for dear life. “Hello, my beautiful Siren,” he replied with a smile in his voice, “I missed you back.”

She looked at him and fluttered her eyelashes flirtatiously, before settling on his lap as he plopped on a rock, his feet dangling in the water. “One month and twenty-nine days before we get married,” she told him, her arm resting on his shoulders. “I’ve counted them.”

He chuckled awkwardly. Bloody hell, she was tenacious.

“Great,” he coughed. He wanted her, he wanted to spend every second of his upcoming life with her, and he wanted to spend all the time with his fingers running over the smooth curve of her spine and with his lips exploring every inch of her skin… Nevertheless, he wouldn’t be unhappy if he delayed her thoughts of marriage of another few months or years…

He tried to find something to tell her to distract her. But it was a difficult task, what with her delicate breasts pushed so deliciously against his chest, and her lips all over his face and neck, and her hand inside his—

“Hey!” he spluttered, grasping her wrist before she could wrap her fingers around him. “Wait a second!”

She blinked, probably without understanding, but let him bring her hand back up between them. “What?” she asked innocently, placing her fingers on his chest.

He tried to look stern. “That’s not how respectable mermaids behave,” he told her. “Now, kisses and little touches are more than fine, but you can’t just do that without warning.” He pressed his lips together, feeling troubled, more than anything, about giving a rather poor performance rather than because of what surely would have happened had he let her have her wicked way with him.

“But you like it,” she pointed out.

He liked it. He liked it a lot, and from the way his trunks were tenting, he wouldn’t have been able to lie to her. “Yes,” he replied with a groan, “but I shouldn’t like it.”

She giggled, probably noticing the absurdity of his words. Her hand started to descend slowly towards his trunks again, but he grasped her wrist and decided that the best way to distract her was to kiss her until he had no more air in his lungs.
She seemed happy with that arrangement, because her hand rose suddenly and she wound her fingers in his hair, devouring him like only a mythological creature, whose sole aim in life was to attract men and have sex with them, could do. She pushed all of herself against his stomach and his groin, giggling when she sensed his groans of delight, and rubbing herself in circles against his less and less subtle erection.

He closed his eyes and ran his fingers in her silky locks. Everything in her seemed perfect, she was the embodiment of all his desires, even those – or probably especially those – he didn’t know he had. From her big blue eyes, to her flaming hair, to her smooth skin and her colourful tail. And her voice was mesmerising, and he could hear it even when she wasn’t talking, he could hear it in his dreams… she was whispering his name on a beach as the waves crashed over his prone body…

Lily’s lips moved from his mouth to his jaw. She unwrapped her tail from around him and slowly floated between his legs, kissing her way down to his chest.

Hugo sighed as he opened his eyes and looked at her. She moved so sinuously, as if she was dancing underwater, she skimmed her hands all over his sides and her mouth pecked his skin around his navel and then her fingers were at his trunks again and Hugo knew somewhere in his brain that he should have stopped her again, but he wasn’t quite sure why anymore.

She smiled up at him as her hands worked on the elastic band of his trunks, and he was just about to nod his agreement to whatever she wanted to do to him, when her blue eyes turned quickly black and a feral expression painted over her face.

For a moment he thought that she was going to drown him without even mating him first. In that moment, he felt highly offended by such an outcome.

But when she jumped up like a spring and threw herself towards the surface, almost slapping Hugo in the face with her fins in the process, he just blinked in confusion.

He was snapped out of his state by cries and splashes of water coming from above him. He looked up and saw Lily trying to push herself out of the tub, her hands grabbing on the tiles as if she was trying to reach something. A lock of long, blonde hair floated gracefully in front of his face and towards the bottom.

Hugo pushed himself on the rocks and let the thrust of the water help him reach the surface. Lily’s tail was sloshing water right and left and he could barely see what her arms were doing; but, over the splashes, Hugo could see a tall figure standing near the tub and trying to fend off Lily’s assault.

He wondered if it was some student who had broken the rules and come in there to have a look at the mysterious inhabitant of the Prefects’ Bathroom, and he felt a ferocious desire to grab them and throw them into the tub and let Lily have her way with them. He grasped a rock and emerged from the water, only to find his sight fog up as Lily let out another inhuman cry.

“Ouch! Damn it!” he muttered, as he scrunched up his eyes and proceeded to cover his ears until Lily decided to stop her screeching – or whatever that was.

“Damn it!” echoed a voice that he recognised. “What the hell is your problem?”

He cracked an eye open and found himself staring at Victoire, who looked positively livid, hands over her head and eyes sending daggers towards him and Lily.

“Vicky!” exclaimed Hugo with a grin, as he pushed his hands on the edge of the tub and jumped up, sitting on it.
Lily’s ferocious cries promptly changed in her heart breaking, dolphin-like mewls, she swam to him and threw her arms around Hugo’s legs, preventing him from going to greet Victoire.

“Lily, it’s alright,” he told her gently, placing a hand on her head, “it’s just Vicky, she’s harmless.”

A snort came from behind him and Lily, snarling, bared her teeth and looked at their cousins. “Veela!” she growled. “Veela, bad!”

He nodded thoughtfully, and turned towards Victoire. “She probably can sense your—*shite*!”

“She can sense my what?” snapped Victoire outraged, but Hugo had already turned back towards Lily, eyes wide and hands going to her face to make her look up at him.

“Lily!” he exclaimed breathlessly. “Lily, you’re talking!”

“Veela!” she repeated. “Veela, bad! Mermaid, good!” She smiled, suddenly looking very innocent. “Mermaid good, Hugo?”

“Mermaid best,” he told her with a laugh. “Oh damn it! You’re really talking! I have to tell that to Madam Pomfrey! I bet you’re that close to being back to normal!”

“You’re kidding, right?” asked Victoire haughtily. “She’s just torn a lock of hair from my head! How is that normal?”

He glanced over his shoulder at his older cousin. She was pointing at the side of her head, but she had so much hair that he couldn’t really notice a difference. He wasn’t sure that would have made her feel any better about it though.

He looked back at Lily, still grasping his legs as if he was about to walk away any minute, and she would have died if he did. “Lily,” he said severely.

She pouted, looking slightly ashamed. And Hugo couldn’t help thinking that that too might have been considered an improvement, after all.

“Lily, why did you attack Victoire?” he asked her seriously.

“Veela bad!” she repeated, baring at teeth, before rubbing her face all over his lap. “Hugo mine! Not Veela!”

He looked at her, surprised. “Oh, oh no,” he hurried to say. “I don’t like Victoire! No, no… eeew! Victoire, bleah! No, Victoire. Victoire ugly!”

“Hey! I think she got it!” snapped Victoire sourly.

He grinned sheepishly at her. “I was just trying to make it easy for her,” he told her, before adding, “Bloody hell, Vicky, she’s talking! I mean, she’s talking out of the water! She does sound like Lily used to sound, doesn’t she?”

Victoire looked from him to her, and took a step towards the tub. Lily growled at her, snapping her teeth in their cousin’s direction.

“Oh yes,” said Victoire dryly, circling the tub to come to stand on the opposite side. “Especially when she growls like that or when she tries to make our eardrums explode.”

Hugo darkened. “Well, you weren’t here on Sunday,” he told her, “I can assure you that she was nowhere *near* being this civil.”
Victoire cocked an eyebrow at him. “You do know what civil means, right?”

Hugo rolled his eyes, he loved Victoire, but the more she talked like that about Lily, the easier it was for him to picture her at the bottom of the tub.

He closed his eyes and shook his head, where was that thought coming from? He cracked an eye open and looked at Lily. Was that her thought?

“What are you doing here, Vicky?” he asked her, trying to sound cheerful. “What an unexpected surprise!” He lowered his hand and grasped Lily’s upper arm when he felt that she was about to throw herself towards the other side of the tub and probably trying to tear more of Victoire’s hair.

“I came for an interview for a teaching position,” she replied, “and since I was already here and Aunt Ginny had told me everything about your misadventures, I thought I’d pop in to check how the mermaid and her mate were doing.”

Hugo tried to smile when she called him Lily’s mate, but Victoire didn’t seem to be wanting to joke about it.

She folded her arms across her chest and looked pointedly at him. “What were you doing?” she asked sharply.

“When?” he asked, his voice a low croak.

Victoire took a deep breath. “Before the Little Mermaid threw herself at me as if she was a Kraken,” she replied, “I was trying to attract your attention, but you seemed pretty busy down there.” Her eyes lowered to his lap, and he was pretty sure that she wasn’t looking at Lily.

He suddenly felt very self-conscious. He tried to close his legs, moving his half-hard cock in a less prominent position. “I… we… we were just talking,” he replied, feeling his face burning.

Victoire flared her nostrils just like Aunt Fleur did when Uncle Charlie would put his dirty boots in her living room. “Oh yes,” she replied icily, “you were using your mouths quite a bit.”

Hugo sunk his teeth into his bottom lip. “I… Vicky, I swear… we just…”

She raised a hand near her face to stop him. “I know,” she said calmly, “it’s the mermaid’s Mating Magic. Aunt Hermione was very concerned when she explained what it means, she asked me to check that you’d keep yourself safe and stay far from the water.” She pursed her lips as if to question what she should have told to his mother.

Hugo looked down at Lily, she was staring at Victoire like a cat would gaze upon a mouse, ready to jump and devour it. She was moving her tail left and right under water and Hugo could feel the movements she made against his legs. He looked back up at Victoire. “I’m totally safe,” he told her with a smile, “you can tell that to my mum.”

“Hugo, you’re taking a dip with a beast that is classified as Dangerous by Newt Scamander,” she replied matter-of-factly.

