The Harry Potter Home for Wounded War Heroes

by shilo1364

Summary

When Malfoy Manor burns, the wizarding world is unmoved. Enter Harry Potter, whose new hobby is finding stray survivors and 'rescuing' them. He whisks the Malfoys off to 12 Grimmauld Place, which has become a landing spot for the displaced and unwanted. He integrates them into his strange, somewhat dysfunctional "family" -and Draco wouldn't have it any other way. LOTS OF FLUFF. EWE
Sev and Luna battles of wits! Muggle board games! Quidditch at the Burrow! Lucius Malfoy baking cookies! and more!
(Major unexpected scene-stealing by Sev and Luna in later chapters)

Future oneshots in this - let's call it Home!verse - will be posted as sequels

Notes
See the end of the work for notes.
It was raining. Cold, miserable, and altogether too wet, the world outside Malfoy Manor mocked Draco. He sat curled in the window seat; the book he'd been reading lay beside him, forgotten. He wrapped his arms around his knees, curling his legs close to his body. He dropped his chin to rest on his knees and stared balefully at the water sleet ing down, the slate-gray clouds that seemed to drop lower as he watched. The wards pinged again in his mind, more insistently this time. Draco scowled harder.

"Draco, darling," Mother's voice floated down to him, "I believe someone's at the gates. Won't you go and let them in?"

Draco muttered something decidedly uncomplimentary. If he'd had his wand, of course, he could have simply asked the wards who was there, and either opened the gates remotely or told the would-be visitor where they could go. If he'd had his wand. As it was, the bloody ward alarm was about as useless as...as a muggle doorbell. He could have at least cast an impervius charm, or something.

Bloody useless Potter just had to keep his wand, didn't he. "Look at me, now, Potter," he grumbled to himself, as he squelched down the drive. "Just look at me, now." The words were uncharitable and petty, and didn't really make much sense, but they made Draco feel infinitesimally better. He continued his muttered diatribe until he drew even with the gates, doing his best to ignore the steady drip, drip, drip of icy water that slipped past his collar and ran down the back of his neck. He'd run out of original insults some time back, and let out one more "Bloody useless Potter" for good measure as he peered through the gates, trying to make out the figure beyond.

There was a startled cough, and then a familiar voice said, "Er, hullo to you, too, Malfoy."

Oh, this was just too much. "What are you doing here, Potter?" Draco hissed, squinting suspiciously though the sodden strings of hair hanging in his eyes.

Potter rubbed the back of his neck, which was no doubt warm and dry, since the git still had the use of his wand. "Er, I brought this back. Thanks for the loan." He held out Draco's wand. Oh.

Draco clasped his hands tightly behind his back to keep himself from reaching out for it. "Don't bother, Potter. They'll just take it like they took my parents' wands."

Potter gaped at him. "I'm sorry, what?"

Draco snorted. "Your lot – from the ministry. Came a few days after the trials. Had all sorts of official documents." He sneered. "Said it was some new ministry policy: Death Eaters can't be allowed magic, you know. We might hurt someone."

Potter's eyes had gone hard and dangerous. Draco drew in a startled breath. Merlin, he'd forgotten how good Potter looked when he was angry. He had the sudden urge to insult Potter, or punch him. Anything to keep those green eyes flashing. "I'll just bet they did." Potter seemed to see him, then. He grimaced. "You look like a drowned rat."

Draco scowled. And then he has to go and say something like that. "It's raining, you prat. No wand, remember?"

Remorse flashed through Potter's eyes, quickly followed by a steely determination. "Right." He flicked Draco's wand, casting an impervius charm, drying charm, and warming spell over him in quick succession. "Wait here."
There was the familiar crack of apparition, and Potter was gone.

"Where the fuck do you think I'll go, Potter?" Draco asked the air petulantly. Then he sighed. *Merlin it feels good to be warm and dry.*

He was just considering that maybe Potter didn't mean it quite so literally, and that it might make more sense, all things considered, to go back inside the manor, when Potter reappeared, slightly out of breath.

"Oh, good. You're still here."

Draco rolled his eyes. "House arrest, Potter. I can't fucking leave."

"Oh. Right. Er – you could have gone inside, though."

Which was true, damn him. "I was enjoying the evening?" Draco cursed himself for making it sound like a question. He opened the gate this time and stepped through. He was just tired of talking through it, he told himself firmly. It had absolutely nothing to do with wanting to stand that much closer to Potter.

Potter looked around at the gray, sleeting rain and raised a skeptical brow. "Riiight." They stood in surprisingly companionable silence for a moment before Potter shook himself. "Oh, er, here." He thrust a hand inside his robe and withdrew Draco's wand, along with those of his parents. Then he produced an alarmingly thick parchment. He handed it all to Draco.

"What's this?" Draco unfolded the parchment.

"It's the list of restrictions on your wands." Potter looked ill, and no wonder.

"*Merlin – *"

Potter scrubbed his hand through his hair. "I know. Listen, Draco," he muttered, moving closer, "Don't fuck this up. I'll get those idiotic restrictions removed as soon as I can, but Kingsley has to at least give the appearance of compromising with the idiots from the old ministry. Just – play by the rules for a few weeks, 'til I can get this sorted, yeah?"

Draco felt his hand going up, mirroring Potter's, and forced it down again. He put far too much effort into his hair to muss it up. Anyway, it wouldn't end up looking as good as Potter's – he just knew it. Not that Potter's looked good, exactly. *Merlin.* "Er, yeah. I'll try."

They stared at one another for a long moment. Draco broke the silence. "Er, want to come in? I think Mother's having tea soon."

Potter stared at him just long enough for Draco to wish he hadn't said anything at all. He was just moving on to wishing the ground would open and swallow him up, and wondering if there was a spell that would do that, and if the ministry would allow him to use it, when Harry smiled. A slow, lazy, incredulous smile that lit up his entire face. "I'm afraid I can't right now – I'm already late as it is. Maybe next time – *Draco.*"

Potter raised his wand, saluted Draco with it, and then, with a dramatic and completely unnecessary flourish that would have put Lockhart to shame, he whirled in place and was gone, leaving Draco to stare at the spot where he'd been.

"Thanks...Harry," he whispered. He stood, staring at the rain for long minutes, clutching his wand and grinning like an idiot. He was still grinning when he closed the gate, skipped up the drive, and
went to give his parents their wands.
Oh, this is just not on. Draco glared at their attackers. They were wearing masks, the cowards, all eight of them. Eight. Against three. One really, since Mother's too out of it to fight, and Father's taking care of her. He raised his wand, knowing that the few spells he was actually allowed would be useless.

And then there was a familiar cry of "Expelliarmus!" and all eight wands clattered on the cobbles. A few well-placed stinging hexes followed, and had the unknown wizards scrabbling for their wands and fleeing. Bloody cowards.

Draco turned toward the mouth of the alley, where he saw Harry Potter, as he'd known he would. Who else is so bloody fond of expelliarmus? Draco thought fondly. Though, Potter had defeated the bloody Dark Lord with an expelliarmus. Perhaps he could be allowed a certain fondness for it.

Harry scowled and shook his head. "Bloody cowards."

Draco laughed. He knew Mother and Father were staring and he didn't care. He had eyes only for Harry, who snorted and grinned at Draco. Draco grinned back. Harry stepped forward, opening his mouth to say Merlin-knew what, but was interrupted by the Weaslette, who tugged him back.

"Harry, we're going to be late."

Harry didn't take his eyes off of Draco.

"Harry, I mean it. If you drop me for Malfoy one more time, we're through." Draco could tell by the glint in her eyes that she meant it.

Harry glanced at her and seemed to come to the same conclusion. "Sorry, Gin. But, I have to..." He scrubbed his hand through his hair.

She dropped his arm, hurt flashing through her eyes. "Fine. Go, Harry. Just go. But, this is it, Harry. This time I'm not going to be there when your little project is done."

Harry shrugged, eyes already searching out Draco's, and Draco was overwhelmed by a rush of heady emotion. He's letting her go. For me.

Ginny stormed off in a huff. Draco was about to reach toward Harry when Harry brushed past him. He spun on his heel, confused, to see Harry rushing forward and scooping Mother neatly into his arms as she wilted. He turned to look into Draco's eyes. "What are you doing here? You know you can't leave the Manor – "

Father's cultured drawl cut easily through Harry's words. "Which is well and good until it burns to the ground around you."

Harry started violently, eyes seeking Draco's once more. He trusts me, Draco realized, and felt flickers of warmth curl through him. He nodded curtly.

Harry swore, nodded to the limp form of Mother in his arms. "Smoke inhalation?"

"Yes." Father sounded detached. Which, considering, was understandable.

Harry swore roundly. "Right. You'll have to stay at mine for now." He stopped. "Oh, bloody hell.
We'll have to clear it with the Ministry first..."

"Which is where we were headed," Father finished for him.

"Bloody hell."

Draco wondered if he should suggest Harry find some other swear words. Instead, he glanced out at the crowd that was beginning to form around the mouth of the alley. He thought he recognized Skeeter's strident voice in the midst of the journalists he could now see forcing their way through the crowd. Bloody hell, indeed. From the look on Harry's face, he'd heard Skeeter too. Mother lay pale in Harry's arms, and clearly needed medical attention, and soon.

Harry seemed to come to a decision. "Right. We're apparating straight there."

Are you sure that's entirely wise?" Father drawled. He didn't quite manage to cover up the fear, and from Harry's scowl, he'd seen it too.

"No, and, right now, I don't give a fuck. Grab on."

Draco hesitated only a second before placing his hand on Harry's shoulder and squeezing gently. Father's hand moved toward Harry's other shoulder, and then Harry whirled them away.

They reappeared in a comfortable office. Draco recognized Minister Shacklebolt, along with several higher-ups in the Ministry. They seemed to have interrupted a meeting. Draco swallowed when he noticed the wands pointed at them; Harry ignored them.

"Kingsley!" he barked, not bothering with niceties. "Malfoy Manor was burned to the ground – how long ago?" He turned to Father.

"About an hour ago," Father drawled.

"Right. The Malfoys were on their way here, to get the house-arrest restrictions modified to allow them to stay somewhere else, when they were attacked. I scared away their attackers – eight of them, all masked – and brought them here. Narcissa needs a healer – smoke inhalation – and I will need the terms of their house-arrest changed so they can stay with me at Grimmauld Place."

Kingsley opened his mouth, but Harry cut him off.

"Oh, and so they can leave so long as they remain with me – or one of the other residents of Grimmauld Place."

"I can't do that, Harry," Shacklebolt said carefully. Draco thought he glimpsed deeply buried amusement in the other man's eyes.

"Right. Just me, then. The war is over, Kingsley."

He stared the Minister down until the larger man flinched and looked away. "I'll call in a healer."

"Pomfrey."

"What?"

"Madam Pomfrey. From Hogwarts. She'll treat her without unnecessary bias."

Shacklebolt hesitated, but nodded. "Rawlins, see to it."
One of the aurors standing by the door nodded at Shacklebolt, pointedly ignoring the rest of them, and departed.

"I'll change the wording of the house-arrest terms myself," Shacklebolt added.

"And I'll watch." Harry's voice brooked no argument. Draco was impressed despite himself.

Shacklebolt cracked a small smile. "Of course." He addressed the others in the office. "Thompson, bring me the documents, please. The rest of you: this meeting is adjourned – we'll have to pick up later."

There was a rumble of muttered grumbling from the assembled wizards, but they eventually filed out.

When the five of them were alone, Shacklebolt sighed and massaged his temple. "Harry... you do bring me the most interesting problems."

"Sorry, sir." Harry looked sheepish.

Shacklebolt waved his apology away. "No, no. It's all right." He fixed Father with a steely stare. "The Manor did actually burn down?"

"It did." Father drew himself up, haughty and dignified, and only trembled slightly when he spoke the words.

Shacklebolt nodded tiredly. Just then, Madam Pomfrey bustled in, took one look at Mother, and conjured a makeshift hospital bed. Harry set Mother down gently on the bed, and Pomfrey shooed them all out.

The Minister took it well, Draco thought, for someone who had just been kicked out of his own office. He tapped the doors, engaging the wards. "So no one can get in while I'm out," he explained. "While we wait for the paperwork, let's zip over to the Manor just to make sure we do this absolutely by the book, yes?"

It wasn't really a question. Father and Draco were both too exhausted to apparate. Harry took one look at them and looked Shacklebolt in the eye. "I'll take them." The Minister just nodded.

Sure enough, the manor was a smoking ruin. Shacklebolt scowled, like he'd not quite believed it, but now knew he would have to investigate. Draco didn't envy him the task – going up against all the self-righteous idiots who'd claim people like them deserved anything they got after the war would no doubt be thoroughly unpleasant. Harry seemed to have faith in Shacklebolt, though, so Draco decided he could do no less. It was only fair, after all, and he trusted Harry implicitly.

Funny, after all their fighting and mutual distrust, that it would be Harry that Draco would put his faith in. Harry he would trust his future to. But, then, Harry had already saved his life several times over, not to mention ridding the world of that bloody menace of a Dark Lord and returning Draco's wand. And his parents.' No, Draco decided, it was no wonder he trusted Harry. The wonder was that Harry trusted him.

Harry reached up and squeezed Draco's hand, and Draco blushed, realizing he'd neglected to remove it from Harry's shoulder after they arrived. He turned quickly to check if Father or Shacklebolt had seen, and released a relieved breath when he saw they were both staring at the ruin of the Manor, apparently lost in thought. Harry shot him a quick smile, then slid Draco's hand off his shoulder. He didn't let go, though, merely re-situated it at his side and laced their fingers together. Draco felt a warm rush of affection that nearly overwhelmed him. Harry squeezed his hand gently, then turned to Shacklebolt, angling their joined hands so they were hidden from view. "The Ministry was supposed
to be better now the war is over," he accused.

The Minister sighed. "These things take time, Harry. I'm only one man. You ought to understand that."

Harry deflated. "Yes. I do, at that. Right then." This time, it was Draco who squeezed Harry's hand in an offer of silent support.

