I Don't Lie

by Bayzen

Summary

After the unexpected death of her father, Remington Alvers is forced to obey her mother's whim to return to Europe. Thrust into this new world, she faces the horrors of making friends, enduring Umbridge's reign, and dealing with a very irksome blonde-headed prat.

Notes

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This is the first installment of a three-part series. To be followed by "Burning Bridges".
“Your father was a Ravenclaw.” Marissel Alvers said to her daughter as they navigated King’s Cross. “I expect nothing less from you. Best if we can make a Slytherin out of you, like myself.”

*I’d like to be anything other than ‘like yourself.’* Remington Alvers thought to herself bitterly. Just over a month ago her father had passed, and her mother hardly shed a tear. Rem adored her father, she always had. Her mother, however...

“Perhaps you’ll meet some of my old friends’ children. It’s nearly time to start contemplating your future. Keep your eyes peeled for a handsome young Pureblood, Remington.” Her mother continued as they approached a wall.

She’d already been through this. She needed to be engaged to a Pureblood that her mother approved of before her seventh year. That’s how her own parents had been arranged. Rem’s father had told her that her mother had a softer, more caring side to her, but Remington had yet to see it. She didn’t want something similar to happen to her. She wasn’t marrying anyone that was less than she expected. Screw her mother; it was her life.

“Right, Mother.” She mumbled, not even flinching as they progressed through the wall and onto platform 9 3/4. “I’ll send an owl after my sorting.”

Marissel gave a sharp nod, “We’ll see just how capable your sorry excuse for a bird-”

“Don’t talk about my baby like that!” Remington snapped.

“How dare you-” Marissel began.

“I’ve got to go!” Rem said suddenly, taking off towards the train, leaving her mother behind without a goodbye.
Against The Grain

She was seated at the Gryffindor table for the famous opening supper.

After her father’s death her mother had moved Remington back to Europe, which was where Marissel’d grown up and met Timothy Alvers at the renowned Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Rather than coming to take care of Remington’s transfer of schools, she left her daughter with the girl’s godfather. Remington had neglected to tell her mother that she’d been sorted at a meeting during the summer. It was best for them both if she waited until they were sufficiently separated before she told her mother she was sorted into Gryffindor. Marissel would be happier if her daughter was a Hufflepuff.

To be fair, the Sorting Hat had sincerely contemplated Ravenclaw. And even more severely considered Slytherin. Apparently, she wasn’t compassionate enough to be thrown into Hufflepuff... or something. What gave the hat incentive to leave her in Gryffindor was beyond her. She wasn’t brave. She wasn’t even exactly outgoing or confident. She had some nerve, she supposed. Chivalry? Maybe. She assumed she’d find out eventually. The hat was never wrong... right?

She sat quietly, listening attentively to the Sorting Hat, and catching snippets of conversation from those around her. Apparently the Hat had sung something a bit more original this year, as opposed to other year’s songs. The chatter around her dissipated as the Sorting began, but she didn’t know a single name that was called, so the ceremony held very little interest for her. The food suddenly appearing before her was new, but she’d skimmed some reading about it and tried to act as if it was no surprise at all. Normally the selective eater, she realized how likely she was to get fat staying here. Everything looked appetizing. Even the ham, which she normally wouldn’t touch.

She attempted, and generally succeeded in not trying a bit of everything and stuffing herself past reason. From what she gathered about Dumbledore, he was probably her favorite headmaster yet. She’d had three headmasters in her four years at Nexxford, the wizarding school she’d attended in America. The first had passed away during the summer after her first year, and the rest had all been temporary replacements; the process of reinstating a new headmaster being far more complicated than she deemed necessary.

Though, that Umbridge woman bothered her. Anyone who wore that much pink could not be trusted. Or taken seriously. She also seemed like a controlling prick. Demanding authority and Remington did not mix.

As the Great Hall began to clear out, she noted a girl that she’d been sitting near was calling together the first years. As she thought about it, she doubted she’d be able to find her way to Gryffindor tower. Sure, she’d been shown the way the same day she was Sorted, but that was nearly a month ago.

Casually, she caught up with the girl. “Assuming you’re a prefect?” Remington asked curtly. She’d never been good at talking with people she didn’t know. She always felt evil if she was anything but excessively kind and polite to strangers. And every single person here was a stranger. . . . This would be a long first couple weeks.

The girl looked at her, “Yes, can I help you?”

“I just don’t want to follow someone to the wrong common room. I don’t quite have the layout of this place down.” Rem replied with a gentle smile. The girl looked slightly quizzical. “I transferred from America. I’m a fifth year.” How odd it was to refer to home as America. And to think that over
here, America was as good as foreign.

“Oh, me too. A fifth year, that is. Ron also.” She said, and a ginger boy on her other side glanced over curiously. “I’m Hermione.”

“Remington Alvers.” She replied in turn. The walk to the common room proceeded in a similar, friendly manner. Remington asked a few questions and so did Hermione. Ron didn’t say too much, until they had finally reached Gryffindor Tower-

“You know,” Remington said, “I’d love to get in a fight.” She’d always craved such. Why, she wasn’t sure, but doing something completely out of line had its allure. Maybe it was a sort of urge to rebel against her mother, or a thread of rebellion she possessed from the beginning.

“You mean a duel?” Ron supplied. They were all seated at a small cluster of chairs. Rem had assumed they were waiting for the boy she’d noticed them talking to during dinner.

“No, I mean a fight.” She grinned.

“You?” He said, looking her over in scrutiny.

“Yeah,” She said, looking at the Gryffindor-colored knickknack she’d picked up from the end table beside her, thoughtfully.

“I would suggest going after a Slytherin,” said Ron, “But that would mean I was encouraging you, and I’m not supposed to do that, am I?”

“No, Ronald. You are not supposed to be doing that.” Hermione reminded him.

“Slytherin?” Rem inquired, looking at him, intrigued.

“Yeah, if Malfoy was a bit scrawnier, it’d be funny to see him get his ass kicked by a girl, but I guess-”

“Making enemies, have you been?” She teased.

“He’s the one making enemies,” Ron muttered, eyes narrowing slightly.

“It’s impossible not to make enemies with Malfoy.” Hermione stated, obviously her dislike for this boy being greater than her disapproval of their conversation.

She smiled, “All the more reason. Hey- it will be my goal for fifth year to get in a fight with a Slytherin.”

He snorted in contempt, “I bet you that goal won’t be fulfilled.”

“A bet deserves a handshake.” Remington stuck her hand out immediately for Ron.

“You two!” Hermione hissed under her breath, obviously not pleased with the exchange. “You should know better, Ron!”

He took her hand, apparently ignoring Hermione, “And what’s the wages?”

“If I win, you have to eat twelve puking pastilles.” She offered. She had been quite intrigued by what she heard of Ron’s twin brother’s array of sickness-inducing sweets, and so it was one of the first things that came to mind.
He grimaced, “And if I win,” He had to stop to think about it.

“I do?” She suggested.

“Do what?”

“Have to eat twelve puking pastilles?”

“Sure.”

The two of them concluded the handshake.

“You know I’m so going to win.”

“The bet or the fight?” He asked, “I doubt both.”

“I know I’ll win the bet, the fight I’m only eighty percent sure of.”

“Eighty percent?” He inquired disbelievingly.

“I’m not going to pick a fight I know I’ll lose.” She reasoned.

Hermione merely sat shaking her head in reproach.
A Snake With Blue Eyes

She couldn’t have asked for a worse first class at Hogwarts. History of Magic was positively her least favorite, and held the longest streak of being her lowest grade. Potions and Herbology weren’t far behind, but History of Magic definitely took the cake. It was just so... boring. It was all old news. She understood the idea of learning history so it doesn’t repeat itself, but just found learning about previous occurrences absolutely trivial.

She walked into class with a fellow fifth year Gryffindor, Fay Dunbar. Fay had the bunk right beside hers in the dorms, so Rem had chatted a bit with her the night before. Fay seemed a nice enough girl. Mellow, friendly. A good type of person to get to know. A trustworthy person. They took a pair of seats towards the back of the class, where Fay proceeded to point at the back of people’s heads, giving their names and occasionally an opinion or two. A couple people stood out to Rem. Of course she recognized the pair she’d spoken to the previous night, Hermione and Ron. She also recognized Harry Potter, who was sitting with them, but she’d already known that Hogwarts was the school which the supposed “Chosen One” attended.

“We have Potions with the Slytherins next.” The girl said with obvious distaste. “I don’t even see why they let us have joint classes with them. Everyone knows our houses despise each other. They’re devil spawn. The lot of them.”

“Apparently, I keep getting hateful vibes from people towards them.” Rem said as Professor Binns called for attention.

Throughout History of Magic, Fay and Rem scooted a paper back and forth, conversing about the different houses and what Fay thought of certain people.

“You haven’t a clue how vile Snape is.” Fay was saying as they descended the stairs to the dungeons.

Remington felt something stir in her stomach, but played along. “Anyone who prefers to hold their class down here must be.” Remington muttered. “Good thing we’ve only got the class twice a week.”

“Twice a week is still often enough for mold to start growing in your lungs.” Fay replied, slipping into the classroom. Rem noticed as they walked in that most of the class was already present. “C’mon.” The girl mumbled, heading towards a spot towards the back that was only occupied by a pair of Gryffindor girls. Parvati and Lavender, Rem remembered. The girls both smiled at her as her and Fay approached.

“I hear this class is torture,” Rem remarked.

“Trust me, if Snape was allowed medieval torture devices, you’d probably be seeing them about the room.” Parvati replied, “If only to scare us.”

Rem shook her head, looking up to the front of the class at the man behind the teacher’s desk. Her eyes trailed over to the opposite side of the classroom, noticing some new faces. She glanced at Fay, as if to ask if she were going to start ticking off names again, before turning back to the students of the other house.

Her gaze drifted past a few of them, noting that half of them had a slightly arrogant look on their faces. Particularly a boy whose eyes she met. He seemed to survey her for a moment, not just taking
in her appearance, but gauging her reaction to him, before looking away from her almost apathetically.

“She’s found Malfoy.” Lavender mentioned, drawing Rem’s attentions away.

“That’s him?” Remington inquired, glancing back at the blonde. “I could take him. Ron won’t be pleased when I win the bet.”

Fay groaned and Parvati asked, “What bet?”

“I bet Ron Weasley that I’d pick a fight with a Slytherin by the end of the year. He suggested Malfoy.” Rem nodded, “I think I could win.” She said thoughtfully.

“Don’t be so sure, he doesn’t look like much, but he’s a Quidditch Seeker.” Lavender muttered. Rem couldn’t agree. He looked attractive. But he also looked like a snob.

“Either way, it would be a feat in itself to get him away from his thugs. Crabbe and Goyle.” Parvati added, “Well, I guess you could just jinx a cake to float in front of them and lead them away. Their brains are about the size of a sugar cube.”

“And their thoughts consist of about as much.” Lavender threw in.

“Settle down.” Snape drawled coldly, bringing the quiet drone of whispers to a silence. Rem ended up on the right end of the table, beside the aisle, with Fay at her left. Though Snape drew attentiveness from the whole of the class, it seemed he failed to pull Remington’s thoughts away from the blond-haired Slytherin at the table kitty-corner to her own.

“What’s his first name?” Rem asked Fay under her breath.

“Malfoy’s?” The other girl asked in disbelief, “Why do you care?”

“I just want to know.” Rem insisted.

“Miss Alvers, if you would please cease talking and pay attention.” Snape demanded, looking at her with his usual mask of displeasure and blank expression.

Rem’s eyes shot up to look at him, her eyebrows arching slightly as she brushed her hair out of her face, signaling that she was listening.

Once sufficiently satisfied, Snape carried on. “Before we begin today’s lesson,” He began, but Remington was distracted by a nudge to her left thigh. She glanced down to see that Fay had scooted a paper partially out of her book, a word scrawled into the margin of the bottom corner.

*Draco*
Divination passed uneventfully, though Remington was sorely dreading the dream journal. Ninety percent of the time she didn’t remember her dreams, and recently, the other ten percent consisted of horrifying nightmares that she wished not write for all to see.

Defence Against the Dark Arts looked as though it was going to make her day yet more undesirable. She’d happily take Snape, or Trelawney, or even Binns over Umbridge. This woman shouldn’t be allowed to teach any class.

So, of course, when Hermione lifted her hand in the air and inquired as to the lack of using defensive spells, Rem’s arm shot up.

“Remington!” Fay hissed under her breath, obviously not pleased with the fact her new friend was already attracting negative attention.

“This is bullshi-” Rem started to respond.

“Yes, Miss Granger? You wanted to ask something else?” Umbridge addressed Hermione.

“Yes. Surely the whole point of Defence Against the Dark Arts is to practice defensive spells?”

“Are you a Ministry-trained educational expert, Miss Granger?” Umbridge asked in her falsely sweet voice.

“May as well be.” Fay muttered.

“No, but-” Hermione began.

“Well then, I’m afraid you are not qualified to decide what the ‘whole point’ of any class is. Wizards much older and cleverer than you have devised our new program of study. You will be learning about defensive spells in a secure, risk-free way-”

“What use us that?” said Harry loudly, “If we’re going to be attacked it won’t be in a-”

“Hand, Mister Potter!” Professor Umbridge rang.

Harry thrust a fist in the air. Nearly half the class had a hand raised.

“And your name is?” Professor Umbridge asked a boy Rem faintly recognized, but couldn’t name.

“Dean Thomas.”

“Well, Mister Thomas?”

“Well, it’s like Harry said, isn’t it?” Dean inquired, “If we’re going to be attacked, it won’t be risk-free-”

“I repeat,” The smile Umbridge was giving Dean was incredibly annoying. “Do you expect to be attacked during my classes?”

“No, but-”

“I do not wish to criticize the way things have been run in this school,” Umbridge spoke over him,
an unconvincing smile stretching her already wide mouth, “But you have been exposed to some very irresponsible wizards in this class, very irresponsible indeed -- not to mention,” She gave a nasty little laugh, “Extremely dangerous half-breeds.”

“If you mean Professor Lupin,” Dean started angrily, “He was the best we ever-”

“Hand, Mister Thomas! As I was saying -- you have been introduced to spells that have been complex, inappropriate to your age group, and potentially lethal. You have been frightened into believing that you are likely to meet Dark attacks every other day-”

And you that we never shall. Remington thought bitterly, switching arms impatiently.

“No we haven’t,” Hermione interrupted, “We just-”

“Your hand is not up, Miss Granger!”

Hermione put up her hand; Professor Umbridge promptly ignored her. “It is my understanding that my predecessor not only performed illegal curses in front of you, he actually performed them on you-”

“Well, he turned out to be a maniac, didn’t he?” Dean said hotly, “Mind you, we still learned loads-”

“Your hand is not up, Mister Thomas!” Professor Umbridge trilled, “Now, it is the view of the Ministry that a theoretical knowledge will be more than sufficient to get you through your examination, which, after all, is what school is all about. And your name is?” She added, staring at Parvati, on Fay’s other side.

“Parvati Patil, and isn’t there a practical bit in our Defence Against the Dark Arts O.W.L.? Aren’t we supposed to show that we can actually do the countercurses and things?”

“As long as you have studied the theory hard enough, there is no reason why you should not be able to perform the spells under carefully controlled examination conditions.” Umbridge said passively.

“Without ever practicing them before?” Parvati asked incredulously. “Are you telling us that the first time we’ll get to do the spells will be during our exam?”

“What about those who are naturally nonadept at casting spells?” Remington demanded, her palm turning upwards. Umbridge’s gaze turned on her. “Alvers.” She supplied, hand still raised. She wasn’t concerned so much about herself, but she felt a bit piteous for Neville, who had a rather sickly look on his face.

“Miss Alvers, you shall wait to be called on before speaking.” The frog-lady stated as Rem rolled her eyes. “I repeat, as long as you have studied the theory hard enough-”

“And what good’s theory going to be in the real world?” Harry prompted over her, fist still held high.

“This is school, Mister Potter, not the real world.” She said softly.

“So we’re not supposed to be prepared for what’s waiting out there?”

Remington previously hadn’t thought much about it. The Dark Lord issue was not quite as pressing back home in America, since the magical community there had not been harassed near as much as the European wizards had. Considering it now, though... She had to admit that there really wasn’t any reason for Harry to lie. If it was a lie, it was obvious that he’d get Hell for it sometime in the end,
so why make up something like this? So... Voldemort must be back. And Umbridge must be an idiot.
Charms was the first class on day two, which was a great improvement from the day previous. Much unlike History of Magic, Charms was her second best class, after Astronomy. Not to mention that nearly the whole class was spent practicing, which was far better than a class spent reading or listening to lectures.