Hugo gritted his teeth. “She’s not a beast!” he snapped. “Don’t you dare call her that!”

Victoire seemed a little taken aback by his harsh tone, but her surprised face darkened almost immediately. “She’s not Lily either,” she replied curtly, “not yet, at least.”

“Lily!” cried Lily at that moment. “Lily! Lily!”
Hugo stretched his lips into the smuggest smile he could muster. “I think she answered for herself,” he told her.

She shook her head. “You’re impossible to talk to,” she told him, “clearly your head is swimming in her magic, and clearly you don’t even understand how dangerous your behaviour is.” She scowled him. “I just want you to remember that if you let yourself be overpowered by your desire, and something terrible happens to you, once Lily is back to being human, she will never forgive herself for having harmed you.”

Suddenly, Hugo darkened and lowered his eyes. He hated the fact that Victoire’s words made perfect sense even when he really didn’t want them to. But nothing bad was going to happen to him, he was sure about that! Lily had had the possibility of killing him more than once already, and she had never even tried to harm him. Alright, she had, but not in the past two or three days anyway…

“Lily,” he called her forcefully, pulling her to him and squeezing her arm.

She let out a high-pitched cry that had little of human, and looked at him with confused eyes as if he was hurting her and she didn’t know why.

He darkened even more. “Lily, I need you to focus, okay? Can you do that?”

She nodded and he let her arm go. She started to massage her flesh where his fingertips had left red marks.

“Do you want to harm me?” he asked curtly. “Do you want to mate me, and then drown me?”

She looked torn and seemed to be either unable to understand his question or to decide what to reply.

“Lily?” he urged her, he could feel Victoire’s eyes on them, and he just wanted to show her that he was right.

She bit her bottom lip, then her eyes became wide and scared again, her tail started to move almost nervously under the water. Finally, she made a graceful pirouette and dove into the water, disappearing through the rocks at the bottom of the tub.

“Does that answer your question?” asked Victoire calmly.

“Yes,” he replied seriously, his eyes fixed on the point where Lily had disappeared. “It answers it, thank you very much.” He raised his eyes on his older cousin.

Victoire shook her head. “How does it answer it? What does that even mean?”

His chin rose defiantly. “It means that she doesn’t want to harm me,” he replied as he dove into the water behind Lily.
Chapter VI

Friday at lunch.

When Alice and Susan made their way towards Hugo at lunch, they looked like their heads were about to explode, for their cheeks were an angry crimson colour and their nostrils were flaring so much, Hugo was surprised not to see steam coming out of them.

He barely raised his eyes from his roast beef. “Ladies,” he acknowledged them rather coolly. They had already cornered him everywhere that week – the Gryffindor table, the Common Room, every single lesson they had in common, the ones they didn’t have in common, the boys’ bathroom, his dorm. Every time trying to saddle him with some sort of silly present for Lily or a card that she wouldn’t have been able to read anyway, and that she would probably tear to pieces if she knew that it came from another girl.

“We had Divination this morning,” said Alice heatedly.

Hugo cocked an eyebrow. “And?” he asked calmly. “Did you Divine how I’m going to die and now feel the urge to tell me?”

“Oh, we know how you’re going to die,” snapped Alice.

“Killed by us!” added Susan just as crossly.

Hugo sighed. “Was that at the bottom of your cup of tea? You know, I don’t really think that Professor Trelawney washes those cups at all.”

They ignored him. “We walked past the Prefects’ Bathroom after Divination,” said Alice.

“Yes, and Lily’s wailing could be heard for the whole floor!” added Susan.

“What did you do to her? You monster!”

Hugo looked at them as they got angrier by the second. He didn’t pay their anger any mind though. However, their words made their way to his brain and left him breathless. Lily was wailing! His Lily was crying and he was not with her! He pushed back from the table and grabbed his books under the bench.

“Where are you going?” asked Susan scandalised. “We’re talking to you!”

He grunted nothing of comprehensible and ignored their outraged cries. He even ignored Mark Goldstein as he sniggered with his friends when he walked past him, all he cared about was to get to the Prefects’ Bathroom and take Lily in his arms to calm her down. Why hadn’t he sensed that she was unhappy? He should have sensed that! Where was the Mating Magic when he needed it?

“It must be about yesterday!” he growled under his breath.

When he had found Lily – in her house at the bottom of the tub – she had looked very nervous, almost upset about what he had asked her in front of Victoire. She had shied away from his kisses and his hugs and had begged him to leave her.

He had complied, and when he had emerged from the tub he was surprised to find that Victoire was still there. She had looked at him like his mother would, and when he snapped at her to get lost, it
sparked an actual fight that had both of them screaming at each other things that they surely didn’t mean. She told him he was an egoistic, sex-starved teenager, and he told her that he wished Lily would just come out there and grab her and drown her.

They had both stopped fighting after that. Victoire too shocked to actually do anything but burst into tears and walk out of the bathroom, and Hugo too upset to even find the words to apologise. He knew he didn’t mean it, he was sure it was just Lily’s Mating Magic. Victoire was standing between the two of them, and he had wanted to hurt her to get rid of her. And he had managed that perfectly well, even though that morning he had felt the urge to write a letter to his cousin, apologising for his hurtful words.

He had been quite horrible to her, he recognised that.

He jumped the last few steps that led to the Fifth Floor and hurried the last few feet that divided him from the bathroom. He slid on the floor and stopped rather abruptly, grasping the handle of the door to come to an alt. He pushed against the door with all his forces, but the door didn’t budge, and he was sent back rather roughly, falling on the floor with books tumbling all around him.

He shook his head, confused, and pushed himself up again. He walked back to the door and tried to push it open once more. Still the door didn’t move.

“No,” he growled, pushing more insistently. “No. No. No!” He bumped his fist against the wood and let out a frustrated cry. No sound answered him from inside. He started to bump his fist with a frantic rhythm, until he felt splinters driving into his skin. He ignored the pain in favour of making more noise. “Lily!” he called her. “Lily! Lily!”

Still he got no reply.

He stepped back and drew out his wand, pointing it at the door he blurted out all the spells that he thought might have had some sort of effect on it. From the Unlocking Charm to the Blasting Curse, and still nothing happened.

He let out a frustrated cry that had a group of Second Years hurrying past him. When he understood that nothing he could do would let him in, he finally stalked away.

Friday right after lunch.

“You said I was allowed to see her!” Hugo cried as he burst into the Headmistress’ office. “You said that!”

Professor McGonagall, barely raised her eyes from the piece of parchment she was working on. “I did,” she replied calmly, as if she had expected Hugo’s visit any time now.

“Then why did you lock the door?” he shouted, going to the desk to bump his fist over the polished wood.

A crimson stain blushed on the piece of furniture. Professor McGonagall eyed it warily. “Mr Weasley, you’re bleeding.”
“I don’t care!” he shouted almost to her face.

“Do you even feel the pain?” she asked, finally looking up from the parchment.

“No!” he replied truthfully. “I’m perfectly fine! But you said I was allowed to see Lily every day! I am perfectly fine, I need to see her!”

“I’m glad to hear—even though I hardly think that’s the truth—that you’re perfectly fine,” she replied calmly, leaning her back against her chair. “But Miss Potter is not, and I’m afraid we have to suspend your daily visits to her for a day or two.”

Hugo felt the rage boiling its way up to his head. “You talked to Victoire!” he barked. “She told you a bunch of lies! She doesn’t understand anything!” He was sorry now that he had apologised to her.

“I talked to Mrs Lupin, yes,” agreed Professor McGonagall, “but that’s not why we’re suspending your visits to Miss Potter.” She took a deep breath, as though she was about to say something that Hugo wouldn’t like, and he was sure that was exactly the case. “Miss Potter herself asked that you were not allowed into the bathroom again.” She sighed and added, “For a while at least.”

Hugo’s lips parted in surprise, then he shook his head forcefully. “No,” he said, his voice a throaty murmur now, “no, you’re lying. She would never… never say those things.”

“She’s worried for your well-being, Mr Weasley,” she told him, “more than you are.”

“I’m perfectly fine,” he replied mechanically.

“I don’t think you are,” replied Professor McGonagall gently, nodding towards his hand. “Miss Potter is afraid she might harm you in some way, and she doesn’t want that.”

“She’s not going to harm me,” he told her in a whisper, “tell her that, please.”

“Why don’t you go to the Hospital Wing to have your hand healed, Mr Weasley?” asked the Headmistress. “And then we’ll talk about that.”

Hugo wanted to scream at her to take down the wards around the bathroom, to let him see her, to let him talk to her. Surely she would come around if he talked to her. However, when he opened his mouth to do just that, he gasped and brought a hand to his head, just where a blinding pain was spreading in his temples.

“Are you all right, Mr Weasley?” asked Professor McGonagall, her voice suddenly distant.

He tried to reassure her that he was perfectly fine, but no sound escaped his lips.

Then he fell to the floor, and everything went black.

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*The night between Friday and Saturday.*

When Hugo woke up, it was the dead of night. The Hospital Wing was deserted, and even the light that usually came from Madam Pomfrey’s office was off. He tried to remember what had happened,
but after his talk with the Headmistress, everything was definitely hazy.

He remembered Madam Pomfrey fussing over him, and Hagrid coming to cheer him up. He remembered Mary asking the Headmistress if her boyfriend could be considered the new Head Boy, and he remembered his Quidditch team coming to ask him how they were supposed to beat Slytherin next Sunday without Lily and their Captain.