They apparated back silently. Shacklebolt was far more patient than Draco could ever have been, when the bumbling Thompson twice failed to locate the correct paperwork. Once the proper paperwork was found, the Minister painstakingly changed the wording in no less than five places, while Harry frowned over his shoulder. Madam Pomfrey revived Mother, but insisted that she rest.

Harry, to Draco's delight, swept Mother into his arms before she could stand. He thanked Pomfrey gravely, then turned. "Done with that paperwork, Kingsley?"

"Just about. Sign here, Harry."

Harry scanned it, nodded, and signed where the Minister indicated.

"Now you three."

They signed, and Shacklebolt made several magical copies. "Here, Harry," he said, handing one to Harry. "Just in case." He gave another one to Father. "Right. That's everything. Remember, Harry – Grimmauld Place, or with you. That's all I can do for now."

Harry nodded. "I'll be back, then."

The Minister's mouth quirked up at one side.

"Give it a week or two, eh? I'm not a miracle-worker."

Harry smiled back, and Draco followed suit. He settled his hand on Harry's shoulder again, much less hesitantly, this time, and Harry whirled them away again.
Earth

They apparated onto the front step of a tall townhouse that sprouted improbably from the middle of muggle London. A sign on the door proclaimed “Number 12 Grimmauld Place: A Grim, Old Place, Indeed.”

Draco snickered. He was about to ask Harry about it – it didn’t seem quite like Harry’s style, after all – when Mother started. “Oh! Harry – it’s the old Black House!” Draco and Father both stiffened.

Harry smiled down at her. “Yeah. Forgot you’d know it. Sirius was my godfather – he left it to me, when…” he trailed off, swallowing.

Mother reached up and laid a gentle hand on his cheek. “He was a good man, Harry. And I know he loved you. I’m glad you ended up with the house – glad it’s being lived in. And… thank you, for bringing us here.” She fell back against his chest, exhausted, but smiling. Draco and Father relaxed.

They walked into the front hall, and were immediately accosted by the Weasel and Granger.

“Come on, Harry! Where were you – ”

Lovegood darted out of the kitchen after them. “There you are, Harry! We’re going to be late, you know! Where have – Oh. Hello, Draco. Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy” She smiled at them.

Father winced. Draco reached a hand out hesitantly. “Luna…I’m sorry…”

She darted forward and hugged him, and he stiffened, but then relaxed into her unexpected embrace, patting her back gently. She smiled up at him. “Oh, don’t worry about that, Draco. It was a long time ago.”

“Luna, how can you – ” the Weasel asked.

She shrugged. “It was war. We all did things we’re not proud of. And, Draco was kind to me – he brought me food, when he could. And he talked to me; told me stories, and brought me news of the war.”

Draco blushed when everyone stared at him. “It was the least I could do. I’m just sorry I couldn’t get you out.”

“So, Harry, what are they doing here?” asked Granger, tapping her foot.

“Oh, er, they’re going to stay here.” Harry scratched at his neck.

“Really.”

“Someone burned down their manor, ‘Mione. While they were in it.”

“Oh.” She frowned.

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” Luna said, “your home was lovely.”

Draco stared at her, along with everyone else. After a few minutes, Granger shook her head. “But, Harry, where are we going to put them?”

“Um…”
Draco’s Aunt Andromeda walked in, then. “Luna, where’s Teddy?”

“Oh, I left him with Sev while I came to see what the commotion was. The Malfoys are coming to stay with us – isn’t that lovely?”

Mother reached out a tentative hand. “Andy?” she whispered.

Aunt Andromeda clapped a hand over her mouth. “Cissy?”

Harry set Mother gently on her feet and held her arm as he helped her over to Andromeda. She stepped out of his hold and embraced her sister. “Oh, Andy”

Lucius looked as surprised as everyone else. He smiled when Draco met his eyes, and Draco felt some of the tension inside him ease.

Then Luna whirled and shouted “Nev! Sev! Pans! Hurry up! You’re missing all the fun!”

Severus stalked in, scowling and holding a baby distastefully away from himself. “Miss Lovegood, I must insist that you stop addressing me as ‘Sev.’ It is completely undignified - ” he broke off when he saw the newcomers.


Severus’ cheeks colored faintly. “Mister Potter retrieved my body and, in a display of unusually astute intelligence, for him, noticed that I was not yet completely dead. He secured Madam Pomfrey’s assistance in assuring my continued existence in this benighted world, and then sequestered me here. He surmised that not everyone would prove to be thrilled to see me survive. Loathe as I am to admit it, he was most likely correct.”

The only really surprising thing, Draco thought bemusedly, was that no one batted an eye at Severus’ ridiculously stilted and pompous speech. But, he supposed, the others must be used to his oddities by now, since they seemed to be unlikely, if amiable, roommates.

He turned to Harry. “That’s where you disappeared to!”

Harry blushed. “Yeah. Was the least I could do, really, once I saw those memories.” He and Severus shared an intense look.

Draco frowned. “Memories?”

Harry leaned close. “Tell you later,” he whispered. Draco found himself leaning closer still, intoxicated by Harry’s scent, his warmth.

Luna startled him by exclaiming brightly, “Oh, Sev. Only if you call me Luna!” and skipping over to Severus, whisking the baby away for a spin around the room before depositing him in Aunt Andromeda’s arms.

Mother cooed. “Oh, is this – oh, Andy he’s perfect!” The baby grinned at her, waved an arm, stared warily at Lucius for a moment, and then grinned at Harry. His hair, which had been blonde like Luna’s, suddenly morphed into an unruly black mop that was the exact twin of Harry’s. Mother exclaimed, “oh, he’s a metamorphmagus!” Aunt Andromeda nodded, and opened her mouth to say something else. Just then, the baby turned toward Draco. He waved his arms excitedly and cooed, obviously asking Draco to pick him up.
Aunt Andromeda looked surprised. “Teddy likes you, Draco. Would you like to hold him?”

Draco gulped, and looked at Harry, who nodded encouragingly. He gingerly took Teddy, who burbled at him. His hair lengthened and lightened to match Draco’s platinum locks.

Aunt Andromeda’s eyebrows climbed higher. “He definitely likes you,” she said.

“He’s never made his hair look like mine,” Severus muttered.

“Well, that’s that settled, then.” Luna said cheerfully. “Narcissa can stay with Andy and Teddy. Draco can stay with Harry, since he takes Teddy sometimes, and doesn’t have a roommate yet, and Lucius,” she turned and smiled brightly at him, “you’ll just have to room with Sev.”

There was silence for a moment, and then Neville, Pansy, and Blaise barged out of the kitchen, laughing and shoving. They stopped short when they saw the crowd in the hall.

Lucius stared at Luna, horrified. “I will not ‘room’ with Severus.” He scowled at Severus, who scowled back just as fiercely.

Luna exclaimed, “Oh! I forgot. There’s that drawing room; I bet we could convert it.”

“No! Luna – ” several people shouted. Harry looked worried.

But Luna, unconcerned, grabbed Lucius’ unresisting hand and skipped upstairs. Everyone else trooped after her, looking at one another uncertainly.

Lucius flung open the door that Luna indicated. Walburga Black’s portrait immediately started shouting about ‘disgraceful mudbloods’ and ‘halfbloods’ and ‘blood traitors.’ Then she saw Lucius, standing immobile in the doorway, and screeched “You! You, you coward and traitor and –”

Lucius slammed the door and backed into the hallway, white and shaking. “Right. I- I’ll stay with Severus after all,” he croaked.

“Draco!” Pansys’ voice cracked. “Oh, Draco, I’ve missed you!”

“Why are you here, though?” Blaise asked. “Not that I mind, but, don’t you have a home?”


Pansy covered her mouth. “Oh!” Her eyes widened, “Oh, Draco, I’m sorry. It was beautiful”

“Yeah.” He looked around. “Greg’s not here, is he?”

“No.”

“Oh.”

“He was, actually.” The Weasel spoke up, surprising Draco. “He was one of the first strays that Harry brought home.” He grinned. “He and Charlie hit it off - Charlie took him back to Romania to his dragon preserve for some dragon wrangling.”

“I’ve been writing to him,” Luna said cheerfully. “Hang on – he sent a photo in his latest letter.”

She dashed up the stairs, and returned a moment later with a photo of Greg and – well, the other had to be a Weasley, with that hair – so that must be Charlie. Who, it seemed, was quite the looker, Weasley or no.
Draco stared at the photo. Greg looked happy – happier than Draco had ever seen him, to be honest. He handed the photo back to Luna with a smile. “I’m glad. It’s what he always wanted.” He looked down, shuffling his feet. “Do you think – do you think I could give you a note to include in your next letter?”

“Oh, yes, I’m sure he’d love to hear from you.”

Draco smiled. “Luna has that effect on people,” Harry whispered, and Draco laughed despite himself.

“So,” Harry continued in an undertone, “you gonna be ok sharing with me? ‘Mione’s right – there really aren’t any more rooms.”

Draco snorted. “I’m sure I’ll manage. Anyway, you’re probably the least likely to kill me. How many times have you saved my life now? Thanks, by the way,” he added softly.

“Oh. Yeah. Welcome.”

“Hey, Harry,” The Weasel said, “where’d you stash Ginny?”

“Oh, ah, well.” Harry rubbed his neck, clearly embarrassed. “She sorta said that if I stopped to rescue the Malfoys from those goons then we were over.”

The Weasel snorted. “I take it she’s gone, then.”

“Yeah.”

“No worries, mate. You would never have made one another happy. Anyway,” Ron stage whispered, “I think she’s got the hots for Dean.”

“Ron!” Granger whacked him.

“Ow, ‘Mione! What was that for?”

“It’s true – she’s definitely got the hots for Dean,” Luna said matter-of-factly. “I’m surprised you never noticed, Harry.”

“I’m not.” The Weasel grinned at Granger, unrepentant.

Granger rolled her eyes, but didn’t dispute it.

“Well, thanks for telling me, you two.” Harry rolled his eyes.

“Harry, I hate to break this up, but, we’re already quite late.”

Draco grinned and poked Harry in the side. “Getting to be quite the habit for you, isn’t it?”

Harry swore. “Right. I’ll get these guys settled; you all go ahead.”

“Um, Harry? Are they coming?”

“Yes? Yes. Is there a problem with that?”

“It’s just… Malfoy…” Ron grimaced. “Harry, it’s like 6th year all over.”

“Oh, Ron,” said Luna, “Harry’s always been like this about Draco, you know that.”
Harry blushed.

Pansy looked up. “Really? Only Draco’s always been like this about Harry.”

Blaise nodded. “Yeah; he’s hardly talked of anything else since first year.”

Now it was Draco’s turn to blush. “Pans!” he exclaimed. “Blaise!”

Harry shot him a speculative look, then turned to the Weasel.

“Ron. My home, my rules. If you don’t like it, you’re welcome to find another place to stay.”

Draco – and Mother and Father, he noticed – stared at Harry. Surely he wouldn’t kick out his best friend for them? But he seemed determined. Then, too, he chose them over his girlfriend. *Choose me over his girlfriend*, a little voice deep in Draco’s mind whispered. He shook his head. *This day just gets weirder and weirder.*

“Go on,” said Harry. He grabbed Luna as she bounced past. “‘Mione? Pans?”

“Yeah, Harry?”

“Give ’em a heads up for me, yeah? I don’t want to cause trouble.”


“She’s right, Harry.” Granger said, clearly trying not to laugh at Harry’s wounded expression. “We’ll do our best, though.” Pans nodded again.

Aunt Andromeda turned to Mother. “I’ll stay and help you get settled.” Severus rolled his eyes, but he stayed too. The others headed out, chattering madly.

Harry clapped his hands. “Right. Let’s get you settled, then. We’ll sort out shopping for whatever you need tomorrow; for now just borrow from us. We’ve sure to have something that fits each of you, between us.” He sent Draco a heated look, and Draco melted.

*To think that I’d ever look forward to wearing that git’s clothes…*

Harry gave them a quick tour of the house, showed them where the bathrooms were. They took turns showering, and Harry, Aunt Andromeda, and Severus provided clean clothes for each of them to wear. Father turned up his nose and sniffed when he saw the robes Severus had been prodded into laying out for him, but when Harry gave him a look he sighed and put them on, grudgingly admitting that they were “adequate.”

“Ready?” Harry asked brightly, when they were all gathered back in the entrance hall.

“Um, Harry?” Draco asked, “Where are we going?”

Harry took a deep breath, let it out slowly. “Just… trust me, yeah?”

“…Yeah.” Draco said, before Mother or Father could say anything. Father frowned, but Mother squeezed his hand and he nodded.

Aunt Andromeda bundled Teddy to her chest and clasped Mother’s hand. Severus rolled his eyes and grasped Father’s shoulder. Harry grabbed for Draco’s arm, but missed, his hand sliding down to Draco’s. Draco clasped Harry’s hand reflexively, then they both froze and stared at one another. Draco didn’t let go; he curled his fingers tighter around Harry’s. Harry squeezed his hand, blushing.
They apparated.
They arrived at... the Burrow?

“Harry? Draco? Why are you holding hands?” Granger’s incredulous voice broke the silence.

Harry, blushing as furiously as Draco knew he was, quickly let go. Draco felt like he’d been set adrift, and unconsciously drifted closer to Harry.

The Weaselette barged toward them, clearly on the warpath, but Mrs. Weasley bustled over and intercepted her before she could say more than a few words. “Harry. You’d better have a good reason for bringing them here.”

He sighed. “Just hear me out, Molly. Then if you say they have to go, I’ll go with them.”

“Oh, Harry… fine. Let’s hear it.”

“Someone burned down their manor. With them inside. I found them on their way to the ministry to report it, being attacked by a group of bloody cowards who ran when I challenged them.”

There were several gasps, and Draco realized that they’d attracted a crowd of Weasleys. He forcibly shoved down the sudden panic that threatened to overwhelm him when he found himself swarmed by gingers.

“Oh, you poor dears. Come in and let me get you some food.” Molly bustled off toward the kitchen, tutting to herself about people being unable to let the past stay in the past.

The Weaselette rounded on Harry, but he’d had a moment to collect himself, and swiftly took the wind from her sails. “Congratulations, Gin,” he gestured at Dean, who hovered at her elbow. “I hope he makes you happier than I could.”