Transfiguration was similar, and Remington was quite pleased when she managed to vanish all but the shell of her snail just before class was dismissed. Fay remarked that she was an aspiring Hermione Granger. Hermione, as it were, had made her entire snail disappear and left class with no homework.

All through lunch Fay complained about the homework, though they’d both finished Potions the night before, neither had touched History of Magic, and Rem knew Fay had filled out her dream journal. Remington, though, wasn’t planning on going near that assignment unless she had a normal, plain-old dream. Chances of which were slim to none.

“I hear you’ve got a substitute for Care of Magical Creatures.” Rem remarked on the way to said class, walking with Fay, who was viciously swiping her dusty brown hair out of her face as the gentle flow of air kept wafting it obnoxiously in front of her eyes.

“Yeah, and it’s about time, too. The last Professor was... less than satisfactory. Malfoy got attacked by a Hippogriff because of it, though. That was amusing. But he had these awful creatures that had stingers and blew fire, it was honestly horrible. I think I liked the flobberworms better.” Fay prattled as they came to a stop, finally giving in and pulling her hair into a ponytail to fight the breeze.

Rem looked over her shoulder as she heard laughter coming down the trail behind them, but quickly looked back when she realized it was Draco and his gang. Truly, it was a gang. They never separated, and Draco was obviously the cult leader.

“Starting to see just how irritating they are?” Fay inquired under her breath as Professor Grubbly-Plank barked, “Everyone here? Let’s crack on then -- who can tell me what these things are called?”

Unsurprisingly, Hermione’s hand went up. Though, when Rem caught sight of Malfoy’s imitation of her jumping up and down eagerly to answer a question, she was slightly affronted on Hermione’s behalf. Normally she wouldn’t have the urge to defend someone she wasn’t particularly close to, but lack of respect had always annoyed her more than anything. Well, Pansy Parkinson’s proceeding shriek of laughter nearly beat it out to take top spot.

“Someday, he’ll get called on for doing that and realize just how idiotic he’s being.” Remington muttered to Fay, just loud enough so that Draco could overhear. The back of her neck tingled a bit, which was a relatively reliable signal that someone was staring at her.

Fay made a sound of amused agreement.

As the class split off to observe their bowtruckles, Remington noticed Malfoy bugging Harry yet more. It seemed as if the boy didn’t know where to draw the line. Fay noticed the glint in her friend’s eye as they settled onto the grass.

“What are you thinking of?” She asked suspiciously, “I’ve got brains enough to know that when people have that look on their faces, they plan on doing something impulsive.”

Rem shrugged, adding a few touch-ups to her sketch of the bowtruckle. She was anything but...
pleased with her work, but Fay insisted it was decent. Finally, she just set the parchment aside. “I swear I’m going to slap him. It’s the second day in and I’m already prepared to win this bet.” She said as she heard Draco’s voice raise for all to hear.

“You’ll not only get in trouble, but he will absolutely not go down without a fight.” Fay warned her.

“Father was talking to the Minister just a couple of days ago, you know, and it sounds as though the Ministry’s really determined to crack down on substandard teaching in this place. So even if that overgrown moron does show up again, he’ll probably be sent packing straight away.” The laughter that followed this statement ground even harder on her nerves.

“Would it be a bad idea to tell him to shut his mouth?” Remington inquired of Fay.

“Yes.” Fay drawled, the patience in her tone exaggerated. “He’s a prefect.”

A sharp laugh escaped Rem, who stared at Fay in disbelief. “You are kidding me right now.”

“Nope.” She replied. “That’s just how pitiful Slytherin is. A simpleton like him is best choice for prefect.” Fay was smirking at her bowtruckle drawing, which was reminiscent of a stick person.

“What was that, Dunbar?”

Fay’s gaze snapped up at Remington, not having realized that after Rem’s outburst, Draco’s attention had been drawn in their direction.

“I don’t remember her saying anything to you, Malfoy.” Rem responded, her voice as civil as it could get, her eyes turning on him in nonchalance.

“I remember her saying something about me, Alvers.” Draco shot back. Her stomach twisted the slightest bit. He’d only heard her last name once before, unless it was used by a student. So either he had been paying enough attention to have remembered her name after hearing it once, or she was being talked about. Neither option sat well with her.

“Oh don’t act like you know me. You don’t even know my name.” Remington said, daringly.

“Don’t I?” He prompted.

“What is it then? My first name.”

“It’s not as if you know me any better.”

“Draco Malfoy.” She stated with a knowing smile, pausing before adding, “The name’s Remington. You don’t need to use it, though.”
Suddenly a force knocked her over, landing in a heap with the person who’d plowed around the corner and straight into her. She pulled up into a sitting position, rubbing her shoulder lightly. She had half a mind to chew out whoever it was that ran into her, but knew that was one of the worst ways for her to start out her year.

“Sorry there, love.” Came a male voice, and her eyes landed on the culprit. A boy a couple years above herself, with red hair. She already had a guess as to what his last name was. “Really didn’t mean to do that. Are you alright?” He asked, getting to his feet and holding his hand out to help her up.

She took it, letting him pull her to her feet. At least he seemed to have manners. “I’m fine. Not like I don’t fall enough on my own.” She shrugged, offering a smile.

He sent her his own grin, “Fred Weasley.” He stuck out his hand again, this time for a shake. She returned it.

“And I’m George.” Said another guy, a twin, without a doubt. He’d just turned the corner, at a much more leisurely pace. “I’ve distracted him for right now, but I don’t think it will hold him back for long.”

She had the urge to ask who they were fending off and why, but decided she may not want to know. “You’re Ron’s brothers, then?” She asked, definitely seeing the resemblance.

“Brothers?” George inquired.

“More like cousins.” Fred responded.

“Distant cousins.” George agreed.

“Nearly not related.” Fred continued.

“I’m so sure.” Rem said, her eyebrows arched at their obvious lie.

“You’re in Ickle Ronnie’s year, then?” George asked, purposely using a demeaning nickname.

“Yes. Name’s Remington.” She said, “And I’ll punch you if you start calling me ickle.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it, Rems.” Fred grinned.

The sound of awkward running footsteps and sharp breathing reached them all from around the corner. It sounded like there was some sort of misshapen three-legged creature wheezing it’s way down the hall at top speed, top speed being about one and a half miles per hour, somewhere around the corner.

“Filch!” George hissed.

Without warning the twins each grabbed one of her arms, all of them taking off away from the noise.

“Since you’re new,” Fred began, trying not to talk too loud as they made their escape attempt.

“We’ll tell you now,” George said, his own tone quite similar to his brother’s.
“You don’t want him to catch you at the scene of our crime.” Fred finished.

Remington laughed. The boys let go of her once they were out of immediate danger.

“You should probably go back to the dorm.” Fred remarked. “Don’t want to get taken hostage by Filch.” He peered around the nearest corner.

“You weren’t going anywhere important, were you?” George looked as if he wouldn’t let her go back the way they’d come whether the answer was a yes or no.

“Nah,” She replied. “Thanks for keeping me from detention.”

“Thanks for not being a Slytherin.” Fred laughed, “I’d have been in trouble for the prank and hexing another student.”

She grinned, “Don’t get caught.”

“Never do.” George responded before she turned and headed to the common room.
Recognition

It was only the third Wednesday into the month that he visited the library to see her at one of the tables, twisting a quill in one hand and staring into a small, but thick book. It couldn't have been terribly long before nine. Though, by the time fifteen minutes before curfew rolled around, he was fairly aware she hadn’t left. And when he caught a glimpse of the table he’d seen her at earlier, her quill-twirl had come to a halt and her head was resting on her arm. Eyes closed, most definitely asleep.

He resisted the urge to roll his eyes, a slightly annoyed look overtaking his features as he walked over to her table. He gently shoved her shoulder, eyebrows arching slightly as she jerked awake, looking a tinge frightened for a moment before her eyes landed on him, instantly narrowing.

“Don’t give me that look; we’re both perfectly aware that I’m doing you a favor.” He said, looking down at her contemptuously.

She set her jaw, flipping her book shut and glancing at the clock on the adjacent wall. “That’s quite a risk for someone like you.” She observed, getting to her feet. “What’s the catch?”

“I’m disappointed, Alvers. I thought you had better manners.” He replied, crossing his arms.

She slipped her quill into her pocket. “Only when you get better manners, Malfoy.” She said, cocking an eyebrow before brushing past him and into the aisle she must have gotten the book from, stretching to slip it onto a shelf just above her height.

“You are absolutely helpless.” He muttered, snatching the book from her and sliding it into the slot she’d been trying to reach.

The look she gave him was grudging and bitter. “Tell me that when I’m not half-asleep, Malfoy.” She snapped, walking around him, afraid she might not get back to Gryffindor Tower before curfew. She slowed for a second, though, closing her eyes in near irritation, then turned slightly to look at him, “Thanks.” She mumbled reluctantly, receiving a slightly smug smirk in return before she left.

“Did you get anything done at all?” Fay asked as Rem trudged into the fifth year girl’s dorm, flopping onto her bed unceremoniously. The other girls glanced over as well, all but Lavender, who was snoring softly from her bunk by the door. Hermione looked up from her seat on her bed for a moment, a large book opened across her knees.

Rem groaned a noncommittal response into her duvet, then pulled herself up so she could lean on her elbows. “Well, first I got sidetracked, then I fell asleep, so no. I didn’t get anything done.”

“Lucky you woke when you did, then.” Parvati remarked, “Or did Madam Pince have to wake you up?”

Remington breathed in, opening her mouth to reply, but paused for a short moment. “No, Madam Pince didn’t wake me up.”

“What are you getting at?” Fay inquired, eyes narrowed.

“Nothing,” Rem said, pushing her shoes off her feet, soon followed by her vividly colored socks. “Just that Madam Pince didn’t wake me.”
“Alright, so Madam Pince didn’t wake you.” Fay repeated mockingly, shaking her outstretched hands on either side of her head. “Are you hinting that someone else did? That’s sure what it sounds like.”

“I’m not hinting anything.” Remington muttered, “Just trying to avoid talking about it.”

“Rem, just tell us who!” Fay ordered, leaning forward on her hands. “How complicated can this be?”

“It was Draco Malfoy, alright?!” Rem hissed.

“Malfoy woke you up?” Parvati prompted in disbelief, “What did he do? Dump you onto the floor?”

“Well, she would have given him a piece of her mind on that, wouldn’t you’ve, Rems?” Fay nudged.

Remington shook her head slightly, “No, he just shook my shoulder a bit—”

“Civilly?” Hermione inquired, eyebrows arched.

“Reasonably.” Rem agreed, “Though I gave him a pretty nasty look- He even put my book away.”

“You’re certain this was Malfoy?” Fay demanded, now at the edge of the side of her bed facing Rem, on her knees with her hands thrust on her hips.

“What do you think I am?” Remington shot back, “Stupid? Of course I’m certain. Don’t you think I’ve asked myself that enough?”

Fay’s eyes were slitted, Parvati was leaning forward as well, her expression unbelieving, and Hermione was just looking up from her book at Rem, dubiously. Lavender gave a soft moan, shifting under the covers.

“Look, I haven’t a clue what he’s been like before—” Rem began.

“He’s called Hermione a Mudblood more times than I can count—” Parvati interrupted as Hermione scowled at the volume in her lap. “And he says it not only because he means it, but because he wants to set her off.”

“And you’ve seen how he talks to Harry. It’s all because he’s jealous of the attention Harry gets.” Fay added.

“He’s been known to torture and harass the underclassmen—” Parvati threw in before Remington cut her off.

“I know, I know! Alright? I get it. He’s a horrid, evil person who’s bound to end up in the fiery pits below.” She said all in one quick breath, “But I can’t tell you any more than you can what he’s up to.” She pulled herself back to her feet, heading to the trunk at the end of her bed. “Maybe it’s nothing. Maybe he’ll be a total prick to me from here on out and I can pull an ‘I told you so.’” She fished around for some shorts and a tank top for bed.

“Or maybe he’s being nicer because you’re Pure-blood.” Parvati commented. “He wouldn’t possibly know your family, would he?”

“He could,” Rem shrugged her shoulders, tossing a pair of jeans back into her trunk. “My parents both grew up here.”

“Perhaps that’s it.” She offered, but when Remington looked up, she caught the unconvinced look on Hermione’s face.
Fiendish Compromise

Remington propped her head in her hand, glaring down at the book that sat in front of her. They’d just been assigned an essay for Potions on a few basic ingredients. Rem couldn’t even tell them apart, nonetheless write a foot and a half long essay about them. She’d initially intended to work on the project the night before, but upon finding a rather more interesting book, she’d blown off homework. Either way, it seemed a waste, considering she’d fallen asleep anyway. She had a habit of preoccupying herself until her exhaustion became too great to ignore, and it seemed to be coming back to get her.

She was now set on going to bed at a reasonable time every weeknight, in effort to not ever be caught like that again by Draco. She hadn’t enjoyed talking about it the night before, considering the experience was both embarrassing, and she had a feeling that they had a bit of disbelief of her. From how it sounded, his attitude was slightly more amiable with her than many others she’d talked to. And ‘slightly’ just might have been an understatement. One person saying differently would put their skepticism on the person rather than Draco.

She’d just read one sentence four times and absorbed about two words that triggered any recognition in her. With a groan of frustration, she lifted her head and let her hand fall onto the table, focusing with all her available effort on the page. Until, that is, someone pulled out the chair across from her.

Rem looked up to see Draco Malfoy looking back at her from his seat across the table, eyebrows raised almost mockingly. He was somewhere between being the last person she wanted to see and one of the few people she preferred to have around. At the moment, it probably leaned toward the former.

“Yes, Malfoy?” She inquired, the frustration from her homework aiming itself at him.

He shook his head lightly, almost disapprovingly, “Troubles, Alvers?”

“What do you care?” She shot back, tapping the end of her quill against the table.

“I don’t.” He responded, leaning back in the chair, “It’s just amusing to see you annoyed.”

“Well then you must be amused every time you come near me.” She retorted. “Now if you’ll excuse me, I’m actually trying to do something productive.”

“You’re not getting anywhere with that.” He observed as she turned back to her paper.

She exhaled in irritation and looked back up. “Really, Draco? What do you want?”

“Nothing.” He replied, “Well, I’d rather not have to wake you up ten minutes to curfew again-”

“You didn’t have to do anything.” She snapped.

“You seemed frightened when you woke up, why was that?” He abruptly asked.

She hesitated only slightest bit, which would have easily been overlooked, but she knew Draco was observant, and quite sharp-witted. He’d never have missed it. “Because I saw your face.” She threw at him, eyes narrowing.

“Nice try, Alvers.” He remarked coolly.
“God, just leave me alone?” She hissed. “I have homework.”

“How long have you been here?” He inquired, eyebrows arched. “You’ve got two sentences and don’t look like you’ll be getting much farther too awfully soon.”

“What are you implying?” She said in exasperation.

“Obviously you’re not very adept at Potions.” A slightly smug smile crossed his lips.

A thought struck her. Now it was her turn to smirk. “But you are.” She leaned forward as his expression suddenly sobered.

“I don’t like what you’re getting at.”

“You could help me.” She suggested, but knowing better than to expect anything from this boy without payment, added, “And we could decide on something I could do in return -- And don’t even start getting nasty ideas.” She tacked on when he cocked an eyebrow at her offer.

“What do you propose?” He asked, seeming quite professional.

“What’s your best classes?” She demanded.

“My best classes?”

“Correct.”

His chin tipped up slightly, “Potions, Transfiguration... Defence Against the Dark Arts.”

She smiled. “Charms and Astronomy. If you help me with just Potions, I can help you in Charms and Astronomy.”

“I don’t need O.W.L.’s.” He objected. “Who says I want help in my classes?”

“You don’t need O.W.L.’s?” She inquired, giving him a look.

“I don’t plan on getting a working-class job, if that’s what you’re going for.”

“Ah, so you’re that rich Pure-blood type.” She said, the expression on her face knowing and slightly self-satisfied. “Wouldn’t your parents be happier if you did yet better than usual?” His eyes narrowed. “I know how it is. My mother’s the same way.”

He scoffed, “Does that make you the rich Pure-blood type too?”

“It makes my mother that way. Not necessarily me.” She disagreed. “I’d like to be an Auror. With my grades in Potions and Herbology, however, that doesn’t seem likely.” After a moment she remarked, “So, is it a deal?”