Hugo just grunted in reply to all of them, until even the last and most tenacious visitors – Alice and Becky – finally decided to leave him alone. He fell asleep again, and for the first time his dreams were not haunted by Sirens and the sea, nor did Lily’s melodious voice resound in his mind throughout the night. Au contraire, he couldn’t hear her voice at all.

For a moment fear gripped his guts. Was she dead? Had she killed herself because she was scared to harm him? Was that why her magic felt much less strong than usual?

He closed his eyes and tried to focus on her, on mermaids, on the sea, on the feeling of her smooth tail and her soft lips. He took a deep breath of relief as he managed to feel her. It was faint and he was sure that he would be able to push the feeling to the back of his head whenever he wanted, but if he focused long enough he could still feel Lily and… and she wasn’t happy. No, not at all. Suddenly, a breath-taking feeling of sadness and discomfort pervaded Hugo.

He pushed the covers back and hastily stood up, only to collapse back again on the bed. He took some deep breaths and searched blindly for his clothes, pushing his jumper over his pyjamas and shivering slightly as he placed his naked feet on the chilled floor.

He stood on tiptoes without even knowing why, and made his way to the door. Wand in his hand, he muttered a “Lumos,” and hurried to the Fifth Floor. He had no idea how to get into the bathroom, but he decided he would try all the spells that he hadn’t tried the day before. If that didn’t work, he would just sit out of the door and wait for the first person that came in there the morning after, and he wouldn’t move until they let him in to see Lily.

He felt his heart speed up. He couldn’t believe his luck. He pocketed his wand and slid against the walls, towards the door.

“…there, there, Miss Potter, is it a bit better?” Madam Pomfrey was saying.

Sobs and heaves let the Healer – and Hugo – know that it was not. He felt his heart clench as he listened. She was sick! Lily was sick!

“Oh don’t you worry,” said Madam Pomfrey, “it’ll pass soon.” There was a soft rubbing sound, as if the Healer was touching Lily comfortingly, then more vomiting and more sobs. Hugo caressed the idea of walking in there and Stunning the Healer to be alone with Lily.

He didn’t act on it, though. He waited patiently by the door, gritting his teeth every time she sobbed more loudly, and trying hard to peer at her through the door without managing to. Luckily, Lily’s heaves seemed to diminsh with time and soon all he could hear was the occasional sloshing of the water or a sob.

“There, Miss Potter,” said Madam Pomfrey at some point, “why don’t you try to rest a little? I’ll bring you a nice cup of tea first thing in the morning.”
Lily mumbled a reply that Hugo didn’t quite catch, and then Madam Pomfrey’s slow steps neared the door. He stepped back, until he found his way behind a tall column from where he could still see the door.

Madam Pomfrey walked out with her arms full of bowls and empty ampoules. A sack filled with fabrics floated at her feet and followed her as she made her way towards the corridor.

Hugo held his breath and tried to keep his excitement at bay as he noticed that she was already walking away before waiting for the door to close, probably absolutely sure that she was the only person walking around the castle at that time of night. He waited for her to walk past the column before he wormed out and hastily stuck his foot between the door and the doorframe.

Madam Pomfrey didn’t even notice that the lock didn’t catch, nor that the door didn’t actually close, she just kept walking away, sighing and shaking her head.

Hugo waited for her to turn behind a corner before he pushed the door open again and slid inside. He accompanied the door until it closed as quietly as it could and sighed in relief as the lock caught, a soft, euphoric chuckle leaving his lips.

His happiness didn’t last, though, because when he glanced at the bathtub, he gasped at the view before him.

Lily was there, her pale face lay against the edge of the tub, her hands grasped the tiles but she seemed too weak to be able to hang on to them. Her eyes were closed and she looked like she was having difficulties breathing. There was a bowl on the floor and Hugo could just imagine why Madam Pomfrey had left it there.

“Lily,” he murmured as he walked towards the tub. His heart clenched at the sight of her tail floating on the surface. It made her look like a dead fish.

“Lily,” he repeated as he hurried to her side. He sat on the tub’s rim near her head and placed a hand on her shoulder.

She opened her eyes a little, and now he could see the familiar brown that was pushing away the blue in her irises. “Hugo,” she murmured feebly. He was surprised when she moved though, for she still was agile despite her situation. She hugged his waist and soaked his lap with her tears and her wet hair.

“Hey, hey,” he said soothingly, caressing her hair and shoulders, “hey, I’m here now. Don’t you worry, Lily, I’ll take care of you.”

She sobbed and nodded, but didn’t look up at him.

“Are you… are you transforming back? Is that why you’re sick?” he asked her gently.

She nodded again and leant her head on his lap. “It’s the food,” she sobbed, her voice very much her old one, “I can’t eat mermaid food, nor human food yet, and I’m sick.” She sobbed more loudly. “I threw up all the fish I ate today.”

“Oh,” was all he could reply, his hands still caressing her head. “But you can… you can talk properly again,” he said soothingly.

She nodded. “And my tail shrunk too,” she said, before looking up at him. “And I don’t feel the burning desire to mate you and kill you anymore,” she added in a whisper, her cheeks colouring a little.
He blinked. “Oh, okay,” he replied softly, “that’s good… I guess…”

She furrowed her brow, raising her head a little from his lap. “You guess?” she asked in disbelief. “You’d rather have me killing you?”

He shook his head hastily. “No, no, of course not,” he replied, “it’s just… never mind, I was just being stupid.”

She grasped his jumper. “No, tell me,” she whispered, “why did you say that?”

He looked away from her and, taking a deep breath, he confessed, “I just still really quite… you know… I just feel a bit… I kind of like you still a bit… I guess, and to know that you don’t like me anymore, I mean… it’s kind of not nice for me at the moment… probably in a few days I won’t like you anymore as well and it’ll be fine, but hearing you saying that you don’t like me anymore… well… you know…”

She blinked at him, then she rose a bit from the tub, her pale chest coming into view. Hugo swallowed.

“Who says I don’t like you anymore?” she asked softly.

“You just did,” he pointed out. Hadn’t she?

She smiled gently. “I said that I don’t feel the urge to mate you and kill you,” she reminded him, “but I… I…”

“Yes?” he asked in a breath.

She lowered her eyes, but he placed a finger almost frantically under her chin to make her look up at him. “I still like you,” she confessed, “I… I still like you that way…”

He felt a wave of relief crashing over him. “Do you remember what happened these past few days?” he asked softly.

She brought both hands to her face and groaned. “Yes, everything! So embarrassing,” she muttered, her mind probably going to the moment she was about to give him head or at his admission that he had wanted to kiss her.

He laughed out loud, relieved at her confession and amused by her reaction. He wrapped her in his arms and hugged her tightly to his chest, until she gasped for air, only then he let her go a little. He lowered his head and brushed his nose against hers. “Nothing to be embarrassed about,” he whispered. “It was not our fault, it was your magic. All those kisses, touches, confessions…” He smiled softly at her, feeling like he just wanted more kisses, touches and confessions right at that moment though. “They did feel good, though…” he added softly.

She smiled back at him. “I know. I wish…” Her voice trailed away as she flushed.

“What?” he asked gently.

She shook her head. “It’s silly,” she replied.

“Nothing you say is silly,” he whispered.

She shook her head again. “What do we do now?” she asked with a sigh. “I mean, I regained my human mind, that’s for sure, but I feel… I feel…”
“Yes?” he breathed.

She looked at him, eyes wide. “I feel so much in love with you,” she murmured, before snorting a, “Stupid magic…”

He smiled dumbly at her. “Good,” he replied, “because I feel so much in love with you too, still.” He tugged some of her hair away from her pale face. “Listen, all we have to do is wait for your magic to wear off, and when it does everything’ll be back to normal.” He grinned. “In the meantime…” He tried to kiss her, but she shied away.

“No, Hugo!” she complained, placing a hand on his mouth, “I’ve been sick all day.”

He kissed her fingertips and smiled, but she darkened all of a sudden.

“Are you okay?” he asked. “Are you not feeling well again?”

“No, no,” she replied, “I just… Madam Pomfrey said that it would wear off once my mind changed back from mermaid to human, but instead we’re both still affected by it. What if it doesn’t wear off?”

He grinned. “Then I’ll marry you in two months’ time and we’ll live in a hut by the sea,” he chuckled.

She looked up at him, trying hard not to laugh. “Hugo! Honestly! This is a serious matter.”

He sighed and nodded in agreement. “If it doesn’t wear off, we’ll talk to Madam Pomfrey and with all the Healers in St Mungo’s.” He glanced at her and whispered, “If we want to do something about it…”

She nodded softly. “Yeah, if we—” She suddenly brought a hand to her mouth, her complexion turned first very pale and then green, and then she was grasping the bowl to puke some more scales and fishbone pieces into it.

He rubbed her back soothingly. “You’re alright, better out than in,” he told her.

When she finished throwing up, she let him limply manoeuvre her onto his lap as he slid into the tub and sat on the higher rock, leaning his back against the tiles and placing Lily against his chest.

She wrapped her arms around his torso and positioned her head on his shoulder, she fell asleep much quicker than he did, and Hugo was just happy to stare at her tired face for hours before sleep claimed him too.
Chapter VII

Saturday, very early in the morning.

When Hugo opened his eyes, the first thing he was aware of was a blinding pain in his back. The second thing was Lily still pressed against his chest.

The third thing was three pairs of eyes which were looking at them.

He started, but calmed when he noticed that none of the visitors was looking at him with hostility. Hagrid seemed to find the scene tremendously cute for his eyes were shining and a dumb smile was visible through his beard. Madam Pomfrey was sighing, but she didn’t seem to want to hex them as Hugo had imagined she might have done once she found him there. Professor McGonagall was sitting on a chair and drinking a cup of tea, looking just as if she had a cup of tea in the Prefects’ Bathroom every other day.