She visibly softened. “Oh, well, all right. Better come in then.” She offered Draco a small smile, and he discovered that it was disturbingly easy to smile back.

They trailed after the Weaselette as she led them into the highly improbable structure that was home to the highly improbable Weasleys themselves. Harry captured Draco’s hand again, just before they passed the threshold, and the warmth that rushed through Draco at Harry’s touch gave him the courage to pass through the door with composure intact. Inside, it was surprisingly cheery, and though it couldn’t have been less like the Manor in appearance, Draco was instantly reminded of home.

He realized that it wasn’t the opulence or grandeur of the Manor he missed, but the comforting sense of home, of belonging, that wrapped him there. That he felt those same qualities here, in the maze-like warren of homely rooms, expanded wizard-space stuffed to bursting with clashing colors, oddments, curiosities, and off course, Weasleys – it eased the ache he hadn’t realized he’d been carrying since the Manor burned. He suddenly realized that it was the house that had burned – not the home. The home was the heart and spirit of the house, embodying its walls and columns and arches, but not constrained by them. It could be re-created somewhere else. Not at the Burrow – he wouldn’t go quite that far – but, perhaps, at Grimmauld Place. With Harry.

“Draco? You OK?”
He realized he’d been standing motionless in the entryway long enough that everyone else had moved on, leaving them alone. He allowed Harry to drag him further into the Burrow. “Yeah.” He smiled, realizing it was true. “Yeah, I’m OK – good, actually.”

Harry smiled back at him, looking slightly puzzled. “Care to tell me what that was about, back there?”

Draco considered. He did want to tell Harry – Merlin, that’s a new one – but it could wait. “Nah. Tell you later.” He echoed Harry’s words from earlier back to him.

Harry smiled. “‘Kay.” He tugged Draco into the fray.

Draco had never seen anything quite like the ruckus of a Weasley family gathering. He was surprised to find that he rather enjoyed it. As he found himself, some time later, gesturing grandly with a chicken leg as he argued with Luna and Ginny, Harry caught his eye. He rolled his eyes at Harry’s smirk, never breaking the thread of his argument. Harry could make fun of him later all he wanted. Draco was having fun – more fun than he’d had in a very long time – and he intended to enjoy every minute of it.

He wasn’t sure exactly when he made the switch to calling the others by their first names, but when half the people in the room were Weasleys, anything else just got awkward. He was relieved to note, when he glanced at them later, that Mother and Father seemed to have adjusted to what would have, not so long ago, been an impossible situation with gratifying, if somewhat baffling, ease. Though, he supposed, Father had always been good at going where the winds of favor blew, and right now, the forecast seemed to be dominated by Hurricane Weasley.

Fred was mentioned at some point, after the drinks were brought out. Everyone froze as the spectre of the war reared its ugly head. Then George stood – only a trifle unsteadily – and raised his glass. “I’d like to propose a toast!” he called out. “To the Malfoys!”

Draco saw his unease and apprehension mirrored on nearly everyone’s face, but no one moved to stop him. Draco hardly dared breathe as George stared into his glass, expression unreadable. After a tense moment, he looked up and smiled. “I know our two families have never gotten along,” he started, with a nod to Draco and his parents. “Hell, we’ve been feuding for centuries, and we fought on opposing sides for most of the war. But. It was your actions, at the end, Draco, and yours, Narcissa, and, yes, even yours, Lucius, that helped Harry end the war – and the Dark Lord – for good. So, I think – and I know Fred would say the same, if he were here – that if there’s anything we should take away from these last years of pain and war and loss, it’s that we should bury our pointless feuding with our dead, and extend our hands in friendship. So, in memory of Fred, my twin, the other half of my soul, I’d like to offer you my thanks, for the aid you gave Harry, and my friendship.” He walked toward Draco, hand extended.

Draco grasped it, shook it firmly, then gave in to impulse and hugged him. “I’m sorry for your loss,” he whispered in George’s ear. “Fred was a good man, and he didn’t deserve to die like that. I would be honored to call you my friend.” George was grinning at him when he pulled away, and Draco felt himself grinning stupidly back.

Mother clasped George’s hand and whispered in his ear as well, startling a laugh from him. Father didn’t smile quite so warmly as Draco and Mother had, but he shook George’s offered hand without hesitation, and offered a few words as well. When George stepped back, he grinned around the room, and yelled, “The Malfoys!” before tossing back his drink.

Draco waited only long enough for him to refill it before he raised his own glass, shouting, “To Fred,
who didn’t deserve to die in that stupid war, and to George, whose offer of friendship proves him to be a bigger man than any of us.”

Luna waggled her eyebrows at George as she drained her glass, and Draco nearly spit out his drink for laughing. Mother raised her own glass, staring into it thoughtfully. “To Harry, who has selflessly saved us all, time and again, and to the Weasleys, who have already proven themselves to be better friends than many of those I used to call by that name.”

Everyone turned to Father, who smirked, and said, “To the burying of idiotic feuds that should have been buried generations ago.”

And in the toasting and general merriment that followed, Draco felt the foundations of home being laid anew.

Later, someone suggested a friendly game of quidditch. The suggestion was met with cheers all around, and enough brooms and gear were quickly rounded up to outfit everyone who wished to play in a (mostly) full kit.

Even father was coaxed onto a broom to play chaser, to Draco’s shock, though he quickly retreated to “sit with the aged and leave the young folks to their daredevil stunts.”

When Draco looked down again, Father, Severus, and Arthur looked to be deep in discussion over some bizarre artifact that, knowing Arthur, was almost certainly muggle and probably dangerous. Father stuck out one pale, aristocratic finger and poked the thing. Draco winced, and then nearly fell off his broom when the thing spat sparks. Father did fall off his chair, trying to get away from it, and Severus nearly fell off his, laughing at him. Draco held his breath when Arthur reached out a hand to help Father up, but Father clasped it without hesitation, and clapped Arthur on the back once he’d been set back on his feet.

Mother, Aunt Andy (as she had instructed Draco to call her), Hermione, Luna, Fleur, and Molly were playing with Teddy and didn’t seem to notice the mishap, though Draco did see Mother smile warmly at Father, pride shining in her eyes, once Arthur had disappeared into the house to fetch more drinks. Father smiled sheepishly back at her.

Harry nudged his broom against Draco’s. “See?” he said, grin blinding in the falling dusk. “Nothing to worry about. Now, C’mon – last one to the snitch has to do anything the other says for the next week.”

Draco grinned back. “Anything? Oh, you’re on!” Together, they raced away, just two boys chasing the snitch, leaving the other players behind as they flew free through the air, egging one another on to wilder and more dangerous stunts, the thrill of friendly competition racing in their veins. Just as they’d always been meant to be.
Aether

Chapter Notes

Author's note: I'll be traveling for some doctor's appointments, coming up, and so won't have reliable internet. So, while there will certainly be another chapter or two, I won't be posting them until at least the first of June. Thanks in advance for your patience!

It was late by the time they said their goodbyes and apparated back to Grimmauld Place in unsteady groups, with the (relatively) sober taking the others side-along to avoid the risk of anyone splinching themselves. So late, that, by mutual unspoken agreement, they all stumbled off to bed, leaving the chatter (and remorse, for those who had drunk more than they ought) for the morning. Harry and Draco stumbled blearily up the stairs together, arms slung around one another’s waists – for balance, Draco told himself sternly, nothing more – and into Harry’s room. Where they stopped, wobbling slightly, and stared at the bed, singular, in the center of the room.

“Oh,” said Harry, frowning. “Um.”

Draco snorted. “Moving a little fast, aren’t we?”

Harry reddened. “Um. No. Yes. Um.” He scrubbed at his eyes. “Bloody hell, Draco, I forgot, OK? I’m sure we can find another bed for you without much trouble. He frowned vaguely around the room, as if he expected a second bed to be hiding behind the dresser, maybe, or in the closet.

Draco yawned, jaw cracking. “I’m sure there’s one somewhere. I am, however, far too tired to look for one.”

“I can transfigure one?”

Draco thought the questioning tone to Harry’s voice quite appropriate. “No, thank you. I don’t care to sleep in whatever mess either of us might transfigure at the moment.” He sighed theatrically. “No, Harry, I’m afraid I’ll just have to sleep in your bed.”

“Oh. Right. I’ll just sleep over there, then.” Harry waved vaguely at the opposite side of the room, and grabbed a pillow. He grabbed at one of the blankets, next, but overbalanced and nearly fell on the floor. He only escaped that fate because Draco had stepped forward to catch him.

Draco frowned down at Harry. “You’ll do nothing of the sort. Honestly, Potter. The bed’s big enough. We can share.”

Harry hesitated. “I – ”

“Oh, for Merlin’s sake, Harry. I don’t bite. Unless I’m asked.” He leered at Harry, and Harry reddened further. Draco sighed. “Just get in the bed. I won’t touch you without your permission, OK?”

He yawned again, and Harry grinned at him. His grin was spoilt, however, by the yawn that interrupted it. “Right,” Harry said. “On three?”

“Three,” Draco declared. He and Harry collapsed onto the bed together, in a tangle of limbs, and
were asleep before they’d finished sorting themselves out.

The house groaned in its sleep, rousing into a wakeful doze, readjusting itself to accommodate the newcomers into its wards, its walls, its floors. Boards creaked and settled as it shifted, breathing in their essences, tasting their magic, reshaping itself into their image. And as it settled back to sleep, it watched them all. And if any of them had thought to ask, this is what it would tell them:

Next door, in the girls’ room, Luna twirled lightly 'round the room, folding her clothes and stowing them neatly in the organization scheme only she understood. Pansy sprawled groaning across her bed. “Why did I drink so much?” She didn’t expect an answer; she asked this every night they’d been to the Burrow.

Hermione groaned sympathetically from the bed next to hers, yanking at her brush, which had become snarled in her hair. “I don’t know, but I’ll never drink again.”

Luna, who never drank more than a few sips, paused mid-twirl and smiled indulgently at them. “You seemed to enjoy it, at the time. Oh, Hermione, let me get that for you.” She floated over to the bed, and shoved at Hermione until she’d positioned her to her liking. She folded herself cross-legged behind her, gently disentangled the brush, and began rhythmically gliding it through the disheveled curls.

Hermione sighed. “Oh, Luna. That feels wonderful.”

Pansy snorted, then asked thoughtfully, “Why don’t you drink, Luna? I mean, right now I’m inclined to think you’ve the right idea, but, why don’t you?”

Luna tipped her head to the side, birdlike, pausing in her brushing to ponder the question. She hummed thoughtfully to herself. “I’m not sure, really.”

Pansy suddenly propped herself up on her elbows. “Oh, Luna,” she said worriedly, “I didn’t mean to pry – I know you’re been through things I can’t even imagine, and – ”

“It’s not that,” Luna laughed. “Anyway, it wasn’t so bad. And we all went through a lot – it was war, after all.”

Pansy made a disbelieving noise, but Luna spoke over her. “I think… I think the best way to describe it, that might make sense to you, is that it doesn’t change things for me, as much as it does for you.”

“That’s true,” Hermione said slowly, “you did drink a lot, that one time, and you didn’t really seem all that different.”

“No,” Luna said simply, turning back to her brushing, “and also yes. I mean, It was different, but not the same way I think it is different for you. It was like… like things shifted sideways, and when they settled, the picture was the same, but the colors had swapped. Sort of.” She frowned. “Actually, that’s not a very good explanation.” She hummed in frustration. “I think, what it comes down to in the end, is that I prefer the comfort of my own delusions to ones I might find in a bottle.”

Hermione twisted to look at her. “Oh, Luna,” she said, grabbing her hand, “I – that’s beautiful, and terrible too.” She frowned. “If I forget this, tomorrow, will you remind me? Because I think I understand you so much better now.”

“Yes,” Pansy agreed from her bed, “and I know I won’t remember.”
Luna made a noncommittal noise.

The House knew that, in the morning, neither of the other girls would remember the conversation. And Luna would never tell. They’d had this conversation, or some variation on it, every time they went drinking. And every time Luna answered differently, as if she were feeling her way toward the truth.

In the next room, the boys’ room, the conversation was not as deep – in fact, it was nonexistent. Ron, Neville, and Blaise, who’d drunk more, perhaps than anyone else, stumbled to their respective beds and collapsed on them, asleep almost before they landed.

Across the hall, Andromeda settled Teddy tenderly into his crib, then smiled at her sister. “Shall I transfigure you a bed, then?”

Narcissa grinned impishly at her. “Actually, Andy, I was wondering if I could just sleep with you tonight. It’s been far too long since we’ve had a good gossip.”

Andromeda laughed. “As always, Cissy, you read my mind. Climb in then – I’m dying to hear all about Lucius.”

They whispered and giggled long after the others were asleep, and the House wished for a moment that it could smile, for it remembered a time, not so very long ago, when two little girls would curl up together for gossip and giggles. It felt right to have them back again.

Next door to the sisters, Lucius Malfoy and Severus Snape stared at one another in horror. Try as they might, neither could manage to transfigure a bed that either would deign to sleep in.

“You shall just have to sleep on the floor,” Lucius declared unsteadily. “I’m quite sure I outrank you.”

Severus stared at him. “You don’t outrank me Lucius. That doesn’t even make sense. And, anyway, this is my room. I was here first. You will have to sleep on the floor.” He stamped his foot in annoyance.

Lucius bridled. “Malfoys do not sleep on floors.” He wobbled toward the bed with as much dignity as he could muster.

“What are you doing?” screeched Severus. “That is my bed. Lucius! What are you – get off!” He tugged on Lucius’ leg, sending both of them sprawling on the mattress in a heap.

They untangled themselves with difficulty, scowling, neither able to summon the energy to get up.

“We are never speaking of this,” Severus growled, “Ever.”

Lucius sniffed. “Agreed.”

They stared at one another for another moment, then began fighting over the pillows. They fell asleep abruptly, mid-scuffle, in a position that would, no doubt, cause them great embarrassment the next morning.