“What have you been receiving in Potions?” He asked skeptically.

“I really don’t think that’s fair.” She objected, indignance lacing her tone. He looked at her expectantly. “I got a D on the last- thing.” She muttered.

“You were one of those people?” He said incredulously, “I thought it was just Potter and Longbottom.”

“Hey, don’t judge.” She snapped.
“I’m not sure if it would benefit either of us much to try and help you with such a terrible grade.” He said it with a fair amount of seriousness, but she could see and hear the mocking beneath it.

“I’m a rather smart person. I just can’t follow directions.” She said, “It’s not like I can’t learn.”

He took a deep breath, eyes on her. She wasn’t oblivious that he had an air as though he were assessing her. Something she’d noticed upon seeing him the first Monday in Potions. “Fair enough. However, the deal-”

“Don’t go manipulating this to your advantage. I’m not stupid enough to fall into that. It’s going to be equal for both of us. Reasonably.” She interjected.

“Fine. I’ll make sure you get an O.W.L. in Potions.” He said, “If you make sure I get one in Charms.”

“And I’ll do my best to help you in Astronomy.” She added. He looked entertained by this. “I like Astronomy, alright?” And it will probably make up for the fact my grade in Potions is likely quite lower than yours in Charms.

He shook his head lightly. She stuck her hand out. “You’re Pure-blood?” He asked.

Her chin lifted a bit. “And if I am?”

He took her hand. “I’d just rather not be throwing my cards in with inferiors.” He smirked.

She jerked her hand away. “I’m sure you won’t have any troubles with that.” She hissed at him as she stood up.

His face took on all of its usual disdain and superiority. “Care to elaborate, Alvers?”

The reminder that she still needed to finish her Potions essay and that she wouldn’t be able to do so without help pulled her back into her seat. “I’d rather not, actually.” She mumbled, resting her elbows on the table crossly, eyes on the book in front of her. Her gaze flicked up at him. “I’m not going to put up with you being biased and nasty, though.”

“We’ve already got a deal, Alvers.” He said, his victory over her clear in his expression.
From the moment she heard “so, Remington...” come out of one of the twin’s mouths, she knew she was about to be pulled into something that wasn’t exactly encouraged by school faculty.

“Oh God.” She mumbled as Fred and George sat across from her at the Gryffindor table. Students had begun to filter out for the night. Fay, who had been hinting that she wanted to go to the dorms, suddenly ceased her remarks.

“We hear you’re good at Charms.” Said the one Rem assumed to be George.

“Perhaps,” She replied slowly, “What do you want?”

“You know about the Skiving Snackboxes, right?” Fred asked as George glanced around to make sure Umbridge and Filch weren’t near.

“In fact I do.” She responded, almost cautiously.

“Well we have a bit of an issue with the Fainting Fancies,” Fred muttered.

“Right, you see, occasionally instead of just waking up right away-” George began, Fred finishing for him with “the antidote also causes some... less desired side effects.” Now George began ticking them off. “Hyperness-”

“It suddenly wearing off and the subject passing out.” Fred interjected.

“You once got sick, didn’t you, Fred?” George asked.

“Yes, I did.” Fred replied thoughtfully.

Remington was staring at them. “You expect me to solve your problems?”

“No, not all of them.” Fred remarked.

“Just these ones.” George added. “Now, come on. What do you think?”

“What do I think?” Remington prompted, “Other than that you two are completely out of your heads?”

“No, not all of them.” Fred remarked.

“Yes, other than that.” Fred waved away her comment. “We need solutions, Alvers.”

She made a derisive noise and rolled her eyes. “What’s in it for me?” George opened his mouth, but she cut him off, “And I don’t want any of your sickness-inducing snacks. I’d rather stay healthy at all times and have to put up with that foul pink toad.”

George’s eyes narrowed on her, obviously shot down. “We can’t pay you.” Fred threw in. “We’re already paying those first years enough of our profit.” George finished.

“By the way, I think that’s really primeval-” Rem began, but was cut short when Fred held up a hand, “Save it, Rems. We’re being nagged enough by Hermione.”

She exhaled, her eyes shifting between the two of them. “How about we just go for the average I-owe-you-one?”
Fred nodded. “Deal.” They both said at the same time.
Invisible Ink Messages

The third Saturday of the month passed much like the first, soaking up as much decent weather outside as possible. The temperatures were starting to cool off well enough, but Rem had the audacity to challenge the inevitable autumn and wear shorts, though pairing it shamelessly with a sweatshirt. Sitting out on the grounds, Remington found company in the form of Ginny Weasley. She couldn’t deny that she quite liked the girl. Ginny had a laid-back sense to her and an all-around likeable demeanor that was hard to not smile at.

At the moment, they were sprawled in a patch of scratchy grass near the lake, finishing up a bit of homework before the weekend could truly start. Remington had just finished the last bit of a History of Magic essay -- which she was fairly certain she failed extraordinarily on -- and Ginny was nearly done with her last assignment. This, of course, didn’t stop their conversation from veering quite a ways from the topic of homework.

Ginny was giving her a shrewd look, her red hair glinting dangerously in the light.

“What?” Remington demanded, arching her eyebrows and giving the other girl a look of her own.

“Seamus has been talking about you, you know.” She said, trying to appear casual.

“Actually, I hadn’t noticed.” Rem remarked. But now that it was brought to attention, she realized what Ginny was talking about. Seamus was part of the same cluster of close-knit Gryffindors that Fay was, and so Rem spent a lot of time with both of them, as well as Dean, whom she’d played one-on-one soccer against a couple times, and nearly won, Lavender, who she found to be the average type girl, not overly crazy or nearly as studious as Hermione, and Parvati, who seemed so much like the voice of reason at times, though joining in on Lavender’s more girlish antics often. She got on well with Seamus, no denying it, but she wasn’t sure if she fancied him in that way.

“No surprise.” Ginny shrugged, “I guess you’re too occupied with-” Her nose scrunched, “Malfoy.”

“I am not.” Rem disagreed, “I’ve got nothing to do with- Stop that. I don’t- What?” She snapped, flustered by the way Ginny’d mimed the words ‘Blah blah blah’ as she was talking.

Ginny gave a contemptuous snort and flipped the page of her Transfiguration book, pretending to continue studying.

“Well then,” Rem said, ready to drag the subject away from herself. “What about you and Michael?” Did she just compare herself and Draco to Ginny and Michael? Oh sh-

Ginny’s eyes snapped back to her, “I don’t see anything wrong with that. Michael is a perfectly nice boy.”

“I don’t know what you’re getting at here, really.” She muttered in exasperation. She received a sidelong look that told her what she already knew; she was perfectly aware of what Ginny was insinuating. She just didn’t want to believe it, or let Ginny continue insinuating it.

“What is it that’s got you so captivated by that dumbass?” Ginny demanded, “You’re always staring-”

“Don’t finish that sentence if you value the ability of speech.” Remington growled, “There’s nothing between me and Draco, and with any hope, there never shall be.” Let’s not mention the pact a couple days ago, hmm?
She rolled her eyes disbelievingly, “I highly doubt that,” She murmured, and without looking up she added, “Seeing as Devil Spawn Numero Uno is staring at you this very second.”

“What?” Rem asked, caught off-guard.

“Look to your left.”

Remington did as advised and looked over her shoulder. Sure enough, she locked eyes with Draco for a short moment. She got an uneasy feeling in her stomach, not sure what to make of the fact he was looking at her. Or rather, according to Ginny, staring. A second later, his grey-blue eyes casually looked away and she turned back to GInny. “That’s not-”

“Uh-ah,” Ginny said, flipping another page, not looking up, “Figure out what it really is before you go making excuses.”

“Jesus,” Rem remarked somewhat bitterly, “Are you sure you’re not supposed to be in Ravenclaw? You’re sounding all wise.”

“And you’re sounding like a first year once again.” Ginny muttered.

“Right, whatever you say,” Remington mumbled, “Just go back to your studying.”

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It wasn’t common practice for Draco to be able to evade Crabbe and Goyle. Though, he supposed, if it weren’t for those two, he’d probably be left alone most of the time, save for when he was with the other Slytherin fifth years. There was Pansy, who seemed utterly infatuated with him, though she wasn’t nearly as air-headed as Crabbe or Goyle. She could hold an intelligent conversation and even show a fair amount of wit at times rather than just nod and agree with everything he said like the other two. Then there was the other gang—

Headed by Blaise Zabini, who Draco actually saw as an equal. Blaise’s views weren’t much different than his own, and the kid was smart, well-known, and a rather good Quidditch Chaser. Theodore Nott joined in occasionally, and Draco didn’t really mind. Nott was clever and similarly disapproving as he was. Lastly was Stephen Cornfoot, who wasn’t quite as prejudiced as the other three, but smart enough to know that as long as he didn’t say anything about it, they’d get along just fine.

Draco had left the two Neanderthals in the Great Hall after lunch, choosing instead company that was rather brighter. Like most of the rest of the school, they were getting as much of the outdoors before the overdue cold settled in. And it hadn’t escaped their attention that the newest addition to the fifth year was sitting only halfway down the gentle slope to the lake.

“She’s awfully vain for a Gryffindor.” Stephen remarked with a glance in Remington’s direction.

“With legs like those, she has a right to be vain.” Blaise added. A part of Draco didn’t appreciate them talking about Rem in such a way, but couldn’t figure out what exactly it was about it that bothered him. It wasn’t morals, he knew that much. He’d not hesitate to speak about her in just the same way.

“So even Zabini finds her attractive.” Nott taunted, smirking at him slightly.

“She’s Pureblood, with a respectable family. Hangs around those Blood Traitors now and then, though.” Blaise said, taking on a slightly disgusted look.
“It’s not like there’s much better to hang around with in that house.” Draco muttered, eyeing the Weasley girl with distaste. She wasn’t bad-looking, and she mustn’t have been a horrible person if Rem was hanging around her, but she had some of the most undesirable blood in the school. Right behind the Mudbloods.

“She’d do better in Slytherin.” Blaise agreed.

“A lot better.” Draco mumbled, watching Remington. It was surprising to see that despite the fact she wore pants ninety percent of the time, her legs had a faint golden tint to them. It was hard to miss, considering all but approximately the uppermost five inches of her legs were displayed thanks to her choice of shorts. And since she’d put her shoes aside, he could just make out a mark on the inside of her left ankle. Papa was inked in black, vertically. Beneath it was Keke, then Father.

She may not have been the most attractive girl at Hogwarts, but she certainly wasn’t unattractive. Draco had the feeling that Blaise and, well, most of the other boys that had begun to fancy her were partially just intrigued by the idea of a new face. All the other girls had been there day-in, day-out, and now there was a bit of variation. And as for the Slytherins, the pureness of her blood only made her more enticing. Not to say she didn’t have flaws. He’d noticed a small scar on her left cheekbone that managed to annoy him slightly, and the tattoos on her ankle didn’t add to her beauty whatsoever. Not to mention that she always slouched-

“Taking a liking to her, Malfoy?” Stephen asked with a sly smile.

Rem’s eyes trailed over to meet Draco’s for a short second and he turned his head to look at the other boy. “Not exactly.”
“Oh god, Finnigan.” Remington said, after having just glanced at the table ahead of her own. She had a hunch when she smelled a hint of something burning, but the smoke curling up from Seamus’ station was a dead giveaway.

The Irish boy turned around as if to see who’d spoken, black smears on his nose and forehead. His eyes narrowed good-naturedly, “Shut up, Alvers.” He shot back.

“At least you’ve still got both eyebrows.” Fay remarked, leaning forward on her elbows.

“No, I think half of the left one looks a bit questionable, you see?” Rem disagreed thoughtfully, trying her hardest to keep a straight face.

“Oh yes, now I see that.” Fay nodded. Seamus scowled at them, the effect quite comical.

Suddenly, his cauldron brought forth a smatter of sparks and he whirled, jumping away from it. Fay cracked up as Rem called, “Careful now, Seamus.” Dean was backing up from his friend, watching the cauldron anxiously. Half the class was paying more attention to the scene than their own potions.

“Really, they shouldn’t be surprised. Happens at least every other week,” Parvati muttered. Lavender nodded in agreement, though had to stifle a laugh as Seamus started toward his potion again, only for it to burst into flames.

“Mister Finnigan, if you would please contain your concoction.” Snape drawled from the Slytherin half of the room, glaring disdainfully at Seamus. With a swift flick of his wand, the fire imploded to nonexistence and Seamus was left with an empty cauldron.

“A pity.” Remington heard Draco say mockingly from the table across from hers. She glanced over to see him smirking derisively.

“I’d appreciate you keeping your comments to yourself, Malfoy.” Seamus snapped, keeping his demeanor as civil as possible, so as to not attract the attention of Professor Snape, who was currently belittling Ron’s potion, which was a sickly shade of green, compared to the soft mahogany that it was supposed to be.

“I’d appreciate you not getting us all killed thanks to your horrendous creations.” Draco shot back.

Remington knew for a fact that Snape was merely turning a blind eye at the moment so as to not have to chastise his favorite student, so when Seamus opened his mouth to send another retort Draco’s way, she interrupted. “It’s not worth it, Seamus.” She told him quietly.

He looked at her for a moment. She could tell he wanted to say something, but bit it back.

“That’s right, control your boyfriend, Alvers.” Came Draco’s call.

She turned towards him, about to get to her feet. “Rem.” Seamus said under his breath as Fay grabbed hold of her sleeve to stop her from doing anything irrational. She glared at Draco for a moment, and he returned it with a lazy smirk of his own.
“Draco. Relax.” She snapped, her forehead resting on her heal of her hand, elbow on the table.

Looking more annoyed than ever, Draco repeated the spell, the wand movement still too tense to create much result.

Her hand came down on his, pinning it to the table. “What would it take to get you to just loosen up?” She demanded, exasperated and surprised that he still hadn’t succeeded in doing much of anything to the teacup on the table in front of them, which was supposed to have been hobbling around on legs for at least ten minutes.

“What about you?” He shot back indignantly. “You’re just as aggravating as I am.”

She drew her hand back, crossing her arms. It was true that she’d been in a rather foul mood all day. Actually, it was getting to be almost chronic. She wasn’t getting much sleep, though she tried, and the fact that she had a hard time not arguing with Draco while he had helped her with the latest Potions essay didn’t improve her attitude. She had a habit of convincing herself she was right, and that certainly didn’t bode well when Draco was right and he knew it. About halfway through she had realized she should trust his judgment and not her own when it came to that subject, and had stopped quarreling with him.

“Alright,” She said, “I’m sorry.” Though her tone was too indifferent for it to sound completely heartfelt. “But it has to be a fluid movement, and you’re not relaxing enough.”

“It’s a bit difficult to relax when you jump down my throat every time I do something even remotely wrong.” He retorted, the lack of patience with her obvious in his voice.

“Right, fine.” She said, shaking her head as if in surrender. *This isn’t going to work. Us, operating together. We’ve both got dominant characters. We’ll just fight the whole time and never accomplish anything but throwing more fuel on the fire.*

His chin jerked slightly, in a nod of grudging assent before he laid the argument to rest and looked back at the teacup, as if it had cost him a personal offence.

“Oh God, now don’t get angry at the cup.” She interjected. “Take a deep breath, calm down.” His glare turned on her and her hands flew up to block her eyes from his. “Seriously, cool it.” She said. “I can’t help you if you’re intent on not letting me.”

She saw him shift and slowly lowered her hands, now finding him leaning on his elbow on the table, chin in his hand and his eyes on her indifferently, an eyebrow raised.

“Was that so hard?” She asked, “Now, can we please continue?”

“This is incredibly frustrating.” He muttered, rolling his eyes.

“Well it doesn’t have to be.” She mumbled, her eyebrows arched.

“I’m not the one making it that way.” He argued.

“You know what, if you’re just going to argue with me-” She began, but then realized how childish they were both being. Not to mention that Draco had put up with all of her contests, and had eventually managed to help her finish her homework, where she wasn’t doing the same for him. He
was watching her expectantly, and she couldn’t decide if he was waiting for her to call off their deal, or suddenly admit defeat and apologize. “We’re never going to get anything done.” She stated.

He took a deep breath, giving her a look. “Don’t give me a reason to argue, then.” He said.

“Whatever you say,” She said almost sweetly, her eyes flicking towards the teacup pointedly.

A smirk pulled at the corner of his mouth as he focused back on the cup, and finally, after all of the disagreements, four little legs sprouted from the china cup and it made a break for the edge of the table, busting to pieces when it smashed into the stone floor.