“Good morning,” said Hugo softly.

Lily nuzzled her nose into his jaw and hummed something.

“Good morning, Mr Weasley,” said the Headmistress. “Miss Potter, Madam Pomfrey brought you a cup of tea.”

Lily’s eyes opened wide at the woman’s voice. She finally noticed that they were not alone and that she was naked, and brought both hands to her chest with a little shocked cry of surprise and embarrassment, before sliding off Hugo’s lap and disappearing underwater.

“Lily!” exclaimed Hugo, he stretched a hand where her tail was disappearing amongst the rocks and blinked as he stared at his palm. He brought his hand back to his face to have a closer look at it. His palm was covered in colourful scales, big and small ones, and they shone in the light coming in from the window. “What…”

“She’s shedding her tail,” said Madam Pomfrey matter-of-factly. “Professor Slughorn asked us to save a few of her scales for his potions.”

Hugo looked at them, mouth wide. Lily was not a potion’s ingredient! He was about to tell them just that, when Lily herself emerged from the water, wearing his Chudley Cannons tee-shirt.

“Good morning, professors,” she greeted them meekly, swimming towards them.

“Good morning, Miss Potter,” replied Professor McGonagall. She waved her wand and a cup of tea levitated towards her. Lily grabbed it and leant her elbows on the edge of the tub, sipping quietly.

Hugo crossed the tub to join her and couldn’t help noticing how much the scales had retired from her body. Her round and pretty bottom, which he had seen so many times half-hidden by her bikini at the beach near Shell Cottage – and had fantasised about just as often – was half-human again. And suddenly, he hoped that she was either wearing something longer or that they were alone.

The professors didn’t seem to notice, though, and Hugo just floated next to her and grabbed the edge too, pushing himself out of the water and sitting near her arms. The Headmistress levitated a cup towards him too.

“Thank you,” he said, as he grabbed it. “You’re not… hum… you’re not mad that I’m here…?”
Madam Pomfrey sighed. “I knew you’d be here, Mr Weasley,” she replied. “Why do you think I left the door open last night?”

Hugo blinked. “Oh, I thought… I thought I wasn’t allowed to…”

“We figured that you might have helped Miss Potter feel a bit better, since she was so prostrated yesterday. And in case she didn’t want you here, we trusted that you’d be respectful enough to leave her,” replied the Headmistress.

Lily glanced at him and smiled. “He did help me,” she told them, and Hugo felt his chest swell with pride.

“So you’re feeling better, Miss Potter?” asked Professor McGonagall.

She nodded. “Much better,” she replied, “I think I’m ready to go back to my lessons.”

Hagrid laughed heartily. “Maybe next week, Lily,” he chuckled, “when you grow back your legs.”

“And, if you’d like, Miss Potter,” suggested Professor McGonagall with a small smile on her lips. “Alas, I’m afraid Mr Weasley has been rather distracted lately,” continued Professor McGonagall, “he’s had a lot on his plate, and on his mind.”

Lily still looked at him, eyes wide. “Oh… me?” she asked softly. “Because of the magic?”

Hugo nodded. “Yeah… but I’ve got some notes, you know…”

“And, if you’d like, Miss Potter,” suggested Professor McGonagall, “some of your friends were really anxious to visit you. If you are happy to let them in, I’m sure they can help you catch up too.”

She nodded fervently, but Hugo wrinkled his nose at the idea of having to share Lily with her super-excitable, and super-emotional, friends. He made a mental note to suggest a timetable so that he didn’t have to listen to Alice telling Lily that he hadn’t wanted to give her the tokens of their friendship.

“Perfect, then,” said the Headmistress, as she stood up, “I’ll let them know that they can finally come in to see you. Is there anything you need, Miss Potter?”

She looked at her, eyes wide. “Food? Human food,” she asked, “and maybe something a bit longer to wear?” She blushed and lowered her eyes, as if she was well aware of her nudity now.

“But of course,” said Madam Pomfrey warmly. “I’ll see to that.”

“And you don’t worry for my classes, Lily,” said Hagrid gently, “consider it passed.” He winked and Lily’s smile brightened up, her tails splashing in excitement.
“Thank you, Hagrid!” she gushed.

He nodded and smiled. “And I’m sure Professor Slughorn will be happy to slip you an ‘O’ if you bring him some of your scales,” he added, winking again.

“Hagrid,” sighed Professor McGonagall, shaking her head.

“Yeah,” protested Hugo, “she’s not a potion ingredient!”

Lily’s little hand shot up to cover his mouth. “Shush you,” she chastised, “I’ll make sure to bring the last scale that I shed. Can I have a box to put them in, please?”

Professor McGonagall shook her head again. “I meant that that was not good work ethic,” she sighed, “but I’ll turn a blind eye, Miss Potter, just because what happened to you was not your fault.”

“Thank you, Headmistress,” said Lily brightly.

Professor McGonagall nodded and chuckled. “If that’s all, Miss Potter, I’ll let you get on with your day.” She looked at Hugo and added, “Mr Weasley, don’t you have anything to do this morning?”

He grinned. “Just a couple of Herbology essays to write with Michael and John for a project that Professor Longbottom gave us, but maybe I could skip them in favour of spending some more time with Lily?” he asked. “She does look a bit prostrate still…”

“I’m perfectly fine,” Lily assured him. “And we need those essays, so go and write them.” She smiled. “I’ll see you this afternoon and if you could bring me my books, I’d be forever grateful.”

Hugo sighed as the possibility of both spending time with Lily, and skipping essays, evaporated in front of him. “Alright,” he agreed. He lowered his head to kiss Lily’s forehead and finally stood from the edge of the tub and made his way to the door, turning to wave and smile as Hagrid patted his back and chuckled for Merlin knew what reason.

“Mr Weasley,” called Professor McGonagall as the door closed at their backs, “how do you feel?”

“Much better,” he replied cheerfully, “thank you.”

Professor McGonagall nodded. “Good to hear, Mr Weasley.”

“I know,” he replied with a grin.

*Saturday at lunch, again.*

Hugo noticed, with great satisfaction, that Alice, Susan and Becky were not at lunch. While in the library, they had gone on and on about visiting Lily as soon as they finished their essays, so much so that Madam Pince had to shush them the whole time for their continuous chatting.

At least, if they were visiting her during lunchtime, he wouldn’t encounter them when he went to see her later that afternoon. He still had to put all his notes together to give them to Lily, but he hoped that the three girls had at least done something intelligent and brought her their own notes.
He gobbled down one last glass of pumpkin juice and stood up, he boldly told two of his fellow Gryffindor Quidditch players that they would play the final against Slytherin with everybody on the team next week. He asked how trainings were going on, and if any of them had any notes from the last Potion lesson that he somehow really didn’t absorb.

After having gotten the notes he needed from Mary, who now looked slightly guilty for having asked to replace him as Head Boy, he walked back to Gryffindor Tower.

He went to his dorm, hastily donned his swimming trunks and pushed the books he needed into his bag, before making his way downstairs again.

Downstairs. In the Common Room. Where a little crowd had gathered around three very angry and very wet young ladies.

“She splashed us from head to toe!” whined Becky.

Alice placed a comforting hand on her shoulder. “Yes,” she hissed, “and look at our homework! Ruined!” She raised a piece of parchment where the letters were melting slowly into a big puddle of black.

Hugo walked towards the group of people who were gasping and nodding and shaking their heads at the heart-rending tale. “Did Lily do this to you?” he asked in disbelief.

“Yes! And it’s surely all your fault,” snapped Susan as she saw him, her finger pointing straight at his chest, “you’ve had a bad influence on her.”

“Yes!” Alice piled on. “She’s never been like that before!”

Hugo stared at them; they looked rather comical with their wet locks plastered to their foreheads, and the little makeup they were allowed to wear was starting to drip over their cheeks. He pushed back the laughter in favour of a serious answer to their accusations. “I’m sure she didn’t mean any harm,” he told them diplomatically. “She splashed me the first time I went to see her.”

“But she screamed at us too!” protested Becky.

“Yes,” whinged Susan, “she was horrible.”

Hugo darkened. “Well, what did you do to her?” he snorted.

The three girls looked at him as if he had just slapped them. “Nothing!” they protested altogether.

“We were just making some small chat!” said Becky.

“And we brought her the books she needed, and gave her our notes,” added Alice. “And look at us! I’m never going to talk to her again!”

“Me neither,” agreed Susan.

“Exactly,” hissed Becky.

They looked at Hugo, probably waiting for him to fall down on his knees and implore them to forgive Lily for whatever she had done to them. Instead, he just shrugged a shoulder and folded his arms across his chest. “Whatever,” he said nonchalantly, “I’m sure she’ll cope without you.”

The little crowd gasped at his words, and the three girls started to scream things at him, but Hugo just raised his chin and made his way to the Portrait Hole without turning his head to look at them once.
Saturday afternoon.

When Hugo pushed the door of the Prefects’ Bathroom open, the first thing he noticed was that Lily was not in the bathtub. Not completely at least.

She was sitting on the edge of the tub, her back arched as she was furiously copying notes and reading from the big tome in front of her. Her tail – if one could still call it that – was almost completely gone and underneath it her legs were more and more visible. Her creamy thighs peeked from under the flowery dress that Madam Pomfrey must have collected from her trunk. Her hair was almost completely dry, as if she hadn’t been in the water for most of the day, the only things under the clear liquid were the last few fins that she lazily sloshed around.

He took a step towards the tub and almost slipped. He blinked and looked more closely at the tiles. Every inch of the floor and part of the walls too were covered in water, as if a bomb had exploded into the tub.