If the House could snicker, it would have, as it checked the wards one last time, and then settled back
to sleep.
Snakes

Chapter Notes

I'm Baaaaaack. :-) Miss me?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sunrise the next morning was spectacular, but in Number 12 Grimmauld Place, only Luna was awake to see it. She perched, legs curled under her, in her favorite window seat, as usual, wrapped in a violent orange afghan that she’d knitted herself and that enveloped her small frame like a fiery cloud. She clutched a mug of tea in her delicate hands. The steam rose around her face, wreathing her as the mist wreathed the hazy landscape outside her window.

Luna sipped her tea and watched as the world outside shifted into focus. She loved these moments, when the day was still so full of promise, when anything might happen. These were hers, these indistinct morning moments. No one else in the house ever rose early enough to see them, and it was easy to pretend that she was the only human in existence, watching the world as it first formed.

First came the trees, shadows at first as they swam through the slowly fading mist. They were still indistinct – could still be anything. Luna bit her lip and clutched her mug closer, dropping her nose to the rim to breathe the fragrant steam, flicking her trailing bangs away from the violet liquid just in time. Then the shadowy forms trembled, and the bones of the trees appeared. Luna relaxed. They were all there, right where they were supposed to be. She always worried that they wouldn’t be, and was always relieved when they were.

The mist cleared further, and the leaves and flowers began to fade in, color leaching into the pale outlines. As the world painted itself into existence outside her window, Luna smiled. She took one last sip of her tea and sighed happily, flinging the window open to invite the morning in.

When she was certain the world had reformed properly, and the birds began to sing, Luna took her empty mug and slipped into the kitchen to help Kreacher with breakfast. They worked in companionable silence, the ancient, stooped house-elf and the barefoot, waif-like girl, dancing lightly around one another, and soon delectable smells drifted through the house.

Teddy was the next to wake, impatient for morning, as babies often are. Andromeda and Narcissa soon glided down the stairs and into the kitchen, passing the exuberant child between them and exchanging yawns and smiles. Luna directed them to seats at the table, tapping it lightly with her wand to enlarge it as she danced by. She slid heaping plates in front of them and whisked Teddy away for a whirl about the kitchen.

“Thank you, Luna.” Andromeda smiled gratefully at her.

“Yes, thank you,” echoed her sister. “This is delicious.”

Next down the stairs were Hermione and Pansy, groaning and blinking.

“Salazar, it’s bright,” Pansy griped. “You need to work on that sobriety charm, ‘Mione.”

“I know,” Hermione groaned. “That’s the next thing I’ll do, once I can see properly.”
Luna waved them to their seats, Teddy perched comfortably on one hip, and slid each a steaming plate and a glass of something blue.

Hermione frowned blearily at her glass, setting the flecks floating in it gleaming as she lifted it into a beam of sunlight. “Um, Luna?” she asked hesitantly.

“Yes, ‘Mione?”

“What is this?”

Luna grinned at her. “Oh, it’s something Sev and I cooked up last week. It’s a hangover potion, mostly, with a bit of pepper-up, and some other things.”

“Why is it blue?” asked Pansy, eying her own glass suspiciously.

Luna grinned at her. “Because it’s pretty. And it makes it taste better. Now, drink up!”

Hermione lifted her glass, studied it dubiously, then shrugged and clinked it against Pansy’s. “Can’t be worse than that stuff George gave us last night. Cheers, Pans.”

Pansy nodded at her, and they downed the liquid together. “That…wasn’t half bad,” Pansy said thoughtfully.

“You and Severus might have something here,” Hermione added.

Luna grinned, and opened her mouth, but her reply was interrupted by the three boys who staggered down the stairs and then slumped at the table.

“Morning, Ron,” Hermione said brightly. The only response was a groan.

“Merlin, ‘Mione!” Neville whimpered, “Keep it down, will you? My head is killing me!”

“Drink up boys,” chirped Luna, delivering the three their own glasses of garishly bright potion.

“Um, Luna?” Pansy gestured at the glasses, frowning. Luna grinned and put a finger to her lips. Ron gulped his down, then screwed up his face as steam trickled out of his ears. Neville and Blaise were similarly affected.

“Merlin’s pants, Luna,” Ron croaked, “what is this? It’s vile!”

Hermione frowned. “What are you talking about, Ron? Mine was perfectly pleasant.” She picked up his glass, eying the bright green drops clinging to the rim.

Luna giggled. “Sorry, Ron, but it had to be stronger. You boys drank a lot more.” Then she caught Pansy’s eye and mouthed sobriety charm. Pansy snorted. Hermione, who’d caught the exchange, slapped a hand over her mouth to hide her giggles.

Blaise grimaced. “And we’re never doing that again!”

Luna grinned and swapped their empty glasses for heaping platters of food. “Eat up,” she advised. “It’ll mask the taste.”

Ron looked skeptical, but picked up a bacon-and-egg sandwich anyway. He chewed thoughtfully for a few seconds, then broke into a grin. “Hey! She’s right! Good going, Luna!”
Luna colored lightly at the praise, and ducked into the pantry before he found the broccoli hidden inside his sandwich. She doubted he would be as happy about that. Or the raisins. She cocked her head, frowning and chewing her lip. Perhaps raisins weren’t right for that sandwich. Now that she thought about it, she really ought to have used prunes.

She waited for the gagging to subside before braving the kitchen again.

The others were nearly finished with their breakfast when Severus and Lucius shuffled in, very carefully not looking at or touching one another. They were also looking rather rumpled.

“Miss Lovegood,” Severus said, as he dropped into a chair, “a glass of that potion, if you will. Not the green one,” he added, grimacing at the glasses in front of the boys.

Luna grinned. “Coming right up, Sev.”

Severus opened his mouth to protest, then closed it again, groaning, and dropped his head into his hands. “I hate you all.”

Lucius nodded emphatically, not even bothering to raise his head off his folded arms. Narcissa stroked his hair, biting her lip to hold back the giggles that threatened to escape.

Luna quickly delivered their drinks – blue, like Hermione and Pansy’s had been – followed by plates of food. They downed the drinks quickly, then tucked into the food.

After a few bites, Severus grimaced. “Miss Lovegood.”

“Yes, Sev?”

“How else am I to get you to eat your vegetables, Sev?” Luna asked, shaking her head. “I’ve never met anyone who avoids vegetables as passionately as you.”

Ron choked on his pumpkin juice. “Passionately?”

Luna and Severus ignored him. “I do not need to eat vegetables, Miss Lovegood. I am a grown man, and I should think I know how to take care of myself without you interfering.”

Luna hummed thoughtfully. “Your hair wouldn’t be so greasy if you ate more vegetables, Sev.”

“My hair is hardly – really?” The annoyance on Severus’ face melted into interest, and Luna grinned.

“Oh, yes. I should think a few weeks of eating vegetables would do wonders for your hair.”

Severus tugged at a lock of hair that even he would have to admit was greasy. “Well, I suppose I can try this mad scheme of yours.” He tried to sound bored and annoyed, but didn’t quite manage it.

Lucius stared at him in horror throughout the exchange. Narcissa caught Andromeda’s eye and grinned.
Meanwhile, in Harry’s room, Draco had just opened his eyes.

Chapter End Notes

To Be Continued... Don’t kill me! ;-)
Snails

Chapter Notes

So sorry for leaving you guys hanging for a week! I hope this chapter (somewhat) makes up for it.

Meanwhile, in Harry's room, Draco had just opened his eyes.

Draco opened his eyes to searing pain, sunlight lancing through a crack in the curtains. Everything was an agonizing, blinding white, and Draco worried for a panicked instant that the sun really was frying his eyes. He scrabbled blindly, trying to get away from the light, and smacked the other body lying next to him.

“Ow! What was that for?”

The other person sounded disturbingly like Harry Potter. Draco whimpered. Now he was having delusions, as well as blind.

“Draco?” the delusion asked, managing a convincing attempt at worry. Draco whimpered again. There was movement, then, muttered cursing and fumbling, and then the blinding light went away. Unfortunately, Draco’s head still throbbed, but at least his eyes were no longer in danger of burning.

Draco cracked one eye carefully open.

The first thing Draco saw was green. Green so brilliant and full of light that it was nearly blinding. Green like silent forest pools and bottomless oceans. Green like Potter’s eyes, only more intense.

Draco blinked, and realized that it wasn’t “like” Potter’s eyes – it was Potter’s eyes, more intense than usual because the thick lenses that normally obscured them were missing. And because Draco had never seen them this close before. Then, Potter blinked, shuttering his stunning eyes, and Draco felt himself released from their spell. He shoved violently away - or, tried to. Instead of moving, he found himself stuck fast, held in place by Harry’s arm and leg, thrown carelessly over him while he slept.

Potter pinned him with his gaze once more. “Going somewhere?”

Great. Now the delusions were visible as well as audible. Draco whimpered again.

The Potter-delusion rolled its eyes. Draco thought that his brain, if it insisted on plaguing him with these Potter-delusions, ought at least to make them as miserable as Draco currently was.

Draco snapped his fingers. He would ask one of the house-elves to bring him a headache potion. And one of Father’s extra-strength calming draughts – the ones he thought Draco and Mother didn’t know about. That ought to deal with the pesky Potter-delusion, which was most likely brought on by stress.

The familiar crack of house-elf apparition relaxed Draco slightly. He turned to the elf. “Nobby, bing me a headache potion. Also a –”

The ancient, disgruntled-looking house-elf looked down its nose at him. “I is not being Nobby, young Master Malfoy, and I is not bringing you a headache potion – ”

The Potter-delusion interrupted the house-elf. “Kreacher. Please bring Draco and I some of Luna and Sev’s new hangover potion.”

Kreacher glared for a moment, then relented. “Mistress Luna is having the headache potion prepared for Master Harry and Master Draco already. Kreacher is bringing the potion now.” He disapparated with a crack that was still reverberating around the inside of Draco’s skull when the house-elf returned, a glass of faintly steaming hazard-orange liquid in each hand.

“Thank you, Kreacher,” said the disturbingly calm and polite Potter-delusion, as he took the glasses. He drained the contents of the first glass in one go, grimacing as he did so, and then handed the other glass to Draco.

“It’s best to drink it as fast as you can, just in case Luna’s decided to try a bizarre new flavor combination. I really don’t know why Sev allows her to help him brew, but they both seem to enjoy it, so I suppose I can’t complain.” The color was returning to his cheeks, and his expression was growing alarmingly cheerful. “Go on, drink up.”

Draco eyed his glass dubiously. He certainly didn’t want to drink it, especially if it tasted as foul as it smelled. On the other hand, the Potter-delusion was looking better by the second, and Draco didn’t think he could handle that much cheerfulness, feeling as he did. Trying not to think too hard about what he was doing – not terribly difficult, when his brain felt like it was moving at a pace even a snail would balk at – he drank it down as quickly as possible.

Draco instantly felt the fog in his mind begin to clear, and he sighed in relief as the relentless pounding at his temples eased. He licked his lips experimentally, frowning as he concentrated on the complex combination of flavors. It wasn’t bad, exactly, he decided. Just… odd. Then he recalled the Potter-delusion’s words and blanched as he realized that he’d willingly drunk something concocted by Severus Snape (who he was almost certain was dead), and Luna Lovegood (who he was absolutely certain was a few carrots short of a bunch). He blanched still further when he realized that the Potter-delusion wasn’t a delusion at all, and that he was in bed with Harry Potter, who had a very intense look on his face as he watched Draco’s mouth. Draco realized that he’d been unconsciously licking his lower lip, trying to separate out the complex flavors in the hangover potion residue that lingered there, and blushed.

Harry tore his eyes away from Draco’s lip and studied him for a moment. Draco felt tiny under that penetrating gaze – a spark being studied by a sun. He wondered how the Weaselette – Ginny, he reminded himself, now that he was on a first-name basis with the Weasleys – how Ginny had stood it, being the focus of that intensity, as she must often have been, as the girlfriend of the Chosen One.

Then he remembered that he was the reason she wasn’t Harry’s girlfriend any longer – though whether she had ever ben Harry’s girlfriend, and not the Chosen One’s girlfriend, he couldn’t say. Nor could he say why the thought bothered him more than he cared to think about. He wondered, suddenly, exactly what she had meant, when she said “if you drop me for Malfoy, again.”

It was the “again” that bothered him most. Had Harry chosen him before, and he’d been too dense, or too wrapped up in important Death Eater business, to notice?

Snatches of the day before came back to him, then, and he recalled the Weasel – Ron – saying “It’s like sixth year all over again,” Luna adding “he’s always been like this about Malfoy,” and most of
all Harry’s hand, warm and solid in his own. He swallowed. He suddenly had a very good idea what Ginny meant.

“Draco?”

Harry peered at him questioningly, a shock of dark hair falling roguishly over his piercing green eyes – so much more intense without those glasses – as he leaned closer, studying him.

Draco realized he’d been so focused inward, he’d lost track of what Harry was saying. “What?”

Harry frowned. “How much did you drink last night?”

Draco winced, remembering. “Too much. Far too much. I don’t normally drink more than a bit of wine. Alcohol doesn’t agree with me.”

Harry nodded sagely. “That would seem to be a bit of an understatement.” He frowned. “Do you trust me enough to let me cast a sobriety charm on you?”

Draco shuddered. Sobriety charms were quite possibly worse than the hangover itself.

Harry laughed. “Not like that. Hermione’s modified one that works much better without the unpleasant side effects.” He grinned conspiratorially. “She says the original was invented by one of the founders of a muggle temperance society, and so had reason to make it as unpleasant as possible.”

Draco stared at him. “That’s just… wow. Wait – how does she know?”

Harry shrugged. “It’s Hermione. She read it in a book, of course. She was working on an improved version because she said she spends far too much time with people who are perpetually either drinking or recovering from drinking, and it was really an act of self-preservation. I think she also got tired of Ron using a hangover as an excuse to get out of his chores, since she’s the one who usually ends up doing them.”

Draco shook his head, deciding not to mention the house-elf.

“You don’t trust me?” Harry sounded sad, and Draco, alarmed at how much that bothered him, quickly replayed the past few minutes’ conversation in his head.

“Oh, no. I was thinking about something else,” he said quickly. “I mean, yeah, I trust you. Go ahead.” He cursed himself for the happiness that flared up when Harry smiled. Draco steeled himself, concentrating on not flinching when Harry pointed his wand at Draco’s head. Then Harry muttered under his breath, waving the wand in a complex series of loops, and Draco felt the rest of the fog lift from his brain. He grinned.