Draco stared after it for a moment. Remington remarked, “I’d run too.” From the attitude she’d had with him from the start, it was only natural that he assumed it was meant as an insult to him. He shot her a glare. “What?” She demanded. “I didn’t mean run from you. Well,” She paused, “You’re a bit frightening when you’ve got that look on your face. Try smiling, I’m sure you’ve be devastatingly handsome.” Inside, she was laughing, but her face didn’t show it, knowing he’d just take it offensively.

“It’s difficult to smile when I’m looking at you.” He replied, the seriousness in the way he said it was almost convincing. Until she burst out laughing and a smirk started to form on his lips. “What?”

“Oh,” She said, “You know you can’t help but smile on the inside when you see me.” She said, grinning. “You don’t have to admit it.”

He arched an eyebrow, leaning his elbow on the table, “Are we done, then?”

“Miss Alvers?” Madam Pince called from the nearest bookshelf. “Professor Snape would like to see you.”

Remington looked back at Draco. If he was surprised by the librarian’s announcement, he didn’t show it. “I guess we are.” She said, pulling her Potions book into her arms. “See you tomorrow in Charms.”

“You’re leaving me to clean up the teacup, aren’t you?” He inquired blamefully.

She just smiled at him before walking away.
It was a touchy subject. But what wasn’t, really? The subject of her entire being had become a bit of a sensitive wound as of late. Her history was anything but her favorite conversational piece. This was no different. It felt like a sick, poor attempt at replacing her father. She had only seen Severus Snape thrice before her father’s death. Once when she was nearly too young to remember him, and once each at her grandparent’s funerals. And then the fourth time she’d met him was at her father’s funeral, and that was the first time she saw him while totally aware that he was supposed to be taking the authority of a father over her. It couldn’t be helped – being that three of the first four times she’d spoken to the man had been at a ceremony for the passing of those she loved – that she did not have a particular liking for him.

She was trying, though. She tried to view Snape as an uncle, at the least. Which he almost was, considering he’d been her father’s cousin. And of course, anyone considered family was subject to her scrutiny and criticism.

“I can’t believe you chose him to be a prefect. He’s so manipulative, and everything must go his way.” Remington remarked as she sat at a table closest to the teacher’s.

“From my understanding, you’ve been spending time with him regardless.” Snape said, not looking up at her from the papers at his desk in front of him, one eyebrow arched.

“Well-” She began haughtily, desperately clutching her dignity, “You’re not exactly passing me, so I needed help from something.”

His gaze turned up at her, “And you just so chose Mister Malfoy?”

Her eyes narrowed, “Normally you’re not supposed to start insinuating things. Not as a teacher, not as a parental figure.”

A slight sneer crossed his face as he looked back down at the papers he was grading.

“Has my mother said anything to you?” She asked indifferently, though she was inwardly half-hoping his answer wouldn’t be a negative. She wanted some sort of acknowledgement from her mother, but wasn’t about to give her mother the satisfaction of receiving a letter from her daughter, not after everything Rem blamed that woman for. But she knew better than to expect Marissel to send a letter without having been addressed first.

“No, Marissel has sent me no word.” He glanced at her again, “Have you not heard from her?”

“No,” Remington said, forcing the disappointment out of her tone. “I haven’t.” She set a glare on one of the legs of Snape’s desk. “Though it doesn’t surprise me much. You’d have to drag that woman halfway to the sun for her heart to start thawing.”

Snape frowned slightly. He’d never say as much to Remington, knowing her reaction would likely be explosive, but it wasn’t hard to see bits of Marissel in the way she held her grudge. How she held on so tightly to her honor. How she placed blame with so little compassion or attempt to understand. The cold stare she fixated made her look such like her mother, though she usually seemed a young, girlish copy of Timothy. Her sharp greenish-blue eyes were unmistakably Marissel, however, where Timothy had the black eyes of a Prince.

“Do you miss my father ever, Severus?” She asked suddenly, her gaze not moving, though softening reasonably.
It irked him slightly how her address of him varied so much, and so often. One moment he could be Professor Snape, and Severus the next. And not just that, but now she chose to ask such a question. It was understandable, of course, but he couldn’t just tell her the blunt response that came to mind immediately for fear of what sort of emotion it might bring out in her. He couldn’t say he’d ever been exactly close with Timothy. But he was the closest relative to Severus’ own age, and they’d always gotten on well. It seemed Timothy had gotten the luck to marry and start a family, where Severus was stuck teaching children in his second-choice post. And a sort of parenthood was unexpectedly and undesirably forced upon him.

“I’m aware that your father was a good man, Remington, but by no means did I know him particularly well.” Snape said.

Her eyes trailed to him and she pursed her lips a bit, not finding fault in his answer. She took a deep breath. “Well... I need to get up to the tower before curfew.” She said slowly as she stood up from the stool, nodding in goodbye before slipping out of the door.
Dyed Hands

She’d been avoiding Fay all morning, or at least preoccupying her. She knew she couldn’t do such forever, but she really didn’t want to talk about it. She knew Fay would be wondering what she’d been doing the night before, having spent a handful of hours in the back of the library with Draco, practicing Charms and memorizing Potions, then having to see Snape afterwards. On that note, she was a bit upset that he’d had her sent to his office for apparently no reason, but she knew that it was simply just his way of making sure she was still functioning somewhat properly after the incident that summer, and she could respect that. Though, it still bothered her. Nevertheless, it was now the next day, and in a series of events that were likely irritating to Fay and grudgingly fortunate for Remington’s cause, Fay ended up a few rows over for Charms. This hardly stopped her from getting to Rem, however.

Rem felt something hit her heel, and upon looking down, discovered a small ball of paper that Fay must have charmed to roll across the floor and run into the intended note-receiver’s foot. She glanced up at Flitwick before snatching up the paper, unfolding it and splaying it on the table before her.

What were you up to last night? I thought we were going to work on Transfiguration together. And it seems like you’re avoiding me. Don’t lie.

Remington took a deep breath, stealing another quick look at Professor Flitwick before scribbling back.

Not much. Got someone to help me with Potions. I was in the library.

She crumpled the paper back into a ball and brushed it lightly off her desk, pointing her wand at it under the table and breathing a charm, her lips hardly moving. She risked a glimpse in Fay’s direction as the other girl responded. Soon, Rem felt a tap on her ankle again and retrieved the note.

I know that’s not the bad part. Something else must have happened, or it was obviously someone I don’t approve of, considering you’re trying to get out of telling me.

Rem’s eyes narrowed slightly. It irked her somewhat that Fay was so observant, that she noticed little things like this. Sometimes it was good. A relief. But for the most part, it just felt too intrusive.

Definitely not someone you approve of. Think about it for a second. Whose guts do you hate? Who is good at Potions? We both know you can guess.

You’ve got to be kidding me. It’s Malfoy, isn’t it?

Perhaps... But Fay, really he isn’t all that horrible. Sometimes. Occasionally. I mean, sure he’s an ass almost constantly, but he wasn’t directly nasty to me. There were comments now and then, but not aimed at me.

Oh, Rem. He probably just wants to get in your pants or something.

Being moderately civil is not going to get him that far. I’m no whore.

But this time, when she sent it back to Fay, the note was intercepted by none other than Draco Malfoy himself. A part of Remington felt absolutely mortified, and she ran a hand through her hair, letting her forehead rest in her palm as her eyes trained back on Flitwick, not brushing her dark hair from her face, feeling a bit less uneasy with it forming a curtain between herself and Draco. And she remained that way for the rest of class.
Once Professor Flitwick dismissed them, Fay was at her side, urging her to hurry so they could get out before Malfoy confronted them.

“Come on,” Fay pleaded, already a couple yards away. “Oh, damn. Too late.” She breathed and Rem glanced over to see Draco headed in her direction. “You’re on your own, honey.” She said before melting into the crowd of exiting students.

Knowing she couldn’t escape Draco even as well as she could Fay, she waited for him to catch up before heading towards the door.

“I could have you in detention.” He remarked, immediately pointing out his ‘superiority’ to her. It was so like him.

“You probably could.” She replied. “Swearing, passing notes, and talking bad about a prefect, I’m sure it’s worth some sort of rebuking.”

She assumed he wasn’t expecting her to be so cooperative and uncombative about it. “Naturally.”

“Doesn’t sound like you’re planning to turn us in, though.” She observed.

“Perhaps you should just watch yourself.” He warned.

“Ah, blackmail. The threat of those too afraid of physical arguments.” She said, the taunting in her voice not being lost to him.

“Is that a challenge?” He inquired, though not seeming thrilled at what she was insinuating, he was amused by the thought of her trying to provoke a fight.

“Most definitely.” She replied, scrunching her nose slightly. She shook her head lightly, “I’ve got to get to Binns’ class.” She said, breaking away from him to head towards the stairs.

“Tuesday night?” He called after her and she turned around, giving him a look that was a bit quizzical. “I’ve got Charms Wednesday.” He said in explanation.

She had to force back the smile that tried to work its way onto her lips. “Sure thing. Seven, then?”

He gave her a short nod of assent and final look before they both turned to go their own ways.
She’d been called into McGonagall’s office after her last class on Tuesday, Herbology, and spoken to about being more careful with the words she writes on paper. There was only one thing she could think of that could lead to her being chastised for such, and that hunch was proven correct when McGonagall showed her the note she and Fay had been passing in Charms. Immediately, she was furious with Draco. What had she done to upset him? She couldn’t have done anything wrong. Certainly nothing to make him decide to turn the note in.

She didn’t have to wait long to confront Draco, finding him near the lake after she left her Head of House’s office. Without hesitation, she approached him. He only noticed her when she was a couple yards away, a cautious look on his face. Until she finally reached him and shoved his chest, causing Crabbe and Goyle to shift forward, though Draco shook his head lightly, bringing them to a halt.

“What the bloody hell was that for?” He demanded, glaring down at Remington.

“I could ask you the same thing!” About to push him again, but he grabbed her hand and threw it away from him.

“What are you talking about, Alvers?” He snapped.

“I guess maybe I was wrong. You are just an asshole.” She hissed, her chin tipping upwards, her expression disgusted.

His eyes narrowed, “And maybe you are just a filthy little Gryffindor.” He retorted, just as venomously.

She drew her wand before he had even halfway reached for his, shoving it into his throat. He winced, glaring down at her. She assumed that he hadn’t expected her to threaten him in such a way. She didn’t blame him, normally she was just disapproving of his behavior, but now she felt as if he’s purposely cost her a personal offence.

“I wouldn’t call me names, if I were you.” She growled.

“You won’t do anything.”

“Want to try me?”

“You’re too much of a goody.”

“Flagrate.” She hissed.

He jerked back, his hand coming up to cover the burn on his neck. “You little.”

“Expelliarmus!” She shouted as he turned his wand on her.

Hands grabbed her arms from behind. “Umbridge is on her way!” One of the twins hissed, presumably Fred. She shrugged his hands off her, still glaring intently at Draco, her wand aimed at his chest.

“You’d best watch yourself, Malfoy.” She warned darkly.

“It’s you who should be watching.” He spat back.
“Miss Alvers!” Umbridge’s girlish voice shrieked in disdain, “Put your wand down immediately.”

She did as she was told. Fred muttered an “I told you so” from behind her. Draco gave her one last smirk before turning to walk away.

“Would you like to explain yourself, young lady?” Umbridge demanded as she approached.

“Malfoy could do a better job of it than me.” Rem said, crossing her arms. If she was going to be taken hostage by this woman, she’d better have someone to suffer with.

“Draco,” The toad-lady said, “Would you please accompany us to my office?” She ordered before turning and marching back towards the castle.

Once Umbridge’s back was to her, a smile of cold triumph crossed her lips.

“You’re just wasting my time.” Malfoy’s voice hissed in her ear, “She won’t believe a lie that comes out of your mouth, particularly when it’s up against my word.”

“Either way, knowing I’m upsetting you will improve my mood.” She whispered back. “An eye for an eye.”

“What did I do in the first place?” He asked irritably, sharply.

“Why would you give McGonagall the note? I haven’t done anything to you!” She shot at him.

“I didn’t give McGonagall the note!” He responded angrily.

“You’re the one who had it!” She hissed, “Who else would have done?”

“It wasn’t me!” He snapped back under his breath, “I’d think telling you once would be good enough!”

“Then tell me who it was!” She demanded quietly.

“I’d place my bets on Parkinson.” He muttered.

“Why’s that?” She asked bitterly. “How’d she get the note in the first place?”

“I don’t know how she got the note,” He stated derisively, “Does it even matter anymore?”

“Alright. Say it was Pansy.” Her tone was nearly more acidic and condescending than his own, “But pray tell what she’d want it for?”

“Because she’s jealous as hell.”

“Of what?”

“What she thinks is going on between us.” He replied as they reached the corridor of Defense, where Umbridge’s office was located. “Pretty sneaky for her. Turn you in, knowing you’d think it was me and get angry.”

“I can’t trust you.”

“I never asked you to.”

“Good thing.” She mumbled tersely as Umbridge glanced back at them and strode into the office. It
didn’t seem as if she’d overheard any of their near-silent exchange.

Draco made as if to enter, but Remington slipped in before him, “Ladies first, where’s your manners?” She asked at a normal voice level, then added under her breath, “Neanderthal.”

He cut her a glare as the Professor gestured for them both to sit. Rem threw herself down into one of the cushy pink seats, her posture probably revolting to Umbridge as she leaned back into the chair.

“Now what is of the encounter a few moments ago?” Umbridge inquired in her impeccably annoying voice, smiling as if she weren’t about to deal out detentions.

“I was walking, when Alvers called me out and drew her wand on me. She burned by neck and disarmed me.” He didn’t seem to realize until after he’d said it that he’d screwed himself over by admitting that she’d disarmed him. He’d have had to be armed in order to be disarmed.

“Could I see the burn, Mister Malfoy?” Umbridge asked sweetly. He pulled his collar down, displaying an angry red dot on his throat, only a little smaller than an inch in diameter. The frog turned her mug on Rem. “Care to defend your actions, Miss Alvers?”

She straightened up, crossing her legs and folding her hands on top. “Certainly. You see, Malfoy has a very common tendency to insult me, among others. I admit, I acted rashly and drew my wand. He followed suit and I disarmed him.”

“Did you burn him before or after he drew his wand?” Umbridge prompted.

“After.”

“Not true!” Draco objected.

Rem’s eyes stayed unwaveringly locked on Umbridge’s, not giving anything away.

“Detention at seven, both of you.”

“Why me?” Malfoy demanded.

“For drawing your wand on a fellow student.” It was a fact none of them could deny, not after Draco’s virtual confession.

“You’re positively foul. I didn’t even turn you in!” Draco snapped as soon as they were out in the hall.

“Does it matter? You still kept that goddamn note, if you hadn’t we wouldn’t be in this situation.” She retorted.

“Or you could’ve just not written the note, then none of this would’ve happened.” He suggested sharply.

“It’s not my fault you’re insufferable.” She said indifferently.

“You’re not really a jar of honey, either.” He muttered.

“I could be, if you weren’t so thoroughly unbearable.”

He smirked, “Are you admitting that you could possibly like me?”

“Only if you underwent one hell of a personality makeover, Malfoy.”
“I’ll keep that in mind, Alvers.”
He came around the final corner before Umbridge’s office to find Remington pacing in front of the door. She came to an apathetic halt once she spotted him, watching him with a strange look on her face. As if she was looking at him, but not really seeing him. As soon as he got close enough to where she could speak at a regular level without her voice being stretched by the distance, she seemed to shift back into the real world. “Draco.” She greeted with false amiability. The self-satisfied smirk on her face told him as much.

“On a first-name basis again all of a sudden, are we, Alvers?” He inquired loftily.

“Shut up.” She said, her mellow, soft voice suddenly turning so indifferent that it was almost harsh. “You’re late.”

“You didn’t have to wait for me, I’m sure you’re quite capable of opening the door yourself.” He responded, stepping past her, turning as he did so that he never stopped facing her, walking backwards to Umbridge’s door.

She twisted on her heels to face him as well, heading after him, a couple yards behind. “You think I want to wait in that room alone with the blood-sucking hag?”

“Colorful word choice,” He remarked, his hand landing on the doorknob, twisting it and giving her a final smirk before slipping inside, Rem just after.

Umbridge didn’t mention their being a good ten minutes late, knowing that condemning Remington for it would only force her to do the same to Draco. She simply smiled at them in that annoying, sickening way. “Draco, you can assist me with some filing.” Umbridge said, “You shall be writing lines, Remington.”