“Did you see them?” hissed Lily without even looking up at him.

“You mean the three very disgruntled young ladies you drenched from head to toe?” he asked, as he shed his clothes, and walked to her in his swimming trunks with his books in his arms. “They said you splashed them and screamed at them.” He snorted and shook his head. “Little liars.”

She raised her eyes on him, slapping her hand on the book. “I did!” she snapped. “I did splash them! Those three… argh! I wanted to push them underwater!”

He furrowed his brow as he sat next to the book. He closed it and placed it where it was not too wet, before sliding closer to her. “What did they do?” he asked her gently.

She crossed her arms and looked away, darkening, and she didn’t un-darken even when he wrapped his arms around her and drew soothing circles on her back.

“Were they horrible to you?” he whispered to her.

“Yes,” she sighed.

“What did they do?”

She took a deep breath. “They said I smell!” she finally bit out, looking up at Hugo with brown eyes filled with rage. “They said that there was a really stinky smell of fish in here, and they asked me how I could even stand to stay in such a place!” She stiffened her muscles, her arms knotting even more tightly over her chest. “And they made fun of my tail! They said that they had seen real mermaids when they were on holiday in Greece, and they didn’t have this sorry excuse of an appendage, but a majestic, long and colourful extremity that ended with many beautiful fins.”

He opened his mouth to show all his indignation to her, but she beat him.

“And they kept badmouthing you! Saying you’ve been horrible to them and wouldn’t give me those stupid bracelets that they kept making,” she growled. “I hate them.”
He looked down at her and smiled. “Did you tell them that you had a beautiful tail until the other day?” he asked her softly. “That it was the most gorgeous tail that a mermaid could ever hope to have.”

She tried to suffocate her smile in favour of more cute pouting. “Really?” she asked softly.

Hugo nodded. “And that the only ones that smell are them? Especially Alice right after a Quidditch match,” he went on.

She let out a giggle. “She does smell, doesn’t she? Michael calls her Alice in Smellyland, when she can’t hear him,” she confessed in a whisper.

He pulled some locks of hair behind her ears as he made her look up at him. “And I hope you believe them when they say that I’ve been horrible to them,” he murmured, “and I’ll be horrible to every person who bothers you with their antics…”

She grinned at him, before stretching her neck a little and kissing him. She was gentler than what she had been when she was still under the complete influence of the Mating Magic, but she opened her mouth straight away, teasing his lips with her tongue and letting out little moans and groans as he responded with the same enthusiasm.

He snogged her for long, wonderful minutes, skimming his hands down to her sides and feeling her naked bottom under the flowery dress.

When she finally withdrew to breathe she lowered her eyes. “Sorry,” she murmured.

“For what?” he asked, leaning his forehead against hers.

“For the kiss, it’s just… the magic isn’t gone completely, yet,” she whispered. “I guess.”

He nodded. “I bet it’ll go away with the last of your scales.” He stretched a hand towards her knee and pushed a big one until it slid off her skin. He let it fall into the water and looked at it as it drifted away.

Lily grabbed it before he could even understand that she had moved away from him.

“What are you doing?” he asked her as she opened a box filled with scales.

She looked at him as if he was stupid. “I need them for my ‘O’ in Potions, remember?” she asked him impatiently. “I’ve spent the whole morning plumbing the depths of the tub for those.”

He wrinkled his nose at her. “Isn’t it going to be weird for you to know that next time we brew a potion we might be using a piece of you?” he asked her. “I think it’s horrible.”

“I’m going to get an ‘O’, Hugo, if Slughorn wants my non-mermaid hair in exchange of an ‘O’ in my N.E.W.T., I’d shave my head for him,” she told him seriously.

He shook his head. “Cheater,” he accused her with a grin.

She cocked an eyebrow. “I’ve been unable to attend my lessons for days, when we’re only weeks away from our final N.E.W.T.s, and it’s all your and Mark’s fault,” she told him, poking his chest with a finger. “I suggest you shut up and just tell me what an intelligent and wonderful girl I am, otherwise…”

He grasped the hand that was still poking him and grinned. “Otherwise?” he whispered.
She grinned back at him then, with the quick mermaidish movements that he still hadn’t gotten used to and she still didn’t seem to have lost, she threw herself into the tub, bringing him under the water with her.

He had just the time to take a gulp of air before he was being kissed again, bubbles tickling him everywhere as she pushed him back and against the smooth tiles of the tub. He distractedly noticed how it seemed as if there were fewer rocks in there.

Her hands closed around his waist and she brought him up again.

He took a deep breath as his head emerged. “Cheater,” he coughed again, but she was kissing and licking and nipping at his neck and murmuring against his skin and he just couldn’t find other words to add to that one.

“You know what’s great?” she asked as she pecked his collarbone.

“What?” he breathed, blushing for his throaty tone.

She giggled. “Madam Pomfrey said that my gills are the last thing that will go away,” she told him. A mischievous light flashed in her eyes and then she dove into the water with a grin over her face.

He looked at her through the water, wondering if she expected him to follow her, his wand was somewhere near his books though and somehow the last thing he wanted was to move now to find it. So, when he felt her lips teasing his chest, he just brought his arms high above his head to grab the edge of the tub and keep his head above water.

She grabbed his sides, running her fingers gently over his muscles.

“Lily!” he gasped, his legs kicked the water as a reflex, and she bit his waist as her hands reached the elastic band of his trunks.

Suddenly, his legs stopped kicking and he stayed as still as possible, letting the water around him settle to have the clearest view of his cousin and what she was doing. Not that he couldn’t imagine by simply her movements.

He took a sharp breath, his muscles stiffening in his body as her hands pushed down his trunks over his hips.

“Bloody hell,” he gasped as she wrapped a hand around him. He felt his stomach tighten and his heels pushed against the tiles as he tried to move his pelvis forward and against her hand… no, hands…

No, it was something even better.

“Shit, shit, shit,” he murmured, turning his head to push his forehead against his arm. He didn’t even have to look at her to know what she was doing, he could feel her fingers on his stomach and her lips teasing him so bloody slowly, kissing the underside of his cock, all the way to its head and down again, licking him and scraping her teeth slowly over his foreskin.

He heaved a sigh, trying hard to delay his release. His hips moved forward though, and she finally opened her lips to take as much as she could of him in her mouth.

He scrunched his eyes up, gritting his teeth as his feet slid from the smooth tiles. “Fuck,” he growled as he pushed himself even further towards her. He wanted to stretch a hand and grasp her hair, but the idea of moving anything that was not his pelvis made him dizzy.
He was so hard, he thought he was going to explode. And when his release finally bubbled over the edge, he thought that he did just that. “Coming, Lily, I’m coming…” he babbled to himself rather than her. His eyes rolled back into his skull, and he felt his balls tightening, as the force of his orgasm made him groan out loud.

She stayed down there until his stomach unclenched under her fingers, then she tucked him back in and swam up again, throwing her arms around his torso she leant her head against his chest, kissing and licking him.

“Shit,” he breathed as he let her hang onto him.

She looked up at him. “Language, Hugo!” she scolded playfully.

“That was…” words failed him, for none of his girlfriends had ever done that to him.

“Good?” asked Lily, with a grin in her voice.

He looked down at her. “Where did you learn that?” he asked in a whisper, slightly afraid of the answer.

She grinned broadly. “Oh, it’s part the mermaid magic,” she told him matter-of-factly, “you know they are great seductresses. They know everything about sex.”

“And the other part?” he asked softly.

She shrugged a shoulder. “Part is James and Teddy’s secret stash of erotic magazines,” she replied calmly, “some issues are really educative, you know.”

He nodded in agreement. “I know,” he replied.

She giggled again, but when he let the edge go and turned them around until he had her pressed against the tiles, all that left her mouth were pretty, breathy moans that he proceeded to smother with his kisses.
Chapter VIII

Another glorious Sunday morning.

The semi-final between Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff, on Sunday morning, was one of the dullest games Hugo had the misfortune to assist to.

No, all right, to be fair with the players, the game wasn’t dull at all – especially when the Hufflepuff Beater knocked Goldstein off his broom and Mark looked like he could have hexed whoever was laughing at him – but Hugo’s mind was definitely somewhere else.

And it definitely wasn’t hard to imagine where it was, but Lily had told him flat out that she couldn’t study with him hanging around her, and kissing her and touching her all the time.

He snorted. Apparently, his hands under her dress were really distracting as she tried to write an essay on the magical plants of Scotland. Even when he used the excuse that he was collecting her scales.

He sighed. When he had visited her right after breakfast, he had hoped for a long and not very profitable – academically speaking – day, filled with languid kisses and maybe something more. He had actually expressed the desire to return the favour from the afternoon before, but she had refused due to the fact that her feet were still stuck together under a thin layer of scales, and she didn’t really want to figure out the dynamics of the act.

Hugo didn’t have to figure out anything at all – he had probably read way more issues of James and Teddy’s stash of erotic magazines – but she had insisted, so he had promised to visit her in the afternoon, and finally left her to finish her umpteenth essay in two days.

“Is Lily coming to the trainings tomorrow?” asked Michael Belby, one of the Gryffindor Beaters.

Hugo turned to look at him. “Probably on Tuesday or Wednesday,” he replied, “she’s still water-bound until her gills disappear and she loses all her scales.”

He nodded thoughtfully. “But do you think we’re going to beat Slytherin on Sunday? I mean, we haven’t had any proper training in a week, what are our chances?”

“Higher than them beating us,” replied Hugo trying to sound cheerful, but he didn’t feel too confident at all about their chances.