“Merlin, that’s some sobriety charm! I think I may have to kiss Hermione now.”

Harry looked so crestfallen that Draco had trouble maintaining a straight face. “On the other hand,” he said thoughtfully, “she’s not here, and you are. Hmm.” He looked Harry up and down exaggeratedly. “Yes… I suppose you’ll do.”

Harry only had time to gape at him before Draco, hurrying, before he lost his nerve, leaned in and kissed him.

For one terrifying instant he was afraid Harry wouldn’t respond, that he’d made a horrible mistake, that Harry didn’t actually want him that way, no matter what the others said, and he would have to
be quick to obliviate Harry before he could turn on him…

And then Harry was kissing him back, and Draco’s world narrowed to the kiss, and the man – Harry Potter, who wasn’t a delusion at all – kissing him back.

When they finally made their way into the kitchen, shyly holding hands, it was to discover their friends engaged in a lively, and not entirely friendly, debate.

“Harry!” Ron wailed, as Luna brought them heaping plates of food, “Lucius is trying to make us go shopping.”

Harry nodded his thanks to Luna. “Well,” he said, around a bite of bacon, “I did promise to take the Malfoys to Diagon Alley today to get whatever they need.”

Ron dropped his head to the table with a resounding thunk.

Hermione rolled her eyes. “Really, Ron!”

Draco snorted, wondering what madness had claimed him, as he already found the chaotic kitchen more homey than the ornate-but-austere dining room at the manor could ever be.

Harry caught his eye and grinned. “You don’t have to come with us, Ron,” he said gently, failing to hide a smile. “I have to go, since the Malfoys can’t leave the house without me – yet – but you don’t have to.”

Ron perked up. Hermione rolled her eyes and cuffed him lightly. “Idiot,” she said fondly.

“Well, I’m coming,” Luna said. “I need to get a few things for our potion.” She glanced at Severus – very much alive, as Draco was pleased to note – who rolled his eyes.

“You are most certainly not going to buy potions ingredients without me, Miss Lovegood, or we’re all liable to find ourselves in pieces. I’ll just have to join you.” He sighed a long-suffering, put-upon sigh.

Luna winked at Draco, and he nearly burst out laughing at how neatly she manipulated Severus. He had to cough, pretending to choke, to cover it.

“So,” Harry said, shoving away his empty plate, “Diagon Alley, then?”

“So it would seem,” drawled Severus.

“Give me a minute to grab my things!” Luna tossed over her shoulder, as she bounced up the stairs.

“All right,” Harry announced. “Everyone going to Diagon Alley, meet in the entrance hall in ten minutes.”

Under cover of the hubbub that swirled around them, as everyone rushed off to get ready, Draco saw Harry lean over to Hermione. “You’re in charge here, yeah?”

She grinned. “Don’t worry. I’ve got it all planned out. We’re going to tackle that garden Luna and Sev have been lobbying for.”

Harry raised an eyebrow. “And if Ron objects?”

“Well, then he’ll find himself having a little chat with Walburga about converting that room to a potions lab. We can’t keep using the dining room.”
Harry saluted her. “Excellent work, sarge. I leave them in your capable hands.” He pulled Draco to his feet. “Come on – I need to grab a few things, and we don’t want to keep the others waiting.”
“Right,” said Harry, when they’d arrived in Diagon Alley. “Where to first?”

Harry, Luna, Severus, Draco, and Mother all turned automatically to Father, who preened at the attention. “I suggest we stop at Madam Malkin’s first. I don’t know about the rest of you, but I desperately need new clothing.” He glanced down distastefully at the robes he wore. “Severus’ taste in clothing is atrocious. We should get him new clothes as well, and then burn these, so no one else need be traumatized by them.”

Severus bristled. “I’ll have you know that I like my clothes.”

Luna patted his arm gently. “You must admit that you could do with a bit of color, Sev.”

“I will do no such thing! In fact – ”

Luna shook her head. “Come on, Sev. Mulpepper’s first. We’re running quite low on Murtlap, you know, and we need…”

Their words faded as Luna dragged him away.

Draco snorted. He knew he should probably be disturbed by the way Severus allowed the mad girl to drag him around, but he really just thought it was cute. “Merlin, I’m turning into a Gryffindor,” he muttered.

“No, I think you’re skipping straight to Hufflepuff.” Harry smirked at Draco’s horrified expression, linking their arms. “Shall we?” he asked brightly. “…Dracopuff,” he added in a whisper.

Draco smacked his shoulder, more amused than annoyed at the nickname – and if that’s not proof, I don’t know what is – but left their arms interlocked. “And you are turning into quite the Slytherin.”

Harry smirked again. “Well, I was nearly sorted into Slytherin, you know?”

Draco stopped walking, dragging Harry to a stop as well. “You’re joking.”

“Nope. I had to convince the Sorting Hat to put me somewhere else.”

Draco snorted, but resumed walking. “You convinced the Hat that its first choice was wrong, just because I was a git to you when we first met? Harry, I’m touched.”

Now it was Harry’s turn to smack him. “Oh, shut up. It wasn’t just because of you.” He paused. “But, yeah. Mostly, I guess.” He blushed, and Draco grinned.

They walked in silence for a bit, and then Harry said pensively, “I wonder what it would have been like, if I’d accepted your hand that day on the train, and let the Hat put me in Slytherin, like it wanted.”

“Well, obviously we would have been best friends.” Draco frowned. “But not with Hermione. Or Ron. And that could have been disastrous. Yeah… I think it’s good things worked out the way they did.”

He nudged Harry’s shoulder. “I did really want to be your friend though, that day. I just didn’t know how.”
Harry nudged him back. “I know. And I think I would have been much more receptive to it, except you reminded me of my horrid cousin, Dudley, who bullied me my entire childhood.”

“But we’re friends now, right? Even though I was so horrid to you?”

Harry grinned. “Don’t look so worried. It’s not a good look for you. And yeah, we’re friends now. I wasn’t that nice to you, either.” There was a brief pause, and then, “Ooh… look! There’s the newest Nimbus.” They stopped to stare covetously for a few minutes.

Draco turned then, a gleam in his eye. “Do you think…”

Harry’s eyes held a similar gleam. “Oh, yes. I definitely think.” He glanced at Mother and Father, who were waiting for them – Mother more patiently, as usual. “After Madam Malkin’s, though, or your father might kill us.”

“But we are definitely getting them.” Draco had to be certain.

“Oh, yes. We are absolutely getting them.”

They strolled back to Mother and Father, speculating about the new broom’s speed and agility all the way.

So Draco Malfoy and Harry Potter ambled happily down Diagon Alley, arm in arm, with Mother and Father trailing regally behind. They drew quite a few stares, but Harry ignored them, so Draco resolved to ignore them as well. It was easier than he’d thought it would be, with the warm presence of Harry by his side, whispering snarky commentary in his ear.

They strolled into Madam Malkin’s, deep in a friendly argument about Quidditch.

“T’ll be with you in a moment,” called Madam Malkin, back turned as she fitted another customer’s robes.

After a few minutes, she turned to them, mouth full of pins, took one look at Draco and his parents, and gasped, scattering the pins on the ground at her feet. Harry rushed forward to help. “Here, let me get those for you.” He deftly gathered the pins, tucking them into the pincushion sitting on the counter, and then took her arm, guiding her gently to a chair.

“Thank you, dear boy,” she said absently, patting his arm as she stared distrustfully at Draco and his parents. Draco shuffled his feet guiltily. Then Madam Malkin looked up at Harry, standing patiently beside her, and gasped. “Oh! My goodness! You’re – ”

Harry smiled disarmingly. “Yes. Harry Potter, vanquisher of dark lords, at your service.” He sketched an elaborate bow, and Draco snorted.

Madam Malkin blushed and stammered like a first year, and Draco had to hand it to Harry – he certainly knew how to defuse a situation with charm. Draco knew him well enough to know that that was the only reason Harry ever pulled out his charm, since it clashed with his Gryffindor honesty.

“What can I do for you, Mister Potter?” she asked, a bit too starry-eyed for Draco’s liking. “I haven’t seen you in here since – well, it’s been years, anyway. Would you like to see our latest designs?”

Draco looked Harry over again, this time focusing on his clothing. It was true, he realized. Harry probably hadn’t bought new clothes in years. Draco grinned to himself. Well. They were in a clothing shop. He would just have to convince Harry to get new clothes, too. And he knew just how to do it…
“Oh, no,” Harry said, “Actually, it’s the Malfoys that need new clothes.” He waved Draco over.

“You’re with them?” Madam Malkin gasped. “But – but Mister Potter! Surely you know what they are?”

Harry’s face closed off instantly, and his voice, when he replied, was hard and cold. “What they are, Madam Malkin, is a family whose Manor was burned to the ground with them inside it. They are staying with me, and are currently wearing borrowed clothing.” He glared at her. “So, if you can manage to set aside your prejudice for a few hours, we’re here to buy a complete wardrobe for each of them. If you can’t, then we’ll have to take our considerable business elsewhere.”

She blanched at the ‘our,’ and Draco thought suddenly of what would happen to her business if it got around that she’d slighted Harry Potter enough that he’d chosen not to shop there, and had to stifle a smile. He found he quite liked this Harry, who seemed to have embraced his Slytherin side, since the war.

Madam Malkin seemed to have come to the same conclusion. “No, no,” she said hurriedly. “No need for that. Come here, young Mister Malfoy, and let me measure you. I believe you’ve grown since you were last here.

Draco stepped up on the pedestal she indicated, and inspiration struck. He looked into the mirror, meeting the reflection of Harry’s eyes. “Hogwarts, too?” He asked innocently.

Harry’s eyes flashed understanding. “Yes.” He walked slowly forward until he stood directly in front of Draco.

Draco swallowed, throat suddenly dry as Harry focused on him. He held out his hand, willing it not to shake. “I bungled it last time, but, friends?” He held his breath as Harry paused, drawing the moment out, face inscrutable.

Then Harry’s face cleared, and he grinned. “Friends,” he said, shaking Draco’s hand firmly.

They stared into one another’s eyes until Madam Malkin cleared her throat. “Well. That was…” She shook her head and indicated the pedestal next to Draco’s. “Mister Potter, hop up here, please. I’ll get you fitted next.”

Harry turned, surprised. “Oh, but I’m not – ”

Draco grinned at him. “Oh, but you are. I’m sorry Harry, but if I’m going to be seen with you, you’ll have to have more fashionable clothes. A Malfoy does not date slobs.” He stuck his nose in the air, much as he had all those years ago, and held his breath, wondering if he’d gone too far.

Harry snorted. “Right.” He jumped lightly on the pedestal. “For our first date, we’re going to Fortescue’s once we leave here, and you’re going to buy me a scoop of every flavor. And try every one with me. And then we’re going to visit George.”

Draco groaned, but it was mostly for show. He looked Harry up and down, letting his gaze linger. “All right. But only if you get an entire new wardrobe and let me pick it out.”

Harry grumbled. “Fine.”

“Good.”

A delicate cough interrupted them. They both turned to see Father, brow raised sardonically. “Are you two quite through? Only I’d like to get out of these horrid robes sometime this century.”
Harry and Draco grinned at one another. Madam Malkin shook her head and returned to her measurements. “I’ll have their measurements in just a moment, Mister Malfoy, and then I’ll get you and your wife’s while these two choose styles and colors.”

Draco cleared his throat. “You mean, while I choose styles and colors.”

Harry frowned. “Hey! What about me?”

“I suppose you can assist me.”

Harry snorted. “Of course, Draco. Anything you want.”

Madam Malkin snapped her fingers, jotting something down on a small pad. “All right, you two, take your flirting over there, please.” She pointed to a cozy corner with plush seats and several thick notebooks on a small table. “All the latest designs and color samples are in those notebooks.”

Harry nodded and leapt lightly to the ground, offering a hand to Draco. “Come on, Dracopuff.”

Father shook his head as Harry tugged on Draco’s arm. “Dracopuff?” he mouthed, horrified. Draco shrugged as he allowed Harry to pull him away. Mother smiled indulgently at him, then stepped lightly onto the pedestal, dragging Father with her.

Draco tried to sit in the seat next to Harry, but Harry tugged harder, pulling Draco into his lap.

“Oof,” said Draco, surprised. “Budge up, then.”

Harry shifted slightly, and Draco squeezed into the chair beside him and then snuggled against him. “All right, assistant. Hand me that book.” He pointed to the top book in the pile.

Harry rolled his eyes, but handed it to him. “All the flavors.”


Harry groaned, but bent his head over the book beside Draco, and soon they were arguing passionately about colors and fabrics.
They were still arguing over colors when Mother and Father joined them. Mother plucked the sample book from Draco’s hand. “Draco, darling,” she said, “I’m sure Harry knows what colors look best on him.”

Draco scowled. “But, that’s just it! He refuses to get anything in this color,” he jabbed at the book, “and he won’t tell me why!” He raked his hand through his hair in frustration.

Mother pursed her lips, studying the samples. “It is a lovely color,” she conceded, “and it matches your eyes, perfectly, Harry.”

“That’s the problem!” Harry exploded. “I refuse to wear anything that is *Avada Kedavra green*!”

Draco stared at him, mouth agape. *Slytherin* green he’d expected. But, *Avada Kedavra* green?

Mother stared too, visibly nonplussed, which Draco had seen only a handful of times in his life. “Harry, dear,” she said, frowning slightly, “your eyes are most definitely *not* Av—Killing Curse green.” Her voice hesitated for the barest fraction of a second, and Draco only saw the slight tremble in the hand that suddenly clutched at her skirts because he was looking for it.

Harry said nothing, but his face took on a mulish expression and a muscle twitched in his jaw as he clenched it.

Mother leaned toward him. “Harry. Who has been telling you such nonsense?”

“Everyone, OK?” Harry shouted. “I don’t remember who said it first, but now everyone says it.”

“Skeeter,” Draco said, gritting the words out between clenched teeth. “It’s just her style, the coward.”