Rem decided she didn’t like the lady calling her by her first name, and caught the smirk Malfoy aimed at her. His work at least wouldn’t be giving him hand cramps.

Umbridge guided her to a desk, placing a quill and parchment in front of her.

“No ink.” She remarked, tapping the end of the quill on the table.

“You won’t need ink.” The Professor smiled at her sweetly. “ ‘I must behave,’ now.”

Rem reluctantly set in on her paper, not paying mind to the other people in the room as she started feeling tingling sensations in her left hand. She stretched the fingers out, not thinking twice about it until the tingling turned into burning, then absolute searing. She glanced down occasionally, watching as the words she wrote on the paper engraved themselves into the back of her hand, red, angry, and deep. Blood pooled in the marks and she now understood why Draco had been asked to organize files rather than write lines. The old toad wouldn’t want her prize student branded like cattle.

Remington fisted her hand and hid her arm beneath the desk, across her lap, as she continued copying the phrase over and over, the cuts on her hand throbbing at her savagely. After some time, Umbridge finally released them.

Rem tugged her sleeve over her hand, for some reason afraid for Draco to see. It had lazily leaked blood throughout the session, though it was nothing a bandage couldn’t conceal.
“Enjoy that did you? Getting me a detention?” He shot at her as they walked down the corridor.

“Partially.” She replied, gripping the end of her sleeve tighter. “I couldn’t help but notice how she gave you the more appealing punishment.”

“What could you expect?” He smirked, “How does your hand feel?”

For a moment she almost thought he knew what the loathsome quill did, but realized he was talking about her writing hand. Not before she flinched, however. He noticed. “Painful.” She muttered. Thoughtlessly, she reached over and rubbed her sore left hand.

“You’re right-handed.” He remarked.

Her hands snapped back to her sides, “How would you know?” She retorted. He stopped in front of her, bringing her to a halt. Before she had time to yank her hand away, he grasped it. She gave a quiet yelp of pain. He glanced at her, shifting his hold to her wrist, pulling back her sleeve. His eyes widened just so fractionally at the words cut into her skin.

“Bloody hell, Rem.” He breathed. She pulled her arm away roughly. “And you didn’t say anything?”

“Would it have mattered? She knew what the quill did. That’s why she didn’t give me any ink.” She responded harshly.

“Maybe you should go to the infirmary-”

“What good will it do? It will probably reject any sort of magical remedy.” She eyed him with scrutiny. “Are you concerned?”

He rolled his eyes and kept walking.
Painted Wings

It was just past five in the morning. Remington was singing along to a song on the radio, a bit upset that her father refused to let her drive. He’d insisted it was far too early and he didn’t want her falling asleep behind the wheel. They were visiting a friend of hers from elementary school. One of the impeccably few Muggles the Alvers associated with. Rem was supposed to be spending two weeks with the other girl’s family. It was a six hour drive, and Rem had sworn she’d be there for lunch. Her father was in the driver’s seat, having given up on trying to turn the radio down. He knew that if he denied her one thing, she’d merely insist on another.

She saw the reflection of eyes just before the creature clambered onto the road, baring its fangs. In less than a millisecond the car slammed into it, just enough time for her to squeeze her eyes shut. The seatbelt dug into Remington’s collar as the airbags deployed, crushing her chest. Something slammed into her forehead and she heard crunching metal and snarls. Of course the crash wouldn’t kill the werewolf. When she realized everything was still she opened her eyes, wanting to call out for her father. She could feel her legs folded up beneath her, the front of the car having compacted from hitting either the wolf or the ditch. Tears burned down her face, likely among blood from whatever had hit her in the head, and a sharp pain throbbed in her left ankle. She managed to fumble the seatbelt undone, shaking from shock, and likely pain. She looked over at her dad, but he wasn’t there.

She tried her door handle, but it was jammed. Instead, she crawled into the driver’s seat, feeling sick as she saw the dark stains patterned on the upholstery. The driver’s door was torn off, along with the seat belt. The crash alone couldn’t have done that kind of damage. She was shaking nearly uncontrollably as she peered out of the doorway. A pair of werewolves were lunging at each other, one of them had a nasty limp and looked rather beat-up. The motionless body of her father was drug halfway from the car to them, a mangled, bloody mess.

Remington was thankful she’d turned her father down when he offered to make her toast. She gagged, tears stinging past her eyes as she retreated into the car. Maybe she could remain unnoticed until the sun came up. Otherwise... Her mind trailed back to her father’s carcass and she gagged again, this time it caught the werewolves’ attention, and their horrifying faces swung to face her.

Her eyes snapped open, her breathing coming ragged. She cast a look over the room, expecting to see a figure in the shadows or eyes tucked away in a corner, staring at her. She sat up, scooting so her back was against the headboard, getting a better view of the dorm. Slowly, her heartbeat lightened, no longer pounding rapidly and painfully in her chest. She took a few deep breaths to regulate her breathing before she slipped out of bed, throwing on a cardigan before silently making her way to the common room. She paced for a while, still too on edge to sit. The room felt claustrophobic. Crowded.

It was the middle of the night, the infamous witching hour, to be exact. If she were caught in the halls, there would be hell to pay. She’d probably have to go and carve her hand again with the devil’s spawn. And for what? A late-night stroll? She wanted to talk to someone. To find solace of some sort. There was always Professor McGonagall, but she didn’t feel very close to her Head of House. She felt like a teacher to Rem, nothing more. Then there was Snape. He was not much better, being far less compassionate. He was a horrible example of a godfather in her eyes, but she felt closer to him than she did McGonagall. If nothing else, she could just tell him about the dream and that its reoccurrence concerned her.

All of the portraits were sleeping, and Remington was careful to make as little sound as she could.
The halls were completely noiseless. There was nothing to hear. It seemed as if the place were abandoned, although she knew there were a few hundred students asleep in their dorms throughout the castle.

She was finally to the stairs to the dungeon, just turning the first corner when she heard the first sounds of life. She caught sight of a couple figures down the hall and quickly retreated, slipping behind a pillar. There was a hushed argument, the sound of stone against stone, and just when she thought she may have avoided being spotted, there was a wand pointed at her throat.

“I thought it was you.” Draco muttered, looking down at her. It looked as if she’d simply rolled out of bed and took to sneaking about the halls. Her hair was pulled back haphazardly into a bun and she’d simply pulled a cardigan over her tank top and sweatpants. Between them, there was quite a contrast, being that he was still fully, impeccably dressed. She eyed his wand pointedly until he lowered it, slipping it back into his pocket. “What are you doing down here?”

“I couldn’t sleep.” She said flatly.

His eyes narrowed, “Alvers.”

“I’m not lying.” She said, crossing her arms. “Why are you out?”

“Prefect business.” He replied, the superior tone to his voice plain. “On that subject, I should give you a detention.”

“Yeah, now that the skin is no longer sore.” She examined his face, some part of her hoping she’d see even a sliver of compassion, but that part was sorely disappointed. It had been nearly a week since the detention.

He tipped his head in a gesture for her to come out from behind the pillar. They started walking down the corridor, away from the dungeons. “If you’d just not ignore the rules, this wouldn’t be an issue.”

“You’re one to talk. You’re a prefect and you’re still not being a model citizen, so don’t go preaching to me about it.”

“I won’t be etched on like you, though.”

“Because you’re her teacher’s pet.” Rem added, not without bitterness. “She just doesn’t want her prize specimen to be branded so everyone can see.” He kept his eyes down and they didn’t say anything for a while, “Where are we heading?” She asked.

“I don’t know.” He replied, “I just figured you wanted to walk.”

“Smart guess.”

“Why couldn’t you sleep?”

“No reason.”

“There was obviously a reason.”

“Nightmare.” She said tersely, “Happy?”

“No.” He responded sharply, but his tone quickly softened back to normal, which wasn’t a whole lot gentler. “Do you want to talk about it?”
“Why do you even care? What’s got you pretending to all of a sudden?” She snapped.

“I try to do something that won’t make you hate me and this is what I get?” He shot back at her venomously.

“I don’t appreciate suspicious kindness.” She retorted. A chill streaked up her spine, sending the hair at the back of her neck on edge. She spun around to see a fluffy tail darting around the corner a ways back.

“Filch!” Draco hissed.

“You think we can get back to the dorms before he catches us?” She asked, sounding quite unconcerned.

“No!” He grabbed her wrist, tugging her towards a broom closet.

“Ow!” She flashed at him as the pressure of his grip made the healing words on her hand burn.

“Sorry!” He lashed back, pulling the door shut behind them.

She pressed her back against the wall, trying not to get her feet caught in all of the junk on the floor. “Did you just apologize?” She asked harshly.

“Shut up!” Draco snapped, “He might hear you.”

She folded her arms crossly, sliding down the wall so she was crouching, a scowl on her face. She heard the same awkward, rushed steps as the time Fred bowled her over. Inside the closet, they were both silent besides the soft sound of their breathing.

Filch reached the area where the broom closet was, mumbling something about students being out of bed. When his steps began to retreat she stood back up. As her eyes adjusted, Remington swept a glance around the broom closet. It was wide enough, but not even two feet deep, and packed with brooms and mops. She figured there were so many because they would certainly be charmed when used, allowing them to work without an individual actually operating them. She also spotted a large arachnid in the corner she’d been standing in. Flattened out, the thing would’ve been an easy half foot from the end of one leg to the end of another leg on the opposite side. It was thick, furry, and dark. She made a sound of surprise, lunging for the doorknob.

Draco’s hand closed over hers on the handle, his other hand bracing against the door on the other side of her. They were pressed together, chest-to-chest, the closet not allowing any more space by depth. Remington tried hard to overlook their proximity, but it was exceedingly difficult to ignore the fact that she could feel Draco breathing. The way his chest rose, restricting her own. Or that when he spoke, his breath brushed her face and neck.

“What are you doing?” He demanded sharply.

“There’s a giant-ass spider in the corner over there. I’d rather have a full week of detention than find out if it’s poisonous.” She hissed, turning the knob. Due to the lack of foot space, they both lost their balance and tumbled out of the closet.

“God dammit, Remington!” He hissed, trying to get up, straightening his clothes, “I’ll kill you if you get me another detention.”

She found her way to her feet, pulling her cardigan back onto her shoulders. “If you hadn’t come back to confront me, we wouldn’t be in this situation!”
“Where were you going?” He snapped.

“Not your business!”

They both heard Filch’s running steps approaching again from the direction they’d faded into before.

“Come on!” She whispered hastily, yanking on his wrist for a moment, running back the way they’d come. Rem didn’t really know where they were heading until they reached the dungeons once again.

“I can’t believe this.” Malfoy muttered, coming to a halt. “If you say anything, you’re dead. You got that?”

“Fine, Draco.” She shot at him, glancing back for Filch.

He turned to the wall, muttering a word she didn’t quite catch.

“What are you-?” The wall started sliding. The Slytherin common room. It clicked.

He pulled her into the dank tunnel just inside the entrance. “Wait here.” He ordered under his breath, leaving her as the stone slid back to where it was supposed to be. After a short time Draco came back and gestured for her to follow. She assumed he’d been checking to see if anyone was still up and out in the common. It would have been really horrible for them both to be caught.

She let him lead her into a room lined with skulls. It held a malevolent green glow and looked strangely unwelcoming. He threw himself down on a couch, looking her over as if she were an Arithmancy problem that didn’t add up. “You shouldn’t be here.”

“I didn’t plan on coming here.” She replied, wringing her hands, standing halfway between him and the entrance to the tunnel.

“May as well sit down.” He said, “You’re going to have to wait until Filch gives up. He’ll probably assume we were both Slytherins and realize there’s no point in trying to catch whoever it was.”

She took a spot on the couch opposite Draco somewhat hesitantly. She didn’t feel comfortable here. And she felt even less comfortable under Draco’s scrutiny.

“You’re not going to tell anyone about the password.” He stated severely.

“I didn’t hear it.” She remarked.

He eyed her disbelievingly.

“I don’t lie.” She said intently.

“And I don’t believe you.” He shot back, “I’ve known you to lie more than once.”

She folded her arms, crossing her legs. “I don’t lie when it’s not obvious I’m lying.” She revised. He gave her a look. “Are you just going to sit with me? I’m pretty sure you don’t enjoy supervising, and I really don’t need a babysitter.”

“I don’t trust you.” He answered.

“I never asked you to.”

“Good thing.”
“Though I’m far more trustworthy than you are.”

“Maybe that’s why you’re a Gryffindor.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“You’ve all the makings of a Slytherin.”

“Perhaps I told the hat I didn’t want to be in Slytherin.” It wasn’t true, not completely. Though, some bit of the back of her brain was probably screaming at the Hat the whole time: “Oh God, PLEASE NOT SLYTHERIN!”

“And why?”

“Because you’re egotistical pricks.”

“And you’re all idiotic gits.”

“At least we have a backbone.” Even she had to admit she sounded a bit defensive.

“You nearly screamed because of a spider.” He prompted.

“I’m arachnophobic. Everyone has their flaws.”

“Like nightmares?” His eyebrows arched a bit, and at that moment he looked shockingly serious, the remnants of his smug, snide self nearly untraceable.

“You don’t know anything about that.” Came out of her mouth far too fast.

“I could.” He hinted lightly.

“You won’t.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t trust you.”

“I’m asking you to.”

Her eyes narrowed on him, “What interest is it of yours?”

“You were coming to the dungeons for a reason.”

“A reason you aren’t aware of.”

“That’s what I want to know.”

“It doesn’t have anything to do with you.” She objected in exasperation. He said nothing, watching her. They were both quiet for a few moments, staring each other down, waiting to see who’d crack first. “My dad died this summer.” She said suddenly. “It was- horrible. I saw it and-” She shook her head, looking at the upholstery of the space on the couch beside her. She wouldn’t let this get to her in front of Malfoy. She couldn’t let this get to her in front of him. She wasn’t about to fall apart with Malfoy as an audience.

“That’s what you were dreaming about.” He offered, still looking at her. From anyone else, it would have sounded caring, if not pitying, though it didn’t sound that way at all with Draco’s cold,
emotionless tone. He at least didn’t sound malicious with his words now. She dared a glance at him, her eyes meeting his. So much for not letting the effects show. All of her pain resided in her cyan eyes, all of the horror and agony of watching her father die. His face softened just so much that it was noticeable before she quickly looked away again. “This isn’t the first time, then?”

“It’s as terrifying every time over.”

“You were looking for someone to talk to.” He said as it came together for him. “Who would you be looking for down here?”

Something came over her, making her feel the need to shut him out. To cut him off immediately, abruptly. She suddenly stood up, “How many times do I have to tell you that this has nothing to do with you?” She snapped.

He held his palms up, “Right. Whatever.” The look he had made it apparent to both of them that this wouldn’t be the end of it. A bit of her knew he’d find out somehow, eventually.

She took a deep breath, walking back over to the tunnel. “I’m going to the tower.”

“Wait, Remington!” He got up, heading after her.

She stopped just under the shadow of the tunnel, “What do you want, Malfoy? It’s late and Filch is more than likely on the other side of the castle now.”

“You don’t know that.” He said.

“I just want to get back to my dorm.”

“You’re not going to sleep when you get there.” He pointed out.

“You don’t know that.” She was perfectly aware she couldn’t straight-up deny it.

“I’m pretty certain.” He said as his eyes flicked over her face, confirming what he already knew to be true.

She sighed, knowing he was right. “I need to get back anyway,” She said, pulling her cardigan tighter around her. “Thanks.”

He gave her a half-smile, half-smirk. “You’re welcome, Alvers.”

She gave a forced smile before turning and walking back to the entrance, not looking back as she silently wound her way up to Gryffindor Tower.
Repercussion

The next day for breakfast, she couldn’t help but take the far side of the table. For some reason, she wanted to see Draco. She felt a need to see if he’d catch her attention or how he’d react to her after last night. She was feeling slightly queasy that morning. Not having gotten much sleep is what she tried blaming it on, but deep down, she knew she felt off balance having told him things she hadn’t yet gotten enough courage to tell even Fay, or Ginny.

After a couple seconds of inconspicuously searching the Slytherin table she found Draco’s figure, and a few seconds later he had the audacity to look up at her. She levelly matched his look. It took her a moment to realize he wasn’t smirking at her or anything, just looking at her, not giving any emotions away. She couldn’t pull her gaze away. She wanted to know what he’d do. She wanted to see if he’d make any sign of acknowledging what passed between them the night before. She’d assumed he’d not tell on her. Why exactly, she wasn’t sure.