Weirdly enough, though, he felt as if he hardly cared about Quidditch at the moment, which was very unusual. He usually loved the game, and spent most of the time talking about it when he wasn’t watching it or playing it. He had even caressed the idea of trying out for a position in one of the teams of the League, but just because he knew that Lily wanted to play professionally. He imagined the two of them playing for an important team like Puddlemere United, and maybe meeting in the shower after their training…

He tried to focus on the game to keep those thoughts at bay. He looked at the Ravenclaw Keeper saving a last minute goal and wondered if his disinterest in the game had anything to do with Lily’s magic. It must have. He smiled again as he thought about her, he was definitely going to wear his swimming trunks again that afternoon. After all, Lily’s kisses and her mouth and her hands were extremely pleasant on his skin, and if the Mating Magic was really going to dissolve into thin air as soon as her gills disappeared – as he suspected that it would – they might as well have made the most out of it.
He wasn’t even worried in the least about what would surely follow: days filled with regret and embarrassment and awkward family meetings.

They would think about that when the time came.

An especially glorious Sunday afternoon.

Hugo sat on the edge of the tub, placing his naked feet on the highest rock. He could see Lily’s naked body swimming several feet under the surface, her feet still greenish and vaguely linked together, her body pale and very much human now.

He watched her as she searched the bottom for scales, one of her hands had a fistful already, the other was moving rocks and pushing heaps of sand into corners.

She was graceful and he just watched her for a few minutes, until she finally started to make her way to the surface again, her eyes opening wide as she noticed that he was there, and hurried to where he was.

“Hugo!” she almost cried, her arms wrapping around his waist. “Thank Merlin, you’re here!”

“Hey,” he replied, a smug smile followed her enthusiasm. “You okay?”

She shook her head. She unwrapped her arms from around him and hopped on the rock, kneeling naked next to him to put away the scales into the overflowing box.

He tried to look at her hands, but somehow his eyes kept going back to her pretty, bubbly arse. She finally closed the box and pushed it away, before sitting next to him. “I need your help,” she said firmly, as she raised her feet up until they rested on his lap.

He bit the inside of his cheek to finally manage to find the strength of focusing on her feet. “Yep,” he croaked out. “Help.”

“Look,” she exhorted him, raising her feet. “I’m bleeding!”

He blinked, finally focusing. “Bleeding?” he asked.

She nodded and hissed when he placed his hands on the inside of her feet. “I was trying to speed up the separation process,” she told him. “Even if Madam Pomfrey told me not to… But argh! Look at me! I’m ridiculous and I can’t bloody walk or swim properly! I’m a freak of nature.”

He chuckled at her distraught tone. “It’ll be over by tomorrow,” he reminded her.

She sighed. “Anyway, I tried to pull my feet apart and that happened.” She nodded towards her feet and Hugo saw the long wound that was starting to bleed in his lap.

“Wow,” he said, “doesn’t it hurt?”

“What do you think?” she huffed.
He glanced at her, trying hard not to stare at her chest or between her legs as he did. “Then why were you in the water? I bet the salt is killing you.”

“Well, first of all, I needed to get wet,” she told him seriously.

He grinned and slid a hand up her leg. “I could have helped with that, no need to get into the water,” he murmured.

She slapped his hand away when he reached too high on her thigh, her face colouring. “Honestly,” she muttered, but she was fighting a smile and he could see it. “Second, I was getting bored and went to look for the scales.” She nodded and added, “And third, nobody gave me my wand back, so I can’t Heal myself.”

He nodded and drew out his own wand, he pointed at her feet and murmured a Healing Charm, the only one he knew. “Episkey.”

She sighed in relief and pushed herself forward and upwards, until she had slid into his lap, one arm behind his shoulders, the other on his cheek. “Thank you,” she told him as she kissed him, “my brave and handsome sailor. Thank you for saving me.”

He hugged her tightly feeling the soft skin of her hip under his palms. “No problem, my pretty Siren,” he murmured, as he let her show her gratitude with kisses and caresses.

“Hmm, Lily, Lily, Lily…,” he breathed as he nuzzled his face into her hair, “tell me you studied everything you needed to study today, and I can spend the rest of the afternoon kissing you and doing all those things that your mother would kill me if she found out and your father would send me to Azkaban for…”

She giggled and moaned softly as he slid his hand higher on her body, past the ridge of her ribcage and to cup a breast. Then she gasped and almost kneed Hugo in the eye when the door closed with a loud bang.

“Send you to Azkaban?” sneered a voice at Hugo’s back. “I think I have an owl to send to the Ministry then.”

With a cry, Lily pushed herself off Hugo and into the water, splashing water everywhere in the process, while Hugo turned to meet the amused sneer of Mark Goldstein.

He stood up, jumping from the tub onto the wet floor and sliding on it until he fell back, causing a burst of nasty laughter coming from Goldstein.

“What the hell are you doing?” he barked as he stood up. “You’re not allowed in here!”

Goldstein laughed again and shook his head. “Don’t try to change the subject, Weasley,” he drawled. “You think I don’t know what you were about to do with you cousin?”

Hugo gritted his teeth, he could feel his anger being tramped by his fear. He swallowed loudly, trying to look cooler than he felt. “I just healed her feet,” he told him curtly. “I don’t know what your depraved, little mind was thinking but we weren’t—”

“Yes, indeed,” he cut him off, waving a hand and walking to the tub, where Lily’s wide eyes were staring up at the scene. “You were not touching her tits, she was not snogging you, she was not rubbing herself all over you. Naked.”

Hugo pressed his lips together, trying hard, in the recesses of his mind, to find something to reply to
him. Something that wouldn’t make him sound as guilty as he actually felt. Something that would shut Goldstein up. He couldn’t find anything.

“I wonder what the Prophet will say about your incesty tryst,” he went on, turning to look at Hugo. “Aren’t you two kind of famous for some unfathomable reason?” He snorted and added, “Oh yes, your parents are famous, aren’t they? Can you imagine the headlines?” He raised his hands as if framing a giant title. “The Head Auror’s freak daughter does the nasty with her cousin in the Prefects’ Bathroom.” He winked at Hugo. “I think it sounds pretty good, doesn’t it?”

Hugo balled his fists near his sides and growled, but he still couldn’t find anything to say that wouldn’t come out completely and utterly ridiculous at that point. He tried anyway. “We weren’t… we weren’t doing anything,” he muttered, his face turning as red as his hair. “It’s the Mating Magic, our parents know it affected us… we weren’t…”

“Oh we were, Mark,” said Lily, her voice desperate from the tub.

Hugo and Mark both turned to look at her. She had swum to the edge and was now standing on one of the higher rocks, half out of the water and completely naked. Hugo felt the urge to grasp something and cover her up, but he didn’t seem able to move to start looking for her dress, frozen there by the curiosity of whatever Lily was about to do.

Mark’s eyes shone with an impish light as he stared… definitely not at her face. His tongue darted out to wet his lips. “You were, right?” he told her, his voice a low murmur.

Lily nodded and hanged her head. “We were, but it’s all my fault,” she went on, her voice broken, “I feel so randy, I’d do anything for a shag. Anything…” She lowered her eyes and rubbed her hands over her arms as if she was cold.

Hugo just stared at her without being able to believe his ears. He thought he actually meant something to her, his mother had said that mermaids only had one mate, he thought he was her mate. Instead… he wasn’t. She just wanted a shag. She just wanted someone between her legs.

Mark cocked an eyebrow. “Well, you should’ve asked me,” he told her haughtily, “I wouldn’t have minded shagging you.” His eyes caressed her body lewdly and Hugo gritted his teeth as he took a step forward.

“Hey!” he barked. “She doesn’t want you.”

“Yes, I do,” said Lily frantically. She stretched an arm towards Mark and smiled. “I would have never agreed to go to Hogsmeade with you if I didn’t like you already… and now… Bloody hell, all I want is you, kiss you, feel you, touch you…”

Mark didn’t grab her hand, but he smirked at her words. “I knew it,” he told her calmly. His eyes descended to her still fishy feet and he cocked an eyebrow. “I don’t usually shag freaks,” he let her know cruelly, “but since you seem to be in quite the predicament…” He glanced at a fuming Hugo before looking back at her. “He’s not good, is he?”

Lily didn’t look at Hugo. “I just want you,” she said softly.

Mark nodded knowingly. “I understand.” He started to work on his clothes unbuttoning his shirt with impatience and almost tearing it in the process.

Hugo just stared at him with his mouth wide, before turning to look at Lily who was keeping her eyes on Mark. “What are you doing?” he asked her frantically. “You hate him.”
She ignored him and stared at Mark as he got undressed.

“Lily!” snapped Hugo. “What the hell is wrong with you?”

“She’s finally understood what’s good for her,” smirked Mark, kicking away his trousers and his shoes. “She’s not as stupid as you are.” He hooked his fingers in his underwear and soon he was walking towards the tub, naked and half-hard already. “Get out, Weasley,” he told Hugo, as he stepped over the edge, “this is not for children.”

“No,” said Lily hastily, “let him stay, I like… I like to be watched…” She blushed and Hugo felt as if his eyes would pop out of his skull any minute now.

Mark took the hand she was offering and stepped on the rock next to her. His slid his palms over the small of her back and pulled her to him. “You really are a slut,” he grunted, rubbing himself against her. “I like that.” He grabbed her chin and kissed her sloppily, until her hands had to press against his chest to make him stop.

Hugo was petrified. He couldn’t tear his eyes from the scene, nor he could find anything to say to Lily. He could feel his heart breaking, though, as if she had just pushed a hand in his chest, taken it out, and now she was jumping on it with all her forces. “Lily…” he murmured, feeling utterly lost.