Harry stared at him. “Draco, you used to feed her lies about me.”

Draco looked at the floor, shuffled his feet.

The silence stretched out, grew taut, expectant.

“I’m sorry, OK?” Draco yelled, when he could no longer stand it. Madam Malkin looked up from her sewing to glare at him. He forced his voice to be quieter. “I just… I was jealous. I had everything; you had nothing. But… you had everything I wanted.”

Harry was staring intensely at him, green eyes—*Slytherin* green—luminous. “What did you want, Draco?” he breathed.


Draco paused, cleared his throat. He could stop there, he knew. Those were all perfectly plausible reasons; they were even all true. But none of them were the *real* reason he’d been so cruel to Harry. And, suddenly, Draco was desperate to share it—his most closely guarded secret. He needed Harry to hear it— to *know*.

“But, mostly,” he said softly, taking Harry’s hand, staring into his eyes, “mostly, what I wanted was...
you. It’s always been you.”

Harry smiled, squeezed his hand. “Me, too.”

Madam Malkin cleared her throat and smiled down at them from where she stood beside their chair. “I just wanted to apologize to you all,” she said. “You are… not at all what I expected.” Her eyes turned misty. “And, I also wanted to tell you boys that I remember you, from that first day. And that your little re-enactment of it earlier was the sweetest thing I have seen in a very long time.”

Father, who’d been looking a bit lost, gaped at her, then turned swiftly to Draco. “You met Harry Potter. Before Hogwarts even started. And you Alienated him? Why didn’t I know about this?”

Mother placed a hand on his wrist. “Lucius, dear. Calm down. You know it’s not good for your nerves to get this worked up.” She turned to Madam Malkin, tapped the book that rested in her lap. “I believe that I am ready to place my order, now.

Madam Malkin beamed. “Wonderful! Why don’t you come over here and I’ll write it down. Oh, and bring the sample book, please.”

“Come along, Lucius.” Mother rose gracefully from her chair and glided smoothly after Madam Malkin, dragging Father after her. She winked at them as she sailed past.

Harry turned to Draco and sighed. “Are they really not the same green as the Killing Curse?”

Draco smiled grimly. “They’re really not. And I should know.” He could see it now, that sickly green. Like in his dreams…

Harry, familiar, now, with Draco’s panics, pulled Draco into his arms, tucked his head beneath his chin, and whispered in his ear. “Shh. It’s OK, Draco. I’m here. It’s over. I’m here.” Then he added something new. Smushed in the middle of reassuring ‘It’s OKs,’ and ‘I’m heres,’ Harry snuck an entirely unexpected ‘I love you.’

Draco’s eyes snapped open, panic forgotten. “You do?”


Draco snorted. “I love you too. Git.”

They grinned at one another. Harry pulled Draco back into his arms, whispered, “you can order the green, so long as you also order that blue that I liked.”

Draco nodded easily. It was a lovely blue, and would look stunning on Harry. He’d been planning to order it, anyway. “OK.”

Harry held up one finger. “Wait a minute; I’m not done. You also have to order that other blue I liked for yourself. And… one in that lovely Gryffindor red.”

Draco groaned.

“Oh, come off it. You will look absolutely smashing in that red, and you know it.”

Draco laughed. “All right. Yes, I’ll order the blues, and green, and red.” He smirked. “And, yes, I’ll look absolutely smashing.”

Harry cuffed him lightly. “Come on, then. Let’s go order. I’ve a feeling your father will be less prickly once he’s had lunch.”
Draco looked at Father’s scowl and decided that Harry was probably right.

Draco groaned. Lunch had been very good, no matter what his father muttered about ‘plebian fare’ – not that that stopped him from eating it – but Draco was regretting eating so much, when faced with the array of flavors at Fortescue’s.

“Do we really have to try them all?” Draco asked, without much hope. “I mean, how different can ‘chocolate almond’ and ‘chocolate pecan’ really be?”

Harry smirked at him. “You’ll see. And, yes; we really do have to try them all.” He waved Draco toward the booths in the corner, cheerfully upholstered in bright yellow vinyl. “Go and find a table. I’ll bring the ice cream.”

Draco sighed. “Right. Come on, then, Mother, Father.”

Mother followed placidly in his wake, ignoring the whispers of the other patrons. Father glowered at everyone, but said nothing.

“I’m sorry,” Harry said, as he plopped a giant tray on the table. “I forgot about what people would say.”

Draco shrugged it off, much more interested in the array of tiny cups on the tray. “Nothing I’m not used to. In Merlin’s name, Harry, what is that?”

Harry grinned. “This is ‘Florian’s Folly.’ One sample cup for every flavor he sells.” He held up a tiny spoon, handed its twin to Draco. “It’s meant to be shared by a couple, so I ordered two – ah. There’s the other.”

Florian Fortescue himself delivered the second tray to their table. “Good to see you again, Harry,” he said. Then he smiled at Draco’s parents. “You are looking as lovely as ever, Narcissa. And you, Lucius, why, I don’t believe you’ve aged a day.”

Father perked up at that, and Harry hid a smile behind his hand. Draco did his best not to snigger, but gave it up as hopeless and turned it into a marginally believable cough at the last second. Mother slanted him a look, but the corners of her mouth twitched. Father was too busy preening to notice.

They still had an hour to kill before they could pick up their orders – Madam Malkin had promised that two complete sets of clothing would be ready that afternoon, and she’d owl them the rest – when they finally staggered out of Fortescue’s.

“Merlin,” Draco groaned. “Why did I let you talk me into that?”

Harry grinned. “Do you still think there’s no difference between chocolate almond and chocolate pecan?”

“No; you’ve certainly enlightened me as to the multitude of possibilities of ice-cream flavors, but I don’t think I’ll need to eat for a week!”

“Oh, I dunno. I bet you’ll change your mind, once we take our new brooms for a spin.”

Draco’s eyes gleamed. “Oh! I’d nearly forgotten! We have to get our brooms!”

Father frowned at him. “Draco, I hardly think – ”
Narcissa nudged him. “Oh, let the boy live a little, Lucius. I think he’s earned it.”

Harry dug through his pockets, frowning. “We’ll have to go to Gringotts first, though. I don’t have nearly enough gold on me to pay for two Nimbuses.” He took Draco’s arm, steering him toward the imposing façade of Gringotts, looming over Diagon Alley.

Draco swallowed. “I’m not sure that’s such a good idea – ”

“Nonsense. You’re with me.”

Draco bit his lip when they reached the intricately carved doors. He had a bad feeling about this.

The goblins treated them with the same cold indifference they always had, and Draco began to hope. Maybe he was overreacting. Then they stepped through the door of the Malfoy vault, and his jaw dropped.

It was empty. Father stopped in the doorway, stunned. For a long moment, no one moved, and then Father strode through the vault, opened the door to the inner vault. That one was cleaned out, as well. They all were. Father threw open door after door, long after Draco had accepted it. The entirety of the vast Malfoy family wealth had vanished.

“Come on,” Harry said quietly. “Let’s get enough from mine to pay for everything, and then we’ll see if we can find out who did this.”

Draco was afraid for a moment that Father was going to explode, but in the end, after a few tense moments, he deflated and slumped dejectedly after them.

Draco closed his eyes when they reached the Potter vault. *What if it’s been emptied too, because he’s helped us?*

He opened them when Harry gasped. Then he blinked. Harry’s vault was, quite literally, overflowing. Draco thought he recognized a few of the treasures, but he couldn’t be sure.

Harry turned to the goblin waiting beside the door. “What is the meaning of this?”

The goblin stared impassively at him, then produced a quill and parchment. “Sign here.”

“For what?”

The goblin eyed him over its small gold-framed glasses. “For the transfer, of course.”

“Transfer?” Harry sounded, if possible, even more confused than Draco felt.

The goblin sighed. “For the transfer of the Malfoy vaults to one Mister Harry Potter,” he read, pointing to a line near the top of the scroll. “Authorized by one Kingsley Shacklebolt, Minister of Magic. Sign, please.”

“What?” Father spluttered. Mother aimed a swift kick at his ankle, glaring at him, and he subsided, though Draco knew it would only be until they were alone again.

Harry plucked the scroll from the goblin’s fingers, scanned it, then signed, muttering to himself, “Good old Kingsley.”

The goblin studied his signature, signed next to it with a flourish, and departed with a sniff.

Father closed the door behind it, then whirls on Harry. “How *dare* you, you impertinent little – ”
Mother jabbed him in the ribs with her elbow, and he squawked. “Lucius. Dear,” she hissed. “Do you really want to antagonize and insult the man who now controls your funds? The man who is dating your son?”

“But, but…” Father heaved a put-upon sigh, but subsided. Mother smiled sweetly at him.

Harry grinned at her. “I think I quite like you, Narcissa,” he said. She preened. Father sulked. Then Harry sobered, leveled a solemn look at Father. “I hope you realize,” he said, “that Kingsley probably just saved your entire fortune by doing this. He knows that I – unlike some people – will give it all back once we’ve sorted out the less-than-savory pockets of the old Ministry. It will take time, but you’re welcome to stay with me until then. And I promise not to touch one sickle of your money.”

Father had the decency to blush. “Well… Oh, alright. I apologize. I am not used to trusting others.”

Harry raised an eyebrow at that. “No, I suppose not. Truce?” He held out a hand. Draco held his breath. Mother tightened her fingers on Father’s arm.

Father sighed. “Truce,” he said, clasping Harry’s hand.

Harry’s grin was blinding. “Right. Let’s go see about withdrawing enough to pay for the clothes and those brooms. From my money,” he hastened to add, with a sidelong glance at Father.

Mother smiled at him. “I would hope, Harry, that you would at least take the money for our clothes from the Malfoy funds. It would be only fair, after all.”

Then she, Harry, and Draco swept from the room. Father followed, grumbling under his breath.
So… this chapter was supposed to be called “Spice” and feature Luna, Sev, & Lucius, board games, and hilarity.

But.

As I posted a few days ago, the mass shooting of LGBTQ+ people at Pulse in Orlando, Florida really devastated me – even though I live on the other side of the country, in California, and didn’t know anyone at the club that night. It prompted me to ‘come out’ as a member of the Queer community – to friends, family, and you, my lovely fanfic readers.

I’m not quite ready to jump into the happy fluff – although your comments and the love you have shown me has been tremendously helpful in easing some of the pain. I’m still hurting, but I’m ready to move forward again. So, thank you. Thank you so very much. And if you will permit me the conceit, I would like to ease back into this story with a slightly-less-fluffy chapter. And then, I promise, we’ll get back to the usual fluffy goodness.

Thanks – you guys rock.

They stood around the television that Arthur had only just managed to convince to turn on. For a roomful of normally boisterous people, they were silent. So silent, that when Harry shifted his weight to ease the pressure on his knee, wounded in the war and never quite healed properly, the resulting pop sounded loud as a firecracker.

Draco wasn’t the only one to jump. He stood next to Harry, hand clamped firmly over his lips, as if to hold in a scream. His eyes were wild, panicked, as they watched the people crying on the screen. As they watched the stretchers being carried out. The blood. So much blood. Blood. And screams.

Draco whimpered between his fingers, and Harry tightened the arm clamped securely round his waist.

The news anchor came back on, then, prattling on about something muggle that none of them – not even Hermione – seemed quite to understand.

Arthur, no doubt disappointed at the way his triumphant – and quite clever – feat of engineering had soured, moved a hand hesitantly toward the knob.

“I’ll just turn it off, then, shall I?” he murmured.

Then the picture on the screen changed.

“Wait!” Draco yelped.

Arthur paused.
“What is it?” Harry asked gently.

“Turn it up,” Draco ordered, ignoring him.

Arthur turned the knob, and the anchor’s voice filled the room. “We’ve just received word that this man is the individual who carried out this horrific attack, and then turned his gun upon himself.”

A grainy photograph appeared behind her.

“Witnesses say he was marked with a sinister-looking snake and skull tattoo on his left arm. The authorities are speculating that this was a gang-related tattoo, and that this could have been a terror—”

Arthur flipped a switch, and the screen went dark. “Well, that’s enough of that, I think.”

Harry turned to Draco, to ask why he’d had Arthur keep it on. He stopped. Draco was frozen, staring blankly at the wall behind the television. His face was deathly white, and his eyes were wild, unseeing.

“Draco?” he breathed, squeezing his boyfriend’s hand. It hung limply, was cold against Harry’s.

Then Draco shuddered. “That was…” he turned helplessly to Lucius.

“Yes,” Lucius said grimly. “That was Gregson.”

Draco whimpered again.

Harry looked back and forth between the two Malfoys in confusion. “Gregson?”

“A Death Eater,” Lucius said. “One of the blood-thirstiest. Charged with creating havoc and sowing discord in the muggle world.”

“He was doing what Voldemort wanted,” Draco whispered. “What I thought I would have done, if not for you.”

He turned a burning gaze on Harry.

“Draco…” Harry didn’t know where to start.

Luna stepped forward, drew Draco gently into a hug. “You can’t take the blame for his actions, Draco. You made your own choices.”

Hermione spoke up then. “There must be something we can do…”

Luna brightened. “Of course there is. We’ll celebrate.”

Everyone turned to stare at her. “Luna…”

“Oh, honestly. Don’t any of you know what this month is?” She took in the puzzled looks, the shaking heads, and rolled her eyes. “It’s Pride month.”

Harry raised an eyebrow. “And that means…”

“That means, we’re going to a celebration. You’re lucky – there’s one quite close.”

Snape stared at her. “You’ve been to one of these… celebrations?”
“Oh, yes. Mother and I used to go all the time. They’re quite lovely.” She paused to look him up and down, considering. “Of course, we’ll have to dress the part.”

Snape edged behind Lucius as Luna beamed at him. “You present the biggest challenge, of course, Sev, but I’m sure I’ll think of something.”

“That, Miss Lovegood, is what I am afraid of.”

Luna ignored him, skipping over to drag Hermione, Pansy, and Ginny off the couch. Come on, then. You, too, Molly. Oh, and Narcissa and Andy, you’d better come too. We’ve work to do if we’re going to make these boys presentable.” The parting look she shot them was rather terrifying.