He winked at her before looking back at the students beside him. She caught him shooting her a sidelong glance before she finally looked away.

She realized that she’d been hoping that seeing him would settle her, but it only pulled her closer to the edge. She found herself unable to eat much more than a piece of toast, either not hungry or too disconcerted to stomach any more.

“Are you feeling alright?” Fay asked as they walked to their first class, Divination. “Normally you shovel down your breakfast.”

“I’m fine.” Remington said quietly, “I just feel a bit off. I’m sure it’ll pass soon, though. I’ll just be starving by lunch.”

Divination only made her feel worse, though. They went over dreams throughout class, and Rem tried to avoid talking about her dreams as much as possible, saying she couldn’t remember any at the moment. It all just reminded her of the nightmares the whole time, which would eat anyone’s happiness away. Fay was starting to get irritated that they only ever went over her dreams and had only talked about one of Rem’s.

Transfiguration passed uneventfully, and failed to change Remington’s mood. But after a particularly frustrating Herbology, her attitude had descended into a sour irritability. She tried to keep her character civil, so as to avoid suspicion and questions from Fay, but mostly just succeeded in not saying much for the rest of the day.

She was still looking forward to Astronomy, however. She only had the class twice a week, so it always cheered her up. It wasn’t until she arrived, however, that she found out that the other half of the fifth year was joining them for this class. So rather than it being a class of only Gryffindors and Hufflepuffs, tonight it would include the Ravenclaws and Slytherins as well. It didn’t particularly bother her, though it was a bit of a nuisance to have so many people in the Astronomy Tower. The tower was plenty spacious enough to house them all, however.

By the time class ended, it was only minutes from curfew, and students were to head directly to their dorms. Earlier that day Remington had been intending to get a book to finish a Charms assignment that was due the next day, but had put it off, not having anticipated Astronomy going so late. She quickly told Fay she was going to run down to the library and pick up the book, hoping she’d get there before it was too late.
Of course, descending to the library would mean she had to go to the second level, and would end up going down the stairs with the Hufflepuff and Slytherin students. Not really looking forward to such, she slipped out the door before much of the class, making her way downstairs as fast as she could without it being too rushed or loud.

“This isn’t the way to your house, Alvers.” She heard the call from behind her, and it nearly scared her. She hadn’t realized she wasn’t alone.

“I need to get something.” She replied as Draco caught up with her.

“Down here?” He inquired.

“The library isn’t shut up yet.” She responded. Now, being with exactly what she’d blamed her bad mood on all day, she felt her irritation start to flare up again after being somewhat soothed from a rather decent Astronomy class.

“I was only asking.” He shot back, obviously picking up on the tinge of bitterness in her voice.

“Either way, I don’t see why it concerns you.” She snapped.

“What’s the deal, Remington? You clearly trusted me last night. And this is more trivial than that.” He pointed out. He didn’t have a clue what had her so wound up, and any person being sour with him got on his nerves.

“Well, maybe I didn’t really want to trust you.” She said sharply, coming to a halt and facing him. “Maybe I don’t want to trust you.”

“What’s so wrong with trusting me? Just because your little Gryffindork friends hate my guts-” He began venomously.

“You don’t think that perhaps their animosity is justified?” She cut across him, indignance plain in her tone.

“You have hardly been here two months, Alvers,” He reminded her, “You don’t think that perhaps you shouldn’t be trusting biased opinions?”

“They can’t be too biased if they’re so widespread.” She hissed. For some reason, his use of her last name bothered her yet more.

He made a derisive sound and crossed his arms, the scrutiny in the way he looked at her apparent. She shook her head at him gently, eyes on him. She was just too tired to argue with him, not to mention that if she didn’t hurry, she wasn’t going to get that book. “I need to get to the library, Draco.”

“Hm,” was his response as he glanced over her shoulder, down the hall. “Considering you’ve got about two minutes-”

Her eyes widened slightly and she looked back in the direction of the library, “But I-”

“Don’t even bother trying your luck.” He said, a hint of his signature smirk on his lips, “Even you don’t have that much fortune.”

Her mouth opened to say something, but she thought better, settling on scowling at him instead. “You ass!” She snapped, though her tone wasn’t as harsh as her words implied.
“How is this my fault?” He demanded.

“You held me up,” She said, then took a breath, looking at him, before shaking her head again, lightly. “I should go to the tower, then.”

“Sweet dreams.”

Having been about to turn away, she locked eyes with him, caught off-guard. They both knew the meaning behind the simple pair of words. “Right,” She murmured quietly, not quite able to draw her gaze away from him yet. More than ever, at that moment, she saw that there was a person standing in front of her, not just Malfoy. She was also incredibly aware of the distance between them.

She not only hardly knew the boy standing a few feet from her, but she had also heard so many horrible things about him. Things she couldn’t just toss away. She trusted Fay. She trusted Ginny, and most of those from her house, in all honesty, and couldn’t simply overlook what they’d told her. Despite all that, though, she knew there was something less than platonic in her that had something for him. She’d not quite decided whether she cared much for that part or not.

Finally breaking eye contact, she turned to head down the hall, to Gryffindor Tower.
It was all fine and dandy that Remington dragged her along to the Hog’s Head on their first Hogsmeade weekend. This little Defence Against the Dark Arts group that Harry Potter had organized was hardly what was bothering her, in fact, she signed that paper without a second thought, her neat, chubby handwriting just below Remington’s own spindly script.

The thing that Fay couldn’t stand was this godforsaken infatuation Rem had for Malfoy. Obviously he was getting to her somehow, which meant Remington’s impression of him wasn’t reliable, which meant her judgment was not to be trusted.

Of course, she couldn’t just tell Rem this. She’d caught on to how the girl worked. Remington was always right, and her thought process was just as effective as anyone else’s. No one else could know more than she did, her perception was perfectly sound. Or so Rem thought. And she wouldn’t take anyone trying to tell her differently. She thought she could see through anyone, if she tried hard enough. That nobody could pull one over on her.

Oh Lord.

Fay’d left Rem sitting around in the common room with Parvati, Lavender, Dean, and Seamus. She was about to find a book in the library to finish a Herbology assignment when she spotted Malfoy at a table towards the back. Alone. As in, no thugs.

If she couldn’t convince Remington, maybe she’d just have to go with the second most involved person.

It wasn’t coincidence that Draco was in the library. Rem had said she’d meet him at seven thirty, and it was only about ten minutes to. He’d come up to the library a bit earlier, wanting to finish Transfiguration before she showed, and he was on the last couple sentences of an essay.

“Oi, Malfoy.” He heard that Gryffindor friend of Remington’s- Dunbar, Fay, call as she neared him. She leaned forward on her hands across the table from him. Her eyes were narrowed in disdain and dislike, along with a tinge of blame and the threads of anger.

Draco leaned back slightly, his eyebrows raising slightly as he fixed a sneer on her, “Dunbar?”

She exhaled heavily, not liking the way his eyes settled on her, the judgment in them not the slightest bit discreet. “I want you to stay away from Rem.” She came out bluntly, knowing that any sort of sugar-coating would be lost to this boy.

Her statement didn’t surprise him in the least, but it was slightly amusing that she actually had the audacity to say it. “And what would she think of you telling me this?”

“You don’t need to tell her.” She snapped. “I don’t like what you’re doing to her head.”

“Is that so?” He said with a smirk, “Pray tell what that would be?”

“Obviously you’re trying to persuade her that you aren’t a pathetic, manipulating git,” Fay replied snidely, “Which we both know you are.”

His eyes narrowed on her maliciously, “I’d watch my mouth, Dunbar.”

“I don’t care if you’re a prefect.” She said derisively, “Leave her alone. She’s better than that.” Her
voice had swooped, dark and low.

At that moment he caught sight of a figure striding through the doors at the other end of the library, and the chocolate brown hair and sharp cyan eyes that were steadily growing more familiar. “But she’s not good enough for you to trust her intuition?” He asked, smugly focusing back on the tall brown-eyed girl in front of him.

Fay opened her mouth to respond, but lost her words. She looked both slightly shocked, and even offended.

“What’s going on?” Rem demanded as she approached, her confusion not hidden.

Fay whipped around, having suspected, but not really been aware Remington had showed. Draco’s natural response would have been to be painfully honest, but something interfered right before the explanation crossed his lips. “I was asking when you were planning on coming. You and Dunbar are close?”

Remington didn’t look totally convinced, but nodded, “Quite,” She said, setting her Potions book on the table with a muted slap.

Fay gave him the strangest look for a split second, but then forced a weak half-smile at Rem, “I’m just going to finish my homework in the common room. I’ll see you later on.” She remarked to her friend before starting toward the bookshelves, casting Draco one last glance of surprise and bewilderment.

Remington took a seat at the table, seemingly oblivious to the exchange, opening her Potions book and leafing through the pages. She glanced up at him. “Is there something I should know?”

“Nothing urgent.” He replied, meeting her eyes.
“Oh hurry up, Fay!” Remington called from over the banister of a flight of stairs. “We’ll be late.”

“This was not my idea!” Fay stated, jogging up the steps. “I don’t see why—”

“Because. That’s why.” Rem retorted, “Now come on, they’ll start without us.”

“Oh what does it matter?” Fay was muttering to herself. “It’s just Potter, Weasley, and Hermione. They really can’t—” She broke off, “That door isn’t supposed to be there.”

Rem glanced back as her hand touched the smooth handle of a pair of large, polished doors. “Well it obviously is here, and we were told to use it, so...” Her eyebrows arched at Fay, who gave her a slightly apprehensive and expectant look, but shrugged. Remington pulled the door open as silently as she could to find a large room on the other side. Walls lined with bookcases and cushions spread all across the floor, allowing for the seating of the whole group.

Fay and Rem slipped in unnoticed, for the most part, plopping onto a set of cushions and tuning into the conversation of the room. It sounded as if they’d just settled on the title D.A. for the group, something Remington off-handedly approved of. The exciting part was when they began practicing disarming spells.

“Don’t hurt me, please.” Fay begged mockingly as they positioned themselves a few yards apart.

“Oh, stop sniveling.” Rem replied, holding her wand in front of her.

“Count of three?” Fay said anxiously. Remington nodded and both girls started to count, though at two Rem gave a slight snap of her wrist and yelled, “Expelliarmus!”

Looking exceptionally affronted, Fay’s wand turned into a flying projectile, hitting the ceiling with such force that it ricocheted and flew right back at her, clattering to the ground a few feet away. The girl glared at Remington in contempt and disdain. “Cheater!”

“I never said I play by the rules,” Rem laughed, though sobered when Fay snatched up her wand and performed the spell just as effectively on Remington, though sending her wand careening right into Dean’s back. He turned to look at the two girls. Fay was now looking quite pleased with herself, where Rem’s face had turned a couple shades pinker.

Dean picked up her wand and tossed it back to her, which she fumbled, but caught, mumbling thanks.

The two girls went back and forth for some time, fighting to disarm the other first. Rem was getting frustrated towards the end, having been disarmed four times in a row, when Harry’s whistle trilled through the air. The room fell into a quiet state.

“Well, that was pretty good,” He said, “But we’ve overrun, we’d better leave it here. Same time, same place next week?”

“Sooner!” Dean called out eagerly. Quite a few people nodded in assent.

“The Quidditch season’s about to start,” Angelina Johnson objected hastily, “We need team practices too!”
“Let’s say next Wednesday night, then,” Harry suggested, “And we can decide on additional meetings then... Come on, we’d better get going...”

People left in threes and fours, so as to not be caught out past curfew. She noticed Harry consulting a rather curious map, and noted that she’d most certainly ask him about it if she got the chance. Finally, she left the room with Fay, Dean, and Neville.

“Well, that was really quite fun.” Fay remarked quietly as they made their way to Gryffindor Tower.

“And you didn’t want to come.” Remington said back to her friend.

“Didn’t want to come?” Dean cut in, “Don’t tell me you only showed up because Rem dragged you with.”

“Then I probably shouldn’t respond to that.” Fay said.

Rem made a contemptuous sound with a roll of her eyes. “You did quite well tonight, Neville.” She observed. “To be honest, I didn’t think you’d catch on so fast.”

“Neither did I, really.” He replied somewhat meekly. “Thanks.”

“Of course.”

“Whereas Rem and Fay kept hitting innocents with their wands.” Dean commented.

“I can’t very well control my wand when I’ve been disarmed, thank you.” Fay huffed as they reached the portrait of the Fat Lady, who was examining her nails with care.

“Mimbulus Mimbletonia.” Rem pronounced and the portrait swung open, admitting the four into the Gryffindor common room.
About a week and a half after her last nightmare, Rem found herself wandering the halls past curfew, relishing the chance to burn off the bad energy that felt as if it were smothering her.

A part of her missed what she used to have. The lull of the train in the middle of the night, rumbling through her old hometown; that would chase away any nightmares. Or the familiar bedroom of her family’s large farm-house-style home, with the pictures pasted all over the immaculately white walls, and the soft, equally white carpet that greeted her feet every morning. All of this, she knew would serve to do little more than make her feel that much emptier. Walking down to the kitchen and not smelling fresh-brewed coffee, that certain dark roast that her father liked best, which he claimed could rival the best tea he’d had back in Europe. How her mother would argue that the tea his mother made was simply superb and could never be rightfully beat out. Those rare moments like that where her mother was nearly what she’d expect from a woman she’d call Mom.

She couldn’t have that back, she knew. The part of her that didn’t long for it was quite glad to see it go. Nothing here was familiar. Nothing here would remind her of what she’d left behind, what had left her behind. That’s how it should have been, anyway.

“Out again?” She jumped slightly and turned to look over her shoulder, already knowing it was Draco. It was hard to miss his voice anywhere, especially in the silence of the deserted castle corridors. Despite the fact she was well aware there was no need to be alarmed, her heart rate took it’s time slowing down, thudding painfully in her chest a couple times before settling.

She still wasn’t quite sure what to make of him. Since that night after Astronomy, she wasn’t sure whether to doubt his customary air of coldness or her own recollection of the event. She’d not really spoken to him since, only having met up in the library once, and the circumstances were just as strange there.

He looked as if he were mildly pleased with himself, having startled her. “You need to find yourself a different habit, Alvers. Something that won’t get you in trouble.”

“I think it’s a reasonable price to pay,” She mumbled, turning to continue walking as he caught up. “Considering.”

“You never really told me about it.” He remarked. With anyone else, she’d have thought the indifference in the tone to be uncaring, but she’d noticed that Draco never really showed compassion. To anyone. Over anything. He of course expected it to be shown to him, though.

“I told you the main idea.” She said, “You know more than anyone else in this school. From what I’ve told anyone else, anyway. I’m sure the staff has a pretty good idea. Particularly Sn-” She cut herself off. What it was that made her just spill her heart out when she was with him, she didn’t know. She didn’t much care for it, either. Perhaps it was simply that her guard was down and her nerves were worn thin after the nightmares. Either way, she’d just nearly mentioned Snape’s name, and that wasn’t something she wanted to divulge just yet.

His eyes narrowed slightly. She could almost hear the gears turning in his mind. She’d given him too much information. Her, coming down to the dungeons that last time she had her dream. The fact he knew she had been planning on finding someone to talk to. He wasn’t stupid. He could certainly guess she was about to say Snape.

“What’s so special about Snape?” He inquired.
“I wouldn’t really like to talk about it.” She muttered.

“Not unlike everything else.” He added with contempt.

“You don’t know how it is, so just-” She started to say.

“There’s a reason for that.” He interrupted her sharply, “You realize I can’t know until you tell me.”

“Werewolves.” She said, quietly, deliberately. It felt strange rolling off her tongue. She hadn’t said the word aloud since god knows when. There’d never really been reason to before the accident, then afterwards... she’d never brought it up, and she’d avoided it when someone else mentioned it, whether they were aware of the situation or not. “Two of them. I was lucky it was nearly sunrise.”

He was silent, obviously not having expected that response. “But really, I don’t like talking about. Please. Just trust that it was awful and that I’ll tell you should I ever feel the need to.”

His eyebrows arched slightly, “Alright then, Alvers.” He murmured. “But that still doesn’t explain the situation with Professor Snape.”

“To be honest, I don’t exactly have a whole lot of family left,” She answered, then slowly added, “And Snape’s part of it.”

“Related to Snape?” Draco asked, slightly dubious and disbelieving.