Lily tilted her head back and looked into Mark’s eyes. She smiled and wriggled free of his arms before diving gracefully into the water.

Hugo felt his jaw pop as he gritted his teeth with way too much force.

“Don’t worry, Weasley,” sneered Mark, “I’ll fish her out of there for round two, okay? You’ll have a nice long look at how it’s done…” He jumped into the water and his head bobbed up like a buoy in the sea. He pushed his hair back and smiled as Lily appeared next to him, eyes big and fixed on his face.

She started kissing him, his lips, his jaw, his neck, just as she used to do with Hugo. Then she dove slowly under the water and Hugo could see the cloud of red hair as it floated in front of Mark while she descended slowly on his body.

“Oh shit,” growled Mark, moving his hands to try to find something to grab. “Fuck, Potter… you really know how to use those pretty, little lips of yours…”

Hugo felt a headache kicking in as he listened to his words. He lowered his eyes and turned away, considering finding his clothes and leaving. He hated Lily now. How could he hate her that much already? He was head over heels in love with her a few minutes before, and now…

“Shit, right there… right there… God, you’re the—”

Hugo darkened, bracing himself for an even more lewd commentary of what Lily was doing to Goldstein.

It never came.

Hugo rolled his eyes, not really wanting to look at Mark’s blissful face as Lily gave him head, but somehow unable not to at least glance at them. He would feel somewhat good if Goldstein had already come, after all now Hugo could at least tell everybody how much Goldstein sucked at sex.

He turned slowly, until the calm water was before his eyes, and then jumped up.
Mark and Lily were nowhere to be found.

“Shit,” he muttered, as he grasped the edge and looked into the clear water, past the rocks and the long seaweed.

And there they were!

Hugo lent forward so much that he almost fell face first on the rocks, but he didn’t quite care. He narrowed his eyes and tried to understand what was happening at the bottom of the tub. It wasn’t easy, for Mark’s struggling was raising a big cloud of sand all around them.

Lily was tackling Goldstein to the bottom of the tub, she was perched over him, her knees pressing over his ribcage, her feet pushing against his lower abdomen. Hugo couldn’t see her face, but she seemed to be able to keep him there without effort.

Mark, on the other hand, was trying with all his strength to push her off him. His eyes were wide and his face slightly red since he probably had already finished most of the air in his lungs.

“Bloody hell,” muttered Hugo, he stepped on the rock and prepared to dive into the water after them.

At that moment he saw more movement, and soon Mark’s head emerged as he gulped down a big mouthful of air. “She tried to kill me!” he gasped. “She tried to kill me!” He stretched a hand towards Hugo and Hugo stretched his own towards him automatically.

“Yes,” hissed Lily as she emerged next to Mark and wrapped an arm around his neck, dragging him back towards the middle of the tub.

Mark let out a very unmanly scream.

“And I can do that again, and again,” she growled, tightening her arm around his throat. “Are you going to tell anybody about Hugo and me?” she hissed.

Mark swallowed, he seemed not to know how to use his hands, whether to try to stay on the surface or to try to loosen her grip. “I… I…” he gasped.

“Wrong answer,” she hissed, starting to dive.

“No!” he coughed. “Wait! I won’t! I won’t!”

She emerged again, tightening her arm once more. “Promise!” she snapped.

“I promise! I promise!” he almost sobbed. “Please, let me go! I promise!”

She seemed to consider his words attentively. “You’ll stop saying all those lies about me,” she added. “Promise! Or I’ll drown you!”

Mark was actually crying and gasping now. “I promise,” he repeated, sniffling. “I’m sorry! I’m sorry!”

Lily snapped her teeth near his ear and he closed his eyes, his bottom lip trembling. “I’m still not convinced,” she hissed.

He started to struggle like a fish out of the water, and Hugo felt a wave of pity for him, and indescribable awe for Lily.

“I’ll do anything!” he begged. “Please! Please!”
“You’ll do an Unbreakable Vow,” she hissed in his ear, “with Hugo, now!”

Hugo looked at her, eyes wide, he had no clue how to do an Unbreakable Vow, and he was pretty sure that Lily didn’t either. He tried to convey that to her, but Lily was grinning wickedly up at him and she winked when their eyes met.

“No!” cried Mark. “I swear I won’t talk! No! Please!”

“Lily, I think… I think that’s enough…” murmured Hugo, stretching his hand again towards Mark.


Lily tightened her arm one last time and then let him go. Mark threw himself towards Hugo’s hand, grabbed it, and jumped up from the water so quickly that Hugo wondered if fear had made him spurt wings.

He flung himself towards his clothes, grasping them in his arms and stepping away from the tub as Lily came to sit on the edge.

“She… she tried to kill me,” he babbled at Hugo, eyes wide and red.

“Yes, well… you told the whole school she was a slut,” said Hugo calmly, “mermaids are vengeful.”

“I’m sorry,” he whined, “I’m sorry. I… I…”

“Go! Before I drown you!” snapped Lily, showing him her teeth, growling and stretching her hands as if she was going to claw his eyes out from the tub.

Mark let out a screech and hurried out of the bathroom, banging the door at his back and sobbing.

Lily’s laughter suddenly filled the room. She gasped and slapped her hands on her thighs as if the scene had been hilarious.

Hugo turned to look at her. “You almost killed him,” he told her severely. Then his lips stretched in a smile. “You were awesome,” he added with awe.

She shrugged a shoulder, a grin on her face. “Did you have any doubts?”

He shook his head and went to sit next to her. “Nope,” he told her.

She jokingly punched his upper arm. “You really thought I was going to go down on him,” she accused him.

He nodded. “I’m an idiot,” he admitted.

She rolled her eyes before moving closer to him and placing a hand in his lap. “True,” she replied, “but right now you’re my idiot.”

He smiled and kissed her, wrapping an arm around her to pull her to him. “Now, where were we?” he murmured.

She placed a hand over his chest to push him back, cocking an eyebrow. “I believe you were about to lock the door,” she told him, “unless you want me to scare to death all the people that walk in here…”
Chapter IX

Monday morning.

The only good thing about Monday morning was Mark Goldstein’s scared face as Hugo walked into Greenhouse number three. He just had to narrow his eyes at him and Mark nodded shakily back at Hugo, before turning to talk to his fellow Ravenclaws.

Throughout the lesson, Hugo could hear bits of conversation as Mark finally admitted to have never kissed Lily – even though now that was not true anymore – and snapped heatedly at one of his friends when he called Lily a slut.

Hugo smiled satisfied at the Devil’s Snare he had to pot. Yes, he had to admit that for a moment he had thought that Lily was really about to give Mark head, and for another moment he had believed that she was going to drown him, but instead she had just simply been awesome and he had just been an idiot for even doubting that.

He sighed and thought about her. He wondered how she had spent the night. He wondered if, by the time he was going to see her, her feet had finally divided and if her gills had disappeared. He closed his eyes for a moment. Probably not, probably the spell hadn’t worn off completely yet, because he could still feel something at the pit of his stomach as he thought about her. He didn’t dream about beaches and mermaids and water and fish, he didn’t hear her voice in his mind, saying his name as if calling him from another world, he didn’t feel the urge to be mated and to knock Lily up. But he did feel a really strong attraction towards her, he did feel girly butterflies in his stomach when he approached the Prefects’ Bathroom. And he couldn’t think about anybody but her. All the time.

“Enough! Enough, Hugo!” grunted Neville as he grasped his wrist and saved the Devil’s Snare from being covered by a surprisingly tall mountain of soil.

Hugo looked down at the plant and then up at Neville, a sheepish smile upon his face. “Sorry,” he said.

Neville shook his head, muttering under his breath about teenagers in love and brushing away some soil from the plant as if it was a rare archaeological treasure he had just found rather than… well, a plant.

“How’s Lily?” he asked him as he placed the pot on a shelf, far away from Hugo. “She looked almost back to normal when I visited her yesterday.”

Hugo nodded. “She should be back to being human by tonight, tomorrow at the latest. That’s what Madam Pomfrey said,” he explained.

Neville eyed him suspiciously. “And that’s when you’re going to be back to being normal too?” he asked him.

Hugo furrowed his brow. “What do you mean?”

Neville sighed. “Maybe with Lily here, your head will stop being somewhere else,” he told him. “Up in the clouds or under the water for example.”

Hugo shrugged a shoulder. “Yeah, well… it’s not my fault, it’s the Mating Magic, you know… that thing that mermaids have…”
“Madam Pomfrey said the Mating Magic should have extinguished when she regained her human mind,” he told him. “Are you sure you’re still under the influence?”

Hugo nodded curtly. “Yes, I can’t stop thinking about her,” he muttered, looking around himself to see if anybody was listening to them, “I just want to be with her all the time, I hurt when I’m not with her.” He blushed violently at his own admission.

Neville sighed. “Yeah, well that’s not very different from—”

“Listen Neville,” said Hugo, suddenly heating up. “I promise you that when Lily changes back completely, I’ll be more than fine. Hell, we’ll both be, okay? Honestly!”

To his surprise, Neville smiled at him. “Merlin, you’re just like your father,” he told him unexpectedly, “exactly like him. Blimey! I don’t even know how he managed to marry your mother!” And without a further word, he walked away to survey the other students’ jobs, leaving Hugo there to blink into space and try to make sense of his words.

Monday afternoon.

Lily was sitting cross-legged on the tub edge. Her wand in her hand, she seemed to be trying hard to Transfigure a towel into a toucan. Her flowery dress was half wet, as if she had splashed around with her feet, which Hugo could see were now finally separated.