Harry found, later, that his fears paled in comparison to Luna’s plans. After he and the others had sat around for a while, staring anxiously at anything but one another, Luna skipped back down the stairs to fetch them. She looked much the same as usual, though she’d added quite a few necklaces, feather earrings, and a few wispy shawls to her outfit. She grabbed Snape and hauled him off. The other girls each fetched one of the boys, and whisked them away to “get them ready,” whatever that meant.

Harry and Draco ended up being dragged away by Hermione, which Harry decided was probably the best outcome he could have wished for. Hermione instructed them to stand with their backs to one another, and transfigured a curtain that she hung between them. She then whipped back and forth, transfiguring their clothing, putting… things… on their hair and faces, and muttering to herself. When she finally nodded and pronounced them “acceptable,” turning away to assume her own costume, Harry was exceedingly tired of the whole process. He turned to Draco, ready to commiserate, but the words died on his lips.

Draco was fucking gorgeous. Hermione had styled his hair, which was getting long again, so that it fell across his face in a way that Harry could only describe as dead sexy. She’d outlined his eyes in kohl, so that they popped startlingly. His hair was a shocking electric blue, with silver streaks that shimmered. Harry glimpsed an earring dangling from one ear, as Draco tossed his head and his hair shifted. Hermione had transfigured Draco’s robes into muggle clothes – black pants with chains and ripped knees, and a silver top with black fishnet sleeves. Draco smirked at him, and Harry realized his mouth was hanging open. He closed it with a snap.

“You don’t look too bad, yourself,” Draco said, sauntering toward him. Harry gulped, and tried not to back up.

Draco laughed, then gripped Harry gently by the shoulders and turned him toward a mirror. Harry’s jeans were tighter, now, dark, with what he assumed were stylish rips. His eyes, too, were lined with kohl, and his shirt was the same startling green. Hermione had taken his glasses, giving him a pair of contacts instead, which he wasn’t fond of in general, but supposed he could wear for one evening. They looked good together.

Hermione appeared, then, and they both stared.

“Oh, knock it off,” she said, blushing. But she couldn’t hide her smile as she turned away.

They trooped down the stairs to meet the others, and they all stood and stared at one another for a bit.

Snape’s transformation was the most dramatic, Harry thought faintly. Luna looked quite pleased with herself. Snape looked resigned. Lucius gaped at him.

Ginny giggled madly. “He has pink hair”
Luna sighed. “We did talk about this.”

“I know,” Ginny gasped, “but I didn’t think you’d actually manage to do it. I mean… it *sparkles*.”

Snape folded his arms and stared determinedly at the ceiling. “If you are quite done, Miss Weasley, I would like to get this mad venture over with.”

He turned and stalked out the front door. Harry privately thought that the gesture lacked a certain *something* without Snape’s robes snapping behind him. In dark jeans, much like Harry’s, a black shirt with fishnet sleeves, and a sleeveless denim jacket covered in patches, kohl-lined eyes and earring like Draco’s, and, of course, the shocking bubble-gum colored hair… he was actually kind of hot. Harry hoped the thought didn’t show on his face, or he would never live it down.

As soon as they arrived, Harry understood. He looked at Luna, at Draco, and they smiled at one another. “I told you,” she mouthed. He just nodded.

It was overwhelming, really. The muggles were packed into the square, all of them dressed just as colorfully as they were. They wept and laughed and spoke and mourned the lives that were lost, while celebrating the lives those people had lived. Celebrating their own lives. And the odd combination of grief and joy lightened Harry’s heart as nothing had, since the war, and he was profoundly grateful to Luna, who, in her odd way, was helping them all heal.

He turned to her, to tell her, and ended up laughing instead. For there was Luna, dancing quite madly, arms raised to the sky and the rain that had started to fall, colorful shawls and turquoise-streaked hair floating around her. And beside her, looking like he didn’t quite know how he’d gotten into this mess, was Snape. As he watched, Luna grabbed Snape’s hands, and twirled him, quite unwilling, into a swirling, spinning mass of people who’d had a similar idea to Luna. And when Luna and Snape emerged, and he saw Snape smiling broadly for the first time, when Snape threw back his head and laughed at something Luna whispered in his ear, he knew they would be all right.
“So… what do we do now?” Draco asked, as Luna dunked the last dish into the sudsy water with a gleeful splash. He grimaced slightly as she flashed a quick grin and handed it to him, dripping with water and bubbles. He hit it with a quick drying spell and sent it winging away into the cupboard, then aimed another drying spell at the wet spot on the floor, shaking his head. The last thing he needed was for someone to fall and blame him for it. He gasped, jerking back in surprise, as Luna darted forward and deposited a blob of suds on his cheek.

“Luna!” he exclaimed, horrified, as she burst into unrepentant giggles.

Harry snorted and gently swiped the bubbles away, his warm fingers lingering a few seconds longer than strictly necessary. Draco felt his scowl softening into a sappy grin. Before he could say anything, Ron pushed past them,shouldering Draco out of the way. “It’s games night.”

Draco sighed. He and Ron were really going to have to have a talk, one of these days.

Harry smiled apologetically at him, shrugging his shoulders slightly. He slipped his hand into Draco’s and tugged him toward the parlor after the others.

“Which tonight, do you think?” asked Luna, tilting her head to the side in a decidedly bird-like manner.

Draco frowned, at a loss. “What’s games night?”

Everyone except Draco and his parents shared a knowing look. “It’s, well…” Ron trailed off, frowning. “Actually, we’d better just show you.” He strode across the room and threw open a cabinet that Draco hadn’t noticed. On the shelves inside were stacks of colorful boxes, marked with mysterious, and obviously muggle, symbols and phrases. “Welcome to games night!”


Luna skipped over to the cabinet and rummaged through the boxes, emerging after a few minutes with a large box and a delighted smile. “How about this one? It sounds fun.”

Harry and Hermione shared an inscrutable look. “Um, Luna…” Harry started.

Hermione interrupted him, lower lip caught between her teeth. “Are you sure, Luna? Maybe we should start with an easier one.”

Snape strode forward then, clearing his throat. He plucked the box from Luna’s grasp. “I, for one, would much rather spend the evening playing a game, rather than arguing over which one to play.”

Ron grinned. “The man has a point.”
Snape rolled his eyes. “Do try to contain your enthusiasm, Mr. Weasley.” He stalked back over to the couches and chairs that had rearranged themselves into a loose circle. He flicked his wand carelessly, whisking a small coffee table into the center of the circle. Another flick and a muttered *engorgio*, and the coffee table enlarged to fill the space. Snape nodded and plunked the box down in the center of the table. “Miss Lovegood? Would you care to do the honors, since you were the one who chose the game?”

“Gladly, Sev.” Luna grinned up at him as she opened the box. Snape’s eyebrow twitched, and a muscle jumped in his tightly clenched jaw, but he didn’t comment.

Draco was impressed, despite himself, at the man’s restraint. He could feel a new tension crackling in the air between the two, and wondered. It felt as if they were balanced on a knife-edge, awaiting the push that would tip them over the edge, still unsure which way they would fall. He snorted to himself. Professor Snape and Loony Lovegood. Who’d have guessed. Of course, that wasn’t who they were anymore. If it ever had been. After 7 years of classes with the man, 7 years with him as his Head of House, for goodness’ sake, and he realized that he’d never really known him.

Harry squeezed his hand, startling him out of his thoughts. “You OK?”

“What? Oh. Yeah. Sorry.” He smiled an apology, and Harry nudged his shoulder companionably. “You might want to pay attention now – Luna’s about to read us the rules.”

“Wait – Luna’s going to read them?”

Harry grinned. “Well, yeah. She picked the game – it’s her turn to read the rules. Don’t worry – she hardly ever embellishes them. Much.”

Draco rolled his eyes. *Merlin. A muggle game I’ve never heard of, and the rules are determined by…* he stopped himself. ‘Loony Lovegood’ was what he’d called her back at Hogwarts, back when he’d been, he realized now, something of a bully. She hadn’t deserved the name then, and she certainly didn’t deserve it now, now that he was beginning to get to know her. Not that he was likely to ever know Luna, but…

Harry nudged him again, and Draco wrenched his wandering thoughts back to the Luna in front of him, and the rules she was reading.

Some minutes later, she folded the paper with grave ceremony and placed it back into the box. The others had pilfered the box as she’d spoken, setting out a colorful – if wildly inaccurate – map of the world and a profusion of tiny plastic pieces in a rainbow of colors. Draco, unsure whether he understood completely or didn’t understand at all, reached out and plucked one of the green figures from the board. It was a soldier, riding a horse, waving a sword – highly impractical, really. What good was a sword when one’s horse put everyone out of that sword’s reach?

“Hey!” Blaise yelped. “That one’s mine!”

“Sorry,” Draco said absently, dropping the piece into Blaise’s waiting hand. He turned to Harry for help, deciding that he fell solidly on the side of “didn’t understand at all.”

Before he could say anything, Harry spoke. “There’s not enough armies for us each to have our own – we’ll have to play it in teams. You’re with me, Draco.” He grinned. “I’ve never played Risk before, but I’ve seen it played a time or two.”

Draco sighed in relief. “Oh, good. Because I haven’t got a clue.”

Ron snorted, and Draco waved it away. He couldn’t be bothered to pick a fight right now. He was
curled up in an armchair with Harry – how had that happened, anyway? – and Harry was a warm and comforting presence against his side. He immediately determined to leave the majority of the game play to Harry, snuggling further into his side. As teams were formed and armies were placed, Draco allowed himself to slip into a comfortable half-doze, floating in a sea of companionship and warmth.

He was jolted back to full consciousness some time later, as friendly bickering gave way to squabbling. He frowned around the room at the tense expressions, blankly surveying the board with its multi-hued armies. Fierce battles had apparently been waged whilst he dozed, alliances had formed and crumbled, betrayals and back-stabbing ran rampant. Draco decided that he would have to play this again one day, this time paying closer attention to the ebb and flow of battle. For a muggle game, Risk was, it turned out, more exciting and deserving of its name than he had first assumed.

Andromeda’s voice suddenly cut through the din. “I’ve just now managed to get Teddy to sleep, and I’m exhausted. Whoever wakes him – and I’ve no doubt one of you will, at your current volume – gets to sit up with him tonight. I’m for bed, myself. Coming, Cissy?”

Narcissa nodded at her sister, smiling apologetically and leaving the argument without a backward glance. Lucius pouted after her, and Draco snorted. He’d never realized how childish and pathetic his father could look, when he didn’t get his way.

Harry caught his eye and grinned at him, snaking an arm around Draco’s waist and squeezing him tighter against his side. “Come on,” he whispered. “Let’s head up. I don’t fancy being conned into sitting up with Teddy tonight.”

Draco nodded his emphatic agreement. Charming though the boy was, he was impossible to put back to sleep, once woken, and Draco certainly didn’t fancy a night of pacing the floor.

“Oi! Harry! Where do you think you’re going?” Ron shouted indignantly.

Harry raised a brow in unconscious imitation of Draco. “To bed. I don’t fancy sitting up with Teddy all night – do you?”

Ron scowled. “But who’s going to play your army?”

Hermione covered a yawn and reached over to pat him on the shoulder. “It’s late, Ron. Harry’s got the right of it. We can pick the game up again tomorrow.”

Ron frowned down at the board, apparently trying to memorize the position of every piece. “Fine. But I’m putting a stasis spell over it. I don’t trust those two not to sneak down in the middle of the night and move the pieces.” He waved at Lucius and Snape. “We all know they’d cheat if given the chance.”

Lucius looked affronted. “How dare you! I do not cheat.”

Draco snorted at that, and Lucius turned his glare on his son’s retreating form.

“Fine,” he spat, turning back to sneer at Ron, “but I’m putting a stasis spell over yours. After all, how do we know you won’t cheat? You’re the one who brought it up.

As Ron spluttered, Lucius flicked his wand, raising a pale green glowing shield atop Ron’s red one. He studied it for a few seconds, then nodded, apparently satisfied. “Now we can go to bed.”
Spice - Cinnamon

Chapter Notes

A/N: I feel like this story is getting a tad unwieldy, so I think what I'll do is wrap up with the end of this little story arc - probably the next chapter. Then I'll return to this - let's call it Home!verse - with oneshots and short story arcs as sequels later. I'll put up an update here when the first one posts, so if you follow this story you'll know when I post the next one.

Draco stumbled down the stairs the following morning, one hand covering his yawn and the other wrapped around Harry's waist. He glanced idly toward the parlor, then stopped, frowning, as he tried to make sense of what he was seeing. Facing one another across the abandoned game, two figures slumped awkwardly, fast asleep. One with red hair, sleep ruffled, the other's long, sleek, and silver-blonde.

Draco nudged Harry's shoulder. “Harry. Tell me I’m seeing things, and that’s not Weasley and my father asleep in there?”

Harry looked where he was pointing, and snorted. “Sorry, Draco. It’s most definitely Ron and your father. Looks like neither of them trusted the other not to cheat.”

Draco groaned.

Hermione and Pansy nearly ran into them, then, as they made their way down the stairs. “Hey!” Hermione grumbled, “don’t stop in the middle of the bloody stairs!”

Hermione turned to look where Harry's gaze was focused, out of habit. Usually he'd be staring at Malfoy. But in this case… “Oh, honestly!” She grabbed Pansy's arm in one hand, Harry's in the other, and dragged all three of them off to the kitchen, muttering under her breath.

Everyone in the house had a good laugh at Ron and Lucius that morning, and the two were in very poor spirits throughout breakfast. The residents of Number 12, Grimmauld Place had had plans for that day, plans that included shopping, cleaning, and taming the massive, yet sadly neglected, garden. Unfortunately, neither Ron nor Lucius could concentrate on anything, and after a few hours of them glaring at one another, not even pretending to pay attention to their chores, with Snape looking up every so often to glower - at both of them, at the others, at the neat rows of plants he was tending, at the world in general - Hermione had had enough.

“Right. That’s it!” she exclaimed, throwing down her trowel in disgust. “Honestly. You are grown men.”

None of them had the grace to look abashed. None of them even looked up from their current three-way glaring contest.