“Hard to comprehend, isn’t it?” She murmured. “I mean, I know my mother was an Orpington, and I’m sure you’ve got a better idea of what sort of history that family’s got than I do. But from what I got from my mother, there’s not been a Gryffindor or Hufflepuff in her or my father’s that she knows of. Slytherin and Ravenclaw are the natural houses of the traditional, old wizarding families, aren’t they?” She shrugged. “Perfect family history to be a Prince. My grandmother was one. So was Snape’s mother. It’s distant, but...”

“It’s a shame you had to break tradition.” He commented.

“Like me better in Slytherin, would you?” She inquired lightly.

“You’d keep better company.” He said, then added. “I’m sure both of our parents would prefer it.”

“Probably-” She began, then realized exactly what he’d said, “Wait, what?”

“Well, if your mother was an Orpington, then she would certainly have liked to see you in Slytherin. As for your father,” He said slowly, careful not to hit a nerve, “I doubt Gryffindor would have been his first choice.”

“And your parents?” She prompted, trying to get at what she was most curious about.

“They most definitely wouldn’t like to know I’ve gotten myself on speaking terms with a Gryffindor now, would they?” He replied smoothly.

“Hate Gryffindor House that much, huh?” She questioned quietly.

“Well,” He amended slightly, “I suppose the fact that your blood is just as pure as mine would make them a bit more lenient.”

She rolled her eyes, “Besides, I’m not sure if it qualifies as speaking terms if we hardly talk in public.”

“You’ve never tried to talk to me in public.”
“I don’t really care to. You won’t treat me the same.” She sort of regretted saying that last bit; it wasn’t exactly what she wanted to say. It was, however, true.

“Well you wouldn’t treat me the same, either, so I don’t see how it matters.”

“Really?” Rem demanded, “I wouldn’t?”

He gave her a look. “We know I’ve got a reputation to uphold, and we’re both just as aware you’ve got your own.”

“So that’s it.” She prompted, “You really think I care about my image?”

“Don’t act so shocked.” He said somewhat contemptuously, “You do.”

“How can you-”

“Don’t lie to yourself.” He interrupted. “You’re careful about what you give away, what you say. If that doesn’t tell me that you’re concerned about your image, I’m not sure what does.”

“That doesn’t necessarily-”

“Remington,” He cut across her again, “Really?”

“God,” She snapped, “Can’t let me be right just once, can you?”

He smirked, “That wouldn’t be any fun.”
“No, no,” Fay objected enthusiastically, “You can’t move there! You need to take his bishop with your queen!”

“Shut up, Fay!” Dean ordered, shooting her a dirty look.

“But then he’d be able to get my queen with that knight!” Seamus snapped back at her sharply.

Then Dean brightened, smiling at the board. “Maybe you should listen to the girl, Seamus.”

Flustered from being reproached twice in a row, she exhaled loudly, “I give up!”

“It’s about time!” Seamus retorted, muttering something under his breath.

Rem was curled in one of the armchairs around the table they were playing at, an old copy of *Pride and Prejudice* opened in her lap, though she was paying more attention to the scene before her.

“Fay, you can play winner, how about that?” Remington offered.

“I’m not going to play against that nag!” Dean protested. Fay made a sound of indignation.

“Who says you’re going to win?” Seamus demanded.

“Well, neither of you is going to win the way this is going.” Rem remarked.

“It’s Fay’s fault.” Seamus commented smartly, earning a smack to the arm from the brunette girl in question. “See what I mean!” He exclaimed, rubbing the spot that Fay had hit.

“You instigated it that time.” She disagreed calmly, her eyebrows inching upwards. Fay had crossed her arms, giving Seamus a haughty look. He sneered back at her.

Dean rolled his eyes with a derisive snort, “Children.”

“You can’t honestly be arguing again.” Ginny said as she passed by. She’d walked by them earlier when they’d just settled in for a game of Wizard’s Chess after lunch, and she’d been heading down to eat. It seemed as though she’d found something to occupy herself with for a couple hours before coming back.

“Of course not.” Seamus replied, then added, “Not again.”

“They’re still arguing would be more appropriate.” Rem agreed.

Ginny shook her head slightly in disdain, “And by the way, Rem,” She said, “Flitwick was wondering if you were still interested in helping the prefects supervise putting up the holiday decorations. Said to talk to him before class Tuesday.”

“Thanks, Ginny!” Remington called after her as the redhead left them, shooting a smile over her shoulder.

“What turn was it?” Dean asked.

“Mine.” Seamus responded, examining the board that was covered with mainly debris and a handful of pieces that were yet intact.
“No, it isn’t!” Dean argued, “You just had your turn when Fay started trying to coach us again.”

With that, Fay huffed scornfully and stood up, “Fine then, I’ll leave.”

“Oh, Fay.” Rem said lightly, watching her friend turn and storm up to the girl’s dormitories.

“Finally.” Seamus drawled cheerfully, eyes on Dean’s rook as it slid across the board.

“Now, that wasn’t very nice of you two.” Rem commented from her seat, looking between them.

“She had it coming.” Dean remarked, eliciting a slight laugh and roll of the eyes from Remington.

“Don’t get me wrong, Fay is great and all, but every time we try playing Wizard’s Chess, she jumps down our throats.” Seamus said, shaking his head slightly, “Knight to D4.”

Dean cursed under his breath as his queen was smashed to bits by what appeared to be a very irritated, but also very enthusiastic knight.

“Sucks to be you.” Remington chirped, her tone quite chipper compared to the carnage that just occurred in front of her.

“Oh.” Dean muttered slyly, “We know whose team you’re on.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Rem demanded. The only response she got was Dean’s eyes turning up to lock with Seamus’s for a moment.
During breakfast on Friday morning, Remington was interrupted from her conversation with Fay about the stores they’d go to on the next Hogsmeade trip by a letter hitting her on the shoulder. She gave the off-white envelope a strange look before picking it up from the ground and looking towards all of the owls above them, hoping to see the bird that had delivered it, but amongst all of the others that were bringing letters, it had been lost.

“Who’s it from?” Fay asked.

“Not quite sure.” Rem replied as she tore it open, slipping out the folded paper inside. She immediately knew who it was from, due to the fact it wasn’t written on parchment, but rather lined notebook paper. “Oh, it’s from Natalie. A friend from my old school.” Fay regarded the lined paper a tad quizzically. “Muggle-born.” Fay’s mouth made a small o of understanding.

Remington smoothed out the paper, finding it to be two sheets, taking in the familiar script.

To My Fellow Penguin (and Sasquatch-lover), Remington Alvers (if you’re not her, get your filthy snitch hands off!)

I am absolutely livid. Did you know that they don’t let owls fly across the ocean to deliver letters? Neither did I. And it makes me mad. So that’s why I didn’t write sooner. They made this whole thing way too difficult. Anyway, you shouldn’t have any problem mailing to me. They set this thing up so that I have a mail slot in the trans-continental section somewhere or something. The owls will take it wherever that is, and then they somehow get the letters across the ocean. Maybe they apparate with them. Or magically poof them away- or, there’s a whale that carries them in a waterproof sack as it swims across the Atlantic ocean! You never know.

But anyway, How is it over there? Meet any new friends? You haven’t replaced me, have you? What about boys? How many sexy Quodpot- no wait, it’s Quidditch over there, isn’t it? So how many sexy Quidditch players have you talked to? I know you’re the reserved one of us two, but you have a lot of fresh meat. I know what you’re thinking. Get your mind out of the gutter! I need to know everything. Who you hang around with, what they’re like. How are classes? Or teachers? The dorms? You’ve got houses there, don’t you? What are you, now that you’re not just put into your year like here. You know what, I thought about that. Don’t you think ‘Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry’ sounds so cheesy? Like, it’s all formal and then you add ‘Hogwarts’ to the beginning and it’s suddenly hilarious. I’d rather go to school there than ‘Nexxford Academy of Magic’. So boring.

Oh, and Celeste and Isaac wanted me to tell you hi. Isaac made the first string this year, you know. He was so happy when he found out that it was actually really funny. We stayed up the whole night in the commons playing cards and eating popcorn. Celeste fell asleep at two and it took seventeen minutes to wake her up. I guess when you grow up with two older brothers and three younger siblings you have to be a heavy sleeper to get any rest. I think Isaac misses you more than he says. I know you two are just as super close as me and you, and I miss you like fricken crazy, so he’s probably got it just as bad.

Mail me right away. I will die if I don’t get a letter in six days. Ep, now it’s five days, twenty-three hours, fifty-nine minutes and fifty-nine seconds! Quick, stop reading this! Now it’s fifty-eight seconds!

Only The Best Wishes From Your Lover, Natalie Ravscroft
“So you’ve got, what?” Fay asked as they traipsed up the stairs to the Gryffindor stands to watch the first game of the school year. “Quodpot, is it?”

“Yeah,” Remington replied, “I don’t much care for it, but it’s awfully popular.”

“Right, you said that one friend of yours had always been pining to get on the team.” Fay remembered, “What was his name? Isaiah?”

“Isaac,” Rem corrected, “And yes.” She zipped her jacket a bit against the slight chill, following her friend to some open seats.

“You’ve at least watched Quidditch before, haven’t you?” Fay continued, taking a spot near the back.

“I’ve played it, actually.” Rem said, settling beside her friend, glancing out over the pitch. The game was to start in just a few minutes, but most of the spectators were chatting and warring over who was to sit where. “I’m sure the rules I’m used to are a bit different than the ones you follow, though.”

“With the whole two beaters, three chasers, a keeper, a seeker-”

“Yeah, yeah.” She broke in, “That’s all the same.”

“Well, there. Can’t be too much different, then.” Rem had a feeling that Fay wasn’t a very enthusiastic Quidditch fan. “Besides, you’re just here to watch your-”

“Shut up, Fay!” Rem hissed, earning an eye roll from the girl on her right. Rem was honestly getting sick of all Fay’s suggestive comments, insinuating there was something between her and Draco. No matter how many times Remington reassured her that there was nothing there, Fay refused to believe it.

“Don’t deny it, Rem.”

Remington scowled, crossing her arms just as the players walked out on the field. Finally, her mind focused in on what she’d registered as little more than a droning sound prior. Singing. The Slytherins were singing something from across the pitch. Immediately it was clear that it was an attack on Ron, trying to either get him to lose his nerve, or simply just greatly upset him. She had a hunch as to who may have composed the lyrics. Someone on the team, no doubt. Someone who actually had a reasonable amount of intelligence to formulate phrases that didn’t sound like they came out of the mouth of an elementary student who’d just discovered rhyming. That alone knocked off all but about three of Slytherin’s players. And this person would also most likely have something slightly personal, if not stupid, against Ronald. Give one guess.

The match started out a bit... disappointing for the Gryffindors, however a few scores against them would be nothing so long as they caught the Snitch. And on that note- it looked as if Harry was paying closer attention to the game rather than finding said Snitch. Certainly it was only natural that he’d be concerned for Ron, but there were more important matters at hand. Angelina seemed to be thinking along the same lines as she yelled at Harry, who ceased watching the game below him.
It wasn’t long before the action truly started. Most of the Gryffindor spectators were on their feet as Harry dove, presumably chasing the Snitch. Sure enough, Draco was soon right at his side, contesting to see who’d close their hand around the prize first. As soon as it was apparent that Harry had caught the Snitch, he was hit in the back by a Bludger, sent by Crabbe, who was immediately sought out by Madam Hooch.

Even from up in the stands, it was easy to tell that there was a confrontation happening down on the grass. The entire Gryffindor team was on edge, with the exception of Ron, who’d disappeared. The three girls were restraining one of the twins, while Harry was holding on to the other. All of their attentions were on the light-haired figure of Draco. No one who knew him would question what he might have been saying; he most certainly wasn’t congratulating them on their victory.

Then, all of a sudden, Harry and George -- she had just gotten a look at the number on his jersey and knew the twins apart -- lunged after Malfoy. Only an Impediment Jinx from Madam Hooch broke up the resulting fight.

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“I can’t believe you.” She snapped.

“Tell me what I did, Remington.” Draco demanded, “They’re the ones who attacked me!”

“Don’t think I don’t know you instigated it.” She retorted, “I’m not stupid,” She said, “Nor am I blind!”

He rolled his eyes, “So I made a couple smart remarks, but I didn’t start punching Potter, or that Weaselbee-”

“A couple smart remarks, my ass,” She interrupted, “You knew exactly what you were doing.”

“You think that’s worse than being assaulted?” He objected, “God damn, my jaw still hurts.”

“Stop whining, it doesn’t and we both know it.” She muttered. They were, in fact, walking back from him being to the infirmary to get rid of the bruises. Pain would have been banished along with them.

“You want to bet?” He shot at her.

“Fine, what do you want me to do?” She prompted, coming to a halt to look at him in disdain and scrutiny. “Pity you? Show sympathy?”

“A kiss to make it better?” There was the ghost of a smirk on his features.

It was her turn to roll her eyes. “Pansy would be happy to oblige.”

He made a face, “That was most certainly not what I was getting at.”

“What?” She said, trying her hardest to not laugh. “Would you rather it was me?”

“Well, that’s what I had in mind when I said it.” He muttered. She wasn’t really sure what to think of this development, but took it all in stride.

“Only if you stop complaining.” She said.

“My word.” His smirk had grown more prominent.
She was tempted to call him out for lying, knowing he wasn’t likely to quit his whining, just knowing Draco’s behavior. Instead, prepared to use it against him the next time he complained, she shook her head lightly. She leaned forward, tipping her head up. Her lips pressed against his jawbone for a fraction of a second before she pulled away, her nose scrunched the slightest bit. “Better?” She asked somewhat derisively.

He pretended to think about it for a moment, then responded noncommittally, “I suppose.”

“Well,” She drawled, “It’d better have made your whole day, ‘cause you’re quite lucky I agreed.”

“Considering I was attacked by a Blood Traitor and Potter earlier-” He began.

“You said you’d shut up about it,” She interrupted him. “You got your kiss.”

“I’d hardly call that a kiss.” He disagreed.

“Pray tell, then,” She said, “What your definition of a kiss is.” She felt a sort of sinking feeling in her gut from the way his eyes trailed to her mouth for a moment.

“Something more along the lines,” She’d been too busy watching him, ready to take a step back if his face got too close, but instead his hand took her chin, frightening her a small bit. By the time she got over that, his lips brushed hers, “of this.”
 Broken Glass

The tassels on Remington’s hat danced gently against the collar of her thick jacket, which she kept buttoned tightly and neatly. Her gloved hands tuck in the pockets in effort to repel the chilly weather. She already knew her nose was going to be frozen before the end of class. Care of Magical Creatures, to be exact. Fay strode at her side, talking about something Rem only caught half of, partially from the breeze carrying away her friend’s voice, and partially from lack of interest. She was mildly distracted by the fact they were taking the trail only a couple yards behind Draco and his gang. When she wasn’t hearing bit’s of Fay’s speaking, she was shamelessly hearing Draco’s.

She’d not said a thing about what happened on Saturday after the game. Nor had she talked to him since. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary, but she couldn’t help but harbor on it. How was she supposed to interpret something like that from someone like him? Half of her hoped in vain that it’d never be brought up and that that was the end of it, but the other half hoped she’d find herself alone in the corridors with him again. And that something not horribly different would happen.

She had to force herself not to smile or laugh at Draco’s worries of the creatures they were to be observing. “He’s an absolute coward, isn’t he?” She murmured to Fay as the other girl finished a remark inquiring why it had to be cold and windy.

“Malfoy?” She asked, a slightly disgusted look on her face, “Of course that git’s a coward. He always has been. Thinks he’s all tough and powerful, then starts crying and whining when things get rough.”

A thoughtful smile etched across Rem’s lips. “This class might be a bit entertaining, then.”

“You watch him all class, every class, anyway.” Fay muttered. “How you even stand that worthless prat, I’ll never know.”

“I resent that. I don’t watch him all class, every class. I glance at him now and then. Only as much as I would any other person. He just... stands out a bit more than others.” She reasoned.

Fay rolled her eyes, then squinted at Hagrid with a slight amount of suspicion. “Course they’re trained,” She mocked under her breath. “He would think a rabid dragon is trained.” Remington shot her an accusatory glance. Fay gave her a look that communicated What? Don’t tell me that’s not true.

“So what happened to your face, then?” Draco demanded, drawing Rem’s attention back to him.

“Mind yer own business!” Hagrid said, angrily. “Now if yeh’ve finished askin’ stupid questions, follow me.”

After seeing Harry, Ron, and Hermione set off, Remington started forward, Fay a half step behind.

“So stupid is the only kind of questions he’s capable of.” Fay mumbled, though by the way Draco’s head turned towards them as they passed, Rem knew he’d heard.