She raised her eyes when Hugo walked into the bathroom, a wide smile tugging her lips. “I’m almost human again!” she announced, uncrossing her legs and dangling them in the air for him to see.

He walked to her and pretended to examine them closely. “Hmm,” he said as he grabbed an ankle and raised it until she had to grasp the edge not to fall back. “No scales, no fins, no webbed toes…”

He grinned at her. “I’d say you are human again!”

She shrugged a shoulder as he let her foot go. “I still have gills,” she replied, but Madam Pomfrey said they’ll be gone by tonight for sure! I might even sleep in my bed.” She sighed. “My soft, dry bed…”

He smiled as he sat next to her. “I’m going to miss coming in here to visit you,” he told her, looking at her beautiful, pale feet. “I’m really going to miss you. Really, really…”

“I’m not going anywhere,” she replied, placing a hand on his arm. “Why are you saying these things? We can still come in here for a swim… we’re both allowed in here anyway.”

He placed his hand on hers, toying with her fingers. “Yeah, but it won’t be the same.”

She wormed her hand away from his and raised it to his face, making him turn to look at her. “Why not?” she asked softly. “I don’t understand.”

“You know what I mean,” he sighed, “without the Mating Magic, it… it just won’t be the same… I bet all boys will be around you by tomorrow morning, wanting to know everything about you… Michael even asked me if you’d be at the trainings this week.”
“No! How dares he?” she quipped.

He glanced at her, unimpressed with her sarcasm in a moment of such despair for him, but she was giggling and when he tried to glare at her, she just cupped his cheek and kissed him.

He capitulated. Completely.

“I thought you wanted the Mating Magic to finish,” she murmured against his lips.

“Did I? I’m not so sure anymore,” he admitted in a whisper. He slid his arms around her and pulled her to him, helping her to slide a leg over his lap, until she was sitting with her chest pressed to his own and her hands in his hair.

She pressed down against him and he groaned against her lips, as he pushed back up against her. He could feel her warmth through his trousers and he was sure that she was wet, which was just what he had hoped because Merlin knew he was already getting hard!

He slid his hand down her side and gathered her dress over the curve of her hip, feeling only naked skin when he managed to bob it around her waist. “You’re naked,” he breathed, looking into her eyes.

She tilted her head back and brushed her fingers over his chest, down, down, until she was toying with the buttons of his trousers. “And you aren’t,” she replied, staring back at him.

He swallowed. “Shall we do something about that?” he murmured throatily.

“Do you want me to?” she whispered, slipping the first button through the hole and leaning her forehead against his jaw.

“Oh God yes,” he breathed.

She kissed his jaw and slipped the second and third buttons through their holes with maddening slowness. Then she raised her eyes on his, her tongue darted out to lick her lips, and her hand slipped inside.

His eyelids drooped, his fingers tightened around her dress, his heartbeat increased. Lily’s hand was bloody amazing, and Hugo felt like he was finally going to drown in bliss.

He unfolded his hand and pressed his fingers to the small of her back, pulling her towards him. “I want you so freaking much,” he breathed over her temple.

She smiled, but didn’t reply. She rose a bit on her knees, her hand still wrapped around him, and when she sank down, Hugo closed his eyes and listened to her moaning so prettily.

Words failed him, and apparently, they failed her as well. She pushed herself against him, until she was flat against his chest, then wrapped her arms around his neck and leant her cheek against his. He moved his hands on the small of her back and let her set a slow and erratic pace, as if she wasn’t exactly sure of how to do it.

It didn’t matter. She could have done anything and the outcome wouldn’t have changed. Hugo’s breathing increased, his pelvis moved upwards to meet her movements without him even noticing, his hands clawed at her back.

It took a fistful of minutes for his lust to tip over the edge.
It took Lily a moment longer, his thumb between her legs and his lips against hers.

Afterwards, they lay on the tub edge, Lily on top of Hugo.

He stared at her as she stared at the water.

The night between Monday and Tuesday.

There was a dip on the mattress, a rustling of fabric, and a soft breath near his face.

When Hugo opened his eyes, it wasn’t day. His dorm was still immersed into darkness and, around him, his fellow Seventh Years were snoring loudly.

He smiled as he opened his eyes and met Lily’s. “Hey,” he told her sleepily. “Are you a girl or a mermaid?”

“A girl,” she replied, stretching a hand to his face and cupping his cheek.

He placed his palm over it to keep her there.

“No more gills?”

“No.”

He smiled and closed his eyes again. “Good.”

“Hugo,” she whispered.

He opened his eyes again and stared at her. She was wearing pyjamas covered in little sleepy cats that were yawning and purring. “Yes?”

She tormented her bottom lip. “Do you want to kiss me?” she asked him.

His sleepy smile widened as he slid closer to her. He pressed his lips to hers and kissed her one, two, three, four times. Little pecks that made him feel indescribably happy. “Always,” he replied, tilting his head back.

She didn’t reply. She didn’t even smile. “Do you want to sleep with me?” she asked in a murmur.

It took him a bunch of seconds to understand her. “Lily, you can sleep here whenever you want,” he told her gently, “on my warm, dry bed…”

She shook her head. “No, I mean… do you want to… to sleep with me… to… like yesterday, you know?” she murmured, her cheeks colouring even in the darkness.

He smiled at her. “Every moment of every day,” he assured her, worming closer until his nose touched hers, “or until the Mating Magic disappears.”

“Do you love me?” she breathed anxiously.
“So, so, so much…” He brushed his nose against hers at every word, and she finally smiled at him.

He stretched a hand to place it on her waist, but she moved away.

For a moment, he fretted that she was leaving, that he had said something wrong, that he hadn’t answered her questions properly. Instead, she just rolled over and pushed herself against him.

He smiled as she fitted her back against his chest, his hand closing possessively over her stomach.

“By the way,” she murmured sleepily, “Madam Pomfrey had me tested before she let me go.”

He pushed his nose in her hair. “What for?” he asked her in a whisper.

“Residual mermaid magic.”

Hugo’s sleepy eyes opened wide all of a sudden. “And?” he murmured, feeling his stomach clench at the thought that everything was going to be over in a matter of seconds.

Lily pushed herself against him. “And she assured me that the Mating Magic disappeared three days ago.” She paused before adding, “Whatever we feel for each other, it’s not that.”

He blinked in the darkness, trying to make sense of her words.

“Goodnight my handsome sailor…” she murmured, yawning.

He lowered his head to hers, feeling rather breathless. “Goodnight my pretty Siren,” he replied.
Epilogue

Two months later.

“Lily! Hugo! Mum says lunch will be ready in five!”

Lily’s glazed over eyes opened slowly, while Hugo cursed under his breath. He didn’t seem to want to reply any time soon, so she took the burden upon her throaty voice. “Coming, Victoire!” she replied from down the beach.

“Really?” asked Hugo, kissing her temple. “Again? I thought you just did…” He grinned against her skin and she slapped his arm.

“Hugo!” she pretended to be shocked at his language, but he didn’t seem to take her seriously. In fact, he kissed her pout away and finally slid his hand from under her bikini bottom, smearing her juices on her hip before bringing his fingers to his mouth. “Nice hors d’oeuvre,” he told her, sucking on them, “can I have the same for dessert?”

She pushed him away and stood up, shaking her head and trying hard not to laugh. “Only if you behave,” she told him as she wrapped the beach towel around herself.

He stood up too, locating his swimming trunks and donning them quickly, before retrieving the other towel and wrapping it around his hips. “Lily, you know that I’m the best-behaved secret boyfriend ever,” he told her brightly. “That’s why I’m taking you out to dinner.”

She stopped with a hand in her wet hair, forgetting for a moment that she was trying to shake the sand from her locks as well as unknotting her mane. “What?” she asked. “Like… like on a date?”

“A date,” he told her, shrugging his shoulder. “Unless you don’t want to go, and would rather stay home to play Wizard’s Chess with Uncle Bill again.”

“Of course I want to go!” she hurried to say. “Our first date?”

He shrugged again. “If you don’t count the first time you tried to grab me and drown me…”

She laughed and ran up to him. Jumping at his neck and wrapping her legs around his waist, her towel opening. “I don’t if you don’t,” she told him.

“I don’t know,” he chuckled, grasping her thighs to support her, “it was kind of romantic…”

She rolled her eyes and kissed him. “Where are we going?”

“It’s a sur—”

“Oh my word! Is it the new sushi place that they opened in Tinworth? The one I said I was dying to try?” she asked excitedly.

Hugo sighed. “Blimey, do you know what surprise means? Yeah, it’s that one…”

She let out an excited cry. “Best. Surprise. Ever,” she punctuated every word with a kiss.

“Well, what can I say? I’m the best. I know my pretty Siren craves fish every now and then.” He tried to go for another kiss, but she tilted her head back, jumped down and grinned up at him.
She laced her fingers with his and they started making their way up towards Shell Cottage.

“What about Uncle Bill and Auntie Fleur? We’re still going to tell them that it’s the Mating Magic?” asked Lily as she shook sand from her flip flops.

Hugo tugged her towards him, pulling her into a hug and stopping a few feet from the cottage. “You know what? I don’t think they believe us anymore anyway,” he admitted thoughtfully.

“Victoire has surely caught onto it,” she agreed. “Oh well…”

“Yeah, I don’t mind if you don’t,” he murmured quickly, pecking her lips.

She winked at him, wriggling free from his arms. “I don’t,” she told him, before grasping his hand again and adding, “Let’s go, my brave sailor.”

He smiled and squeezed her hand, bringing it to his lips to kiss her knuckles. “After you,” he whispered, “my pretty Siren.”

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