Hermione wrinkled her nose in disgust, drew her wand with a fluid grace she’d learned, somehow, in the war and that had never left her, and hit each of them with an invisible smack across the back of the head. Hermione sniffed, mouth twitching at the three startled and near identical exclamations of shock that followed.
“Now. Since some of us are having difficulty focusing on our tasks, we may as well give it up for today.” She flicked her wand, and the various garden implements shot into the air, arced over their heads, and slotted neatly into their places in the storage shed. The doors banged shut after them, and she nodded. “Well? What are you waiting for? The sooner we finish that blasted game, the sooner some actual work can get done around here.”

Ron squawked indignantly as Luna’s armies surrounded his last holdout. Luna grinned widely and pumped her fist in the air as she stabbed Ron in the back – metaphorically, at least – and reached out to flick the last of his soldiers off the board with a violent pink-tinted nail.

Hermione reached absently to pat Ron’s knee, never once bothering to look up from the book she’d produced, upon being eliminated from the game, with a relieved sigh.

“What are you reading now ‘Mione?” Harry asked exasperatedly from his seat on the floor, sprawled inelegantly over Draco’s lap. Draco looked up from where he was massaging Harry’s shoulders, glanced at the title of the book and smirked as he raised his eyes to Hermione’s face. Hermione met his eyes staunchly, though the tips of her ears reddened. “Nothing you’d be interested in, I assure you,” she said archly. Draco snorted. “She’s telling the truth,” he whispered into Harry’s ear. “I’ll tell you about it later.”

Luna’s earlier strategy – which had seemed chaotic, haphazard, and random at the start of the game – came together with a suddenness that surprised everyone.

Severus was next to fall before her advancing army, having failed to negotiate a treaty with Lucius. He plucked his last soldier out of the way of her fingernail, glowering at her brilliant smile, and settled back into his chair with a quiet sniff.

Lucius was, it turned out, a sore loser. He whined, pouted, and did his best to cheat, but Luna countered his every move. It wasn’t long before her armies had his surrounded.

Luna grinned wolfishly at him and pulled the small stack of paper toward her. “Shall I read out what I’ve won?”

Ron cleared his throat. “Actually, Luna, I was thinking.”

Hermione rolled her eyes, muttering, “Oh, Merlin. This ought to be good.”

Ron scowled. “Shut it ‘Mione. Anyway, I was thinking that it would only be fair if we played another game, got a chance to win back some of our losses.”

“That’s not really how it works, Weasley - ” Draco drawled, but Luna held up a hand to stop him.

“No, Draco, that’s alright. I don’t mind.” She tipped her head on its side, considering the three scowling men in front of her. “Would it be just those of us who bet on the last game playing, then?”

“Sounds good to me,” Harry said around a poorly-concealed yawn. “I’m quite comfortable here, and I’d just as soon watch.”

Draco snorted at him. “You’re ridiculous, Potter,” he said fondly, carding his agile fingers through Harry’s unruly hair. “But in this case I find I have to agree.”

The others nodded, and Luna clapped her hands. “Excellent. Why don’t you three go fetch us a
game, then.”

As it turned out, Luna’s strategic brilliance was not limited to Risk. Or Scrabble. Or Clue.

“Enough!” Pansy exploded, some hours later. “Salazar, but you’ve been at it all day. Don’t you think you’d have beaten her by now, if you were going to? Give up, already, before you owe her more than you can pay.”

“Too late for that,” Ron muttered glumly. He scowled down at the pile of papers, far too many of which bore his own nearly illegible scribbles. “What I want to know,” he added, half to himself, “is how the bloody hell she did it?”

Hermione rolled her eyes, looking up from her latest book – she’d summoned a stack of them when it became clear how long the game was going to last – and patted him on the knee. “Ron. Did you forget that Luna was a Ravenclaw? The Sorting Hat doesn’t place people randomly, you know.”

Ron scowled harder.

Pansy bounced up from her half-doze with a grin. “I’ll go fetch the others – don’t read them out until I get back!”

Luna’s pale fingers flicked deftly through the scraps of paper, sorting them into piles at what appeared to be random - but likely wasn’t - snorting occasionally. The pile had grown alarmingly since they’d started. The contents of the wagers had grown more and more ridiculous as the games had progressed – especially since the only condition Luna had set had been that they could not be monetary. She had plenty of money for her needs, she’d explained, and so only favors and promises would count.

Then, just as the others appeared in the doorway, Luna paused, eyes widening as she read the elegantly looped handwriting on the paper she held. She drew in a startled breath, let it out in a huff of laughter.

Lucius, who recognized his handwriting on the slip and could guess which particular wager this was, paled.

“Luna?” Pansy asked worriedly from the doorway.

Luna nodded, holding up the slip of paper as explanation. She took a deep breath, stifled another snort, and read aloud:

“I, Lucius Abraxas Malfoy, promise my firstborn child.”

Draco was the first to break the hushed silence. “Hey!”

Luna smiled beatifically at him, blinking her wide, guileless eyes. “Oh, Draco. Don’t worry. I won’t do anything too terrible.”

Draco winced at the wicked gleam in those eyes, and ducked behind Harry.

“Luna…” Harry said slowly, trying valiantly not to laugh.

Luna grinned at him. “Oh, all right, Harry. I’ll toss out the ones that involve other people.”

Harry grinned back at her as he hauled Draco out from behind him. “There. See? The big, bad Luna
won’t hurt you.”


Narcissa, who’d just walked in with Andy and Teddy, loaded down with bags from their shopping trip, rolled her eyes. “Really, Lucius?”

Lucius scowled.

Draco and Narcissa shared an exasperated look.

Harry caught Luna’s eye, and they grinned at one another for a moment, until Harry turned to take the bags from Narcissa.

Luna sent the scraps of paper darting off to her room with a flick of her wand, and then followed the others into the kitchen, pondering how best to collect her winnings.
A/N: Last chapter you guys! Remember, I'll post future stories as sequels. I'll update this story when the first one posts, so you know it's up. Thanks for reading!

The house thrummed with anticipation.

Luna had whisked Harry and his armloads of bags into the kitchen the moment he returned from his mysterious shopping excursion, and they’d been giving one another significant looks all morning. It was driving everyone else to distraction.

Well, everyone but Ron.

Ron had begun his task the day before, and had approached it with a cheerful diligence he’d been missing lately. He’d brooded terribly while waiting for Luna to pronounce his fate, and was inclined to dread it, no matter how many times he was reminded that it was Luna setting his forfeit, and not someone he needed to be afraid of. His skin had had a decidedly gray tinge all through breakfast that morning, and he’d jumped nearly out of his chair when Luna had dropped her fork onto her plate with a quiet clatter.

“I’ve got it!” she’d announced gleefully.

Ron had sunk lower in his chair. Luna had had that wicked gleam in her eye again, the one that spelled doom for whoever caught her attention.

“Walburga,” she’d said decisively, sounding pleased. “That’s just the thing.”

“Er, the name’s Ron…”

Luna had frowned at him for a moment, a puzzled crease between her brows. “What?” Then her face had cleared. “Oh. No, silly. I want you to chat with Walburga, convince her to stop yelling at us so Sev and I can get that potions lab set up. We really do need more room if we’re to do any proper experimenting.”

Ron had swallowed. “Right. I’ll just, er, get on that, then,” he’d said weakly, turning pleading eyes on Harry and Hermione.

Harry had shrugged, a “what can you do, mate?” expression on his face, and turned to whisper in Draco’s ear. Hermione had never bothered to look up from her book.

Ron had crammed his last slice of bacon into a suddenly dry mouth, shoved back his chair, and trudged up the stairs like a man walking to his doom.

But that was yesterday.

Today, Ron was cheerfully tucking into his breakfast, whistling under his breath.
“So,” Harry asked brightly, as he dropped into the chair beside Ron with a thump. “How’s it going with Walburga?”

Ron beamed at him. “Great, actually.”

“Great,” Hermione echoed disbelievingly.

Ron’s grin widened. “Yep. Me and Aunty Wally had a long chat yesterday. Turns out she’s quite the softie, under that ‘screaming harpy’ exterior.”

“Really.” Hermione let her book fall closed, not even bothering to mark her place.

“Yep. She’s got some great ideas. We should have a functioning potions lab in there by the end of the week.”

Everyone was staring now. Severus placed his fork precisely in the center of his plate.

“Well. Good, then.”

Lucius cleared his throat. “And what will our task be?” he asked, indicating Severus with his fork.

Luna grinned. “I’m so glad you asked…” She reached behind her chair and produced two bags with a flourish, depositing them in front of the men in question. “Well, go on then. Open them,” she prompted, when neither man moved to take his bag.

Severus sighed heavily, rolling his eyes, but reached obediently into his bag, producing a bundle of cloth. His brows drew down as he stared at it. “What’s this?”

Luna bounced on her toes, clearly hard pressed to contain her excitement. “It’s an apron. And a chef’s hat. And an oven mitt, I think.” She glanced at Harry questioningly, and he nodded.

Lucius made a strangled noise as he held up his apron, proudly emblazoned with the words ‘I Love Lucy.’ “What in Merlin’s name is this?”

Luna sighed. “An apron. Like Sev’s.” She jerked a thumb at Severus, who was staring at his apron in disbelief. It said ‘Kiss the Cook.’

“Yes,” Lucius said, still staring at the apron. “But, why?”

Luna’s grin became blinding. “Because, Lucy, dear, for your forfeit – and yours, Sev – I’m going to teach you to bake. With Kreacher’s help, of course.”

“Baking.” Severus stared at her, face completely blank. Lucius gaped, mouth hanging open, though whether at the thought of baking or at being called Lucy, it was difficult to say.

“Oh!” Pansy leapt from her chair, diving into the closet and rummaging through her bag. She resurfaced, cradling her beloved camera. “For posterity, you know,” she said, patting the lens-cap fondly. “I’ve a project coming up that this will be perfect for.” She took a lot of ribbing for her newfound passion, but they were all secretly glad that she’d found something to care about. The muggle art school she attended had rekindled a spark she’d been missing since the war, further back than that, really. Draco had never seen her with so much life, and they were all willing to indulge her. Even, it seemed, letting her document embarrassing baking lessons.

The first attempts did not go well. Lucius and Severus had to be talked into wearing their new baking gear, and they’d threatened to take them off when no one could hold back the laughter. Pansy had
gleefully snapped some photos of them, all cheerful aprons and thunderous scowls, and Luna had had to talk Lucius out of hexing the girl. Finally, order had been restored, and it was time for the baking lesson to officially begin.

“What am I supposed to do with this?” Lucius asked in disbelief, holding up the fork Luna had pressed into his hand. “Surely you don’t mean for me to eat this disgustingly soft warm butter?”


Luna pinched the bridge of her nose, even her legendary patience wearing thin. “Here. Like this.” She demonstrated the proper butter-mashing technique, and then how to cream the butter and sugar together, and how to fold in the chocolate chips.

Lucius scowled down at his batter, stubbornly refusing to resemble anything close to the dough Luna was now shaping into neat circles on her baking sheet. Narcissa rolled up her sleeves and joined her husband, startling him. “Like this,” she said softly, somehow turning the unrecognizable goop in his bowl into cookie dough.

Lucius stared at her. “You can bake?”

Narcissa wiped a smudge of flour from her cheek and grinned. “Cookies, anyway. Draco and I used to sneak down to the kitchens and pester the house elves into letting us ‘help.’ It was our secret.”

Lucius stared at his wife and son in shock, and then grinned and shook his head. “All these years, my dear, and you still surprise me.” He leaned in as if to kiss her, but swiped flour across her forehead instead. Narcissa squealed indignantly and waved the spoon at him, but he danced out of her reach.

Lucius managed to catch Severus with a puff of flour next, streaking his dark hair with dingy white. Severus ‘accidentally’ flicked a spoonful of batter into Lucius’ hair in retaliation. And then batter was flying, clouds of flour were puffing about the room, and everyone was laughing.

Everyone but Kreacher, who wrung his hands, moaned and wailed about what the Black ancestors would have said, and then shooed them out of his kitchen. The cookies disappeared from the platters as soon as he brought them out, but everyone agreed that the lumpy, misshapen ones tasted the best, even if they were slightly burned and just a tad doughy in the center.

“So,” Luna said brightly, ignoring the flour smudged across the bridge of her nose and the batter clinging stubbornly to her hair, “has anyone thought of a name for our home, yet?”

Hermione brushed flyaway curls behind her ears; her nose wrinkled as she considered Luna’s words. “Why do we need another name for it, though? Number 12, Grimmauld Place works well enough.”

Luna blew out an exasperated breath, fluttering the wayward strands of hair that fell across her eyes. “Because,” she replied, slow and patient, as if she were addressing a child, “that is the name of our house. I’m talking about the name of our home.”

Hermione frowned and opened her mouth to argue. Draco jumped in before she could. “I have.” He flushed as all eyes in the room turned suddenly toward him. “That is,” he backpedaled quickly, “if you want to hear it. Actually, it’s probably rather stupid, so… never mind.”

Luna smiled at him, radiating confidence and kindness and comfort. And home. “Go on,” she prompted gently, drawing Draco’s attention back to her, and away from the scowl on Ron’s face. “Let’s hear it.”
Draco cleared his throat, immensely grateful for the warmth that seeped into him from Harry’s hand at the small of his back, easy and solid and reassuring. He reached behind him, seizing Harry’s hand, twining their fingers together and squeezing. “The Harry Potter Home for Wounded War Heroes,” he said quickly.

There was a beat of silence, and then everyone started nodding and talking at once. Luna clapped her hands, squealing, “Oh! Draco, that’s perfect!”

Harry squeezed his hand and leaned in for a quick peck on the cheek. Severus eyed him appraisingly and then nodded. Even Ron nodded grudgingly.

Suddenly, Draco felt his hold on Harry loosening as Luna seized his other arm and dragged him toward the nook she and Pansy’d claimed as their “studio.”

Later, when their carefully lettered sign hung proudly on the front door, Draco realized that the empty spaces in his heart, the ones he’d acquired during the war, had been filled quite without his noticing. For the first time in a very long time his heart was filled with light and love, laughter and joy. For the first time in a long time, he was happy. He was content. He was home.

~The End~

End Notes

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