She looked over her shoulder, back at him, giving him a slightly taunting smile. His eyebrows arched, the ghost of a sneer on his face before he took to walking behind the two, his cronies right on his heels.

When the class came to a halt, she wasn’t afraid to stand towards the front, watching Hagrid and the carcass he’d tossed to the ground. She could feel Fay at her shoulder, and knew she was nervous by
the way she rubbed her mitten-covered hands together, trying to make it look like it was her way of warding off the low temperature. Rem’s breathing slowed as she caught sight of something, her gaze focusing on one of the creatures she’d seen pulling the carriages that had brought the students to the school. She knew that they were called thestrals, but that was nearly the extent of her knowledge.

“And you were frightened.” She murmured to Fay.

“What?” Fay asked, confused, her eyes on the dead cow Hagrid had brought with him.

“Can’t you see it?” Remington asked, giving Fay a slightly disconcerted look of her own.

“See wha-”

“Oh, an’ here comes another one!” Hagrid remarked proudly. Remington glanced from Fay’s bewildered face to the second thestral, which was now taking interest in the meat. “Now... put yer hands up, who can see ‘em?”

It began to dawn on her the bits of information she wasn’t recalling about thestrals. Only those who’ve seen a person die can see a thestral. Rem raised her hand half-heartedly. She didn’t particularly want half of the fifth year to know even such a sliver of her past. It was still a touchy issue. She could feel eyes burning into her back and could’ve bet that it was Draco.

“Yeah... yeah, I knew you’d be able ter, Harry,” Hagrid said seriously, “An’ you too, Neville, eh? An’-” He continued, his eyes turning on Rem, but he never got the chance to address her.

“Excuse me,” Remington had a feeling that Draco’s interruption wasn’t random. He cut across Hagrid at that exact moment for a reason. “But what exactly are we supposed to be seeing?”

At that point, Hagrid pointed at the partial dead cow that was resting on the ground a short ways away. Everyone stared for a few beats before gasps and squeals echoed through the group immediately following one of the thestrals ripping a strip of meat from the carcass.

Parvati was squeaking fearfully, demanding what was going on. “Thestrals,” Hagrid said in response, “Hogwarts has got a whole herd of ‘em in here. Now, who knows -?” Parvati continued to alarmedly prattle about how unlucky they were and all and Hagrid continued to attempt to console her. Only when Hagrid asked why they were only visible to some people did Rem fully tune back in.

She felt someone at her left shoulder as Hermione explained that the only people who could see the thestrals were people who had seen death.

“That’s why, then?” She heard Draco’s voice in her ear. She tipped her head back a fraction. “What do they look like?”

A wicked half-smile settled on her mouth. “Skeleton horses from Hell. Oh, and they have wings.” She said, looking back at him for a moment.

“You’re lying.” He accused, not believing that such a description could be honest when she was smiling like that.

“Why would I do that?” She responded, “They really are quite demonic-looking. They’re kind of cute in a way, though.”

“I don’t believe you.” He insisted.

“Your loss-” She stated as Umbridge swept in, immediately making Remington’s eyes narrow on the
“Oh, this will be amusing.” Draco whispered.

“Don’t make me hit you.” She hissed under her breath.

“Fine, I’ll leave you be.” He muttered and she felt his presence dissipate.

She pulled her hands out of her pockets to cross her arms indignantly, glaring at Umbridge as she went about her disgusting business. Speaking aloud the disturbing and despicable things she was writing down about Hagrid. Sure Hagrid may not be Remington’s favorite teacher, but by no means did he deserve this. When Draco and Pansy started laughing when Umbridge condescendingly told Hagrid she’d be asking the students questions, using hand gestures and all, Rem shot Draco a venomous glance. He just winked at her. She nearly marched over and slapped him, but against her impulse, stayed put, her death stare intensifying as Umbridge stopped near Pansy.

“Do you find,” Professor Umbridge said in a ringing voice, “That you are able to understand Professor Hagrid when he talks?”

Suppressing giggles nearly unsuccessfully, Pansy replied, “No... because... well... it sounds... like grunting a lot of the time...”

Remington’s hands curled into fists. It was apparent that Pansy’s words didn’t get past Hagrid, though he made an effort to pretend not to have heard. “Er... yeah... good stuff abou’ thestrals. Well, once they’re tamed, like this lot, yeh’ll never be lost again. ‘Mazin’ senses o’ direction, jus’ tell ‘em where yeh want ter go-”

“Assuming they can understand you, of course.” Draco remarked loudly. Rem whipped to look back at him. His eyes shifted from Hagrid to her, giving her a look somewhere along the lines of expecting any less, Alvers?

“I’ll be back.” Remington mumbled to Fay before heading towards the back of the class. Fay only watched after her for a couple steps before knowing where she was headed, and turned back around in disdain.

“Yes, Remington?” Draco inquired of her as she approached, Umbridge now occupied with interrogating Neville.

“Have you no civility?” Rem demanded.

“Why don’t you ask the violence-loving oaf over there?” He replied. She lifted her chin loftily.

“At least the violence-loving oaf knows how to respect others.” Rem snapped under her breath. They glared at each other for a moment, long enough for her to catch Umbridge’s newest observation.

“Students... are... too... intimidated... to... admit... they... are... frightened...”

Neville started to protest, but Remington cut across him. “Would you object to another student’s opinions, Professor?” She asked Umbridge with the most innocent, kindhearted voice she could manage. She knew that the woman’s distaste for her might rule out the possibility of her responses to be written down, but she could at least try.

Umbridge turned to Rem, the look in her eyes showing that she at least had some disagreement with hearing Remington’s opinions, but replied with a curt, “Of course not, Miss Alvers. You, as well can see them?”
Knowing this would open up her most personal secrets to the class, she answered truthfully. “Indeed.” She knew Draco was watching her closely, gauging her expression and composure. He knew more than anyone else in the class how much the ordeal affected her. He’d had to deal with those effects more than once.

“Whom was it you saw die?” The frog lady continued.

“My grandparents.” Rem said, “And my father.”

“Oh yes,” Professor Umbridge murmured, “The rouge werewolf attack. Timothy was your father, was he?”

“Yes.” Remington said, knowing that she likely wouldn’t have brought it up if it hadn’t been Rem. “And I think that the thestrals are quite interesting. They’re very similar to winged horses. I don’t find them threatening at all.”

“Unlike what you said earlier.” Draco cut in, his eyes narrowing on her.

“I said they were skeletal, yes.” Remington said, flashing him a sharp glance, “But I also said they were kind of cute.”

“Right, Miss Alvers. Thank you.” The woman said with as much civility Rem believed she could manage before announcing to Hagrid that she believed she had enough information and promptly leaving the class.

As Care of Magical Creatures drew to a close, Pansy seemed to take pleasure in harassing Rem.

“So your father was killed by werewolves, was he?” The pug-faced girl inquired, following Remington and Fay away from the forest. “You were there? I bet you’re a werewolf, too—”

“Oh shut it, Barkinson.” Fay snapped.

“Why don’t you, Dunbar.” Pansy shot back, apparently unable to come up with a suitable retort. “I’m sure Alvers can defend herself. Using claws and all.”

“Leave it alone, Pansy.” Came Draco’s voice from behind them.

“What?” Pansy demanded, “Are you defending her?” She asked in falsified disbelief.

“Well, I’m not encouraging you.” He replied. Pansy gave a huff, lengthening her stride. There was a hint of prideful knowing in the look on her face, if it wasn’t all mocking. “I need to talk to you.” He whispered in Rem’s ear before following Pansy ahead. Remington watched him for a moment.

“Why didn’t you tell me about your dad?” Fay asked gently.

“I just hadn’t gotten far enough past it.” She replied with a shrug.

“But you could announce it in front of the whole class?” The other girl prompted disbelievingly.

“I just really wanted to confront Umbridge, I guess.” Rem said, “I don’t really know, Fay.” She finished, ending the conversation.
“How did I know you’d be out here?” Rem asked, stepping slowly, but relatively carelessly down towards the dock that hung out a few yards into the lake. Her foot took a misstep and her arms stretched out so she’d keep her balance, pausing for a moment to make sure she wouldn’t go careening out over the thin ice.

“Probably because you saw me, then followed the footprints.” He responded, looking back at her. When he turned his gaze back on the lake, he rolled his eyes at her clumsiness, so she wouldn’t see.

“How could you-” She began.

“It’s not as if I don’t know the Gryffindor common room overlooks the path down here.” He remarked. “Not after those Weasley twins were jinxing snowballs to fly at the tower’s windows all day-”

“So this was your plan?” She came to a halt a couple yards behind him.

“Not exactly,” He replied, “Though it worked well, didn’t it?”

“I suppose.” She said noncommittally, stuffing her hands into her coat pockets. “What was it you wanted?”

He looked out at the near-frozen lake, spotted here and there with patches that exposed a bit of the dark, cold waters beneath. It was finally chilly enough that Rem didn’t want to be outside. It didn’t seem as cold as she was used to during this time of year, though, so of that she was thankful.

Not liking him facing away from her, she picked her way closer to the shore, stopping beside him.

“Your grandparents, too?” He prompted.

“A couple years ago.” She answered.

“Don’t like to talk about that one, either?” He inquired.

“If you haven’t noticed,” She said, “People don’t generally enjoy talking about those who’ve died.”

His eyes were still taking in the surface of the lake, not turning towards her. “Generally.”

“What’s with the attitude?” She asked harshly, shooting him a look. “You’re the one who wanted to talk to me.”

“I don’t have an attitude, Remington.” He shot back, meeting her eyes. She saw that what she’d mistaken for irritation before was actually a sort of measured indifference.

Alright then.” She muttered, turning away from him to walk out on the dock, gazing at the massive ring of shore that surrounded the lake, the trees that lined the opposite side. Her steps creaked against the old, weathered wooden planks. She looked down when she reached the end, wondering how thick the ice was beneath the lip of the dock.

“I wouldn’t try.” Draco called from behind her. “I’ll tell you now that I won’t go fishing for you when you break through.”

She glanced over her shoulder, “What makes you think I wanted to step out on it?”
“You’re a Gryffindor. It’d just be like you to do something stupid like that.” He replied.

“Right.” She set her jaw, turning her eyes back up to the lake.

The dock groaned behind her as Draco made his way to the end as well. “Those words- on your ankle,” He began.

“Yes. Memorials.” She broke in, “It made me feel better and I knew it’d piss my mother off.”

“So you got tattoos?” He prompted, somewhat disbelieving, somewhat contemptuous.

“Nothing else seemed good enough.” She murmured. “Permanent enough.”

“Because defiling your body is the only thing that was good enough.” He remarked under his breath.

“You know,” She said, the irritation in her voice plain, “The things I do, you don’t need to approve.”

“I don’t need to-”

“What is this to you?” She hissed, turning on him, her eyes narrow and judging. “One moment you’re all dissent- then another you’re quiet, and dare I say thoughtful. And what about Saturday-”

“What about Saturday?” He snapped back at her, eyeing her with slight derision.

“No, really,” She pronounced, removing her hands from her pockets and propping them on her hips. “What about Saturday? Is it some sort of game to you?” She demanded, “Because, if it is, I forfeit. I’m done.”

“I don’t see what you’re insinuating.” He retorted.

“I’m not insinuating anything.” She hissed, “I’m telling it like it is.”

“Considering I’m not sure what you’re talking about-”

“You can’t just-” She said, obviously getting worked up, “Kiss me and act like it never happened!” His eyebrows arched and she finally had enough, whirling and heading back down the dock at a brisk pace.

“So now you’re going to stomp off like a romantically challenged ten-year-old?” She could hear his pursuit, though much more casual than her attempted retreat.

She spun around, “Don’t- even-” She caught herself on her words, not sure how to object. “I don’t love you! I’d hardly call it-”

“You don’t have to.” He interrupted her, looking quite calm compared to her indignation. She resisted a blush, regretting what’d come out of her mouth. “Either way, it doesn’t matter, does it? You’re done, aren’t you?”

She was tempted to just turn around and head back up to the castle rather than keep arguing and likely say more that she’d wish she hadn’t. Though, he’d only take that as a victory for himself, and she could hardly afford that. “You’re vile.”

A slight smirk pulled at his lips, “I’m a Slytherin.”

“I suppose it only makes sense.” With a relatively collected, cool tone and expression, “The undesirable ones all get thrown into their own house.” With that, she turned her back before he could
respond and immediately started to weave her way away from the lake.

Behind her she heard him repeat, “Undesirable?”
Remington tugged the Santa hat onto her head, momentarily glancing up. Fred and George had come up with the idea, but she’d been the one to charm the sprig of mistletoe to hover just above her head. They’d asked her to, on the grounds of using her as a test subject for what they wanted to use for another of their products. Immediately after they’d each given her a kiss on either cheek before running off to wreak more havoc. She, on the other hand, had to go down to the Great Hall. Hoping it would get her out of Potions, or even History of Magic, she’d volunteered to help decorate for the holidays with the Prefects, along with a few others that had offered to give up their class time as well. It didn’t get her out of either class, of course, but she was still supposed to help.

She received a few odd looks from the occasional underclassman as she made her way towards the Hall. Ron and Hermione were already there, no doubt because of Hermione dragging him down early enough to be sure they weren’t late for anything. Ron caught sight of the mistletoe floating over her head immediately, his eyebrows got a bit closer to his red hair. Hermione, though, had instead noticed the red and white hat that Rem had pulled over her brown hair, along with the pair of identical hats she was holding half-inconspicuously at her side.

Remington curled her arms tightly around herself, staring out a window in the Gryffindor common room. In fact, it was the very window that overlooked the path down to the lake, though she tried not to think about that. It was late in the night, or early in the morning, however you look at it. Another nightmare had chased her out of her dorm, though she didn’t want to go out into the corridors and risk running into Draco, not after their argument a couple days ago. She still felt a little childish about it. Though, it wasn’t as if he was sure to be out in the halls, anyway. There’d already been a couple times she’d not run into anybody out there, nonetheless Draco, when she’d been walking in the middle of the night.

She was starting to lose more sleep than she knew she should. It felt as though the nights she wasn’t being harassed by the dreams, she’d sleep only restlessly, afraid they would attack once she let her guard down. Not that having her guard up warded them off any better. Her worries of the nightmares were what instigated them. An endless circle of torment.

There was a full moon resting low in the sky, and she blamed it whole-heartedly. If not for its rising that morning a little over four months ago, she’d be back in America, sitting up late in the commons with Natalie, Isaac, and Celeste, probably talking about their plans for Christmas. Maybe she’d have been planning to spend the holiday with Nat, not realizing how precious time with her father was, considering he’d still be alive and well. Or maybe, at least, she wouldn’t be up at this precise moment, as she was convinced her nightmare had been in at least partially brought on by the yellow-white orb hanging out in the sky.

With a look of distaste on her face, she tore her eyes from the window and got to her feet, walking across the common room to slide a sheet of parchment, a quill, and a bottle of ink from the small table beneath the bulletin board and going back over to the couch she’d been sitting at. She twisted the cap from the ink and dipped the end of the quill in, scrawling the date across the top right corner of the sheet.

Mother,

It’s certainly been a short few months here, and I’m quite sad to see it go, even for a couple weeks. I guess you’re to blame that I like this place so much. You’re the one who sent me here. Anyway, I’m
looking forward to this Christmas, although I know it’s going to be much different from previous ones, for obvious reasons. I’m sure you know what I mean. For similar reasons, I’ve not been getting much sleep. I thought of talking to Snape about it, but I figure I bother the man enough as it is, so I’ve been perusing the library to see if I can find some sort of... sleep potion or something. If all else fails... I suppose I’ve not annoyed Snape much too recently.

See you in a few days, Remington

She folded the finished product neatly, aspiring to take it to the owlery in the morning. She pulled a woven blanket from the arm of the couch and wrapped it around herself, tucking her feet under her and turning her eyes back to the window.
She spent the train ride to King’s Cross in a compartment with nearly all of the fifth year Gryffindors. Personally, she was quite glad the compartments were large—thanks, no doubt, to an extension charm on the Express. It let there be several people inside at one time, and therefore said people could hold a conversation without Rem needing to say much.

Currently, they were discussing what’d been, essentially, the gossip of Gryffindor for the past couple days. The fact that all of the Weasleys, along with Harry, had disappeared in the middle of the night just a couple days ago. The three boys said that Ron had to wake Harry up that night; he was thrashing about and making such a fuss in his sleep. It had been obvious that Harry wasn’t well, but he was going on about Ron’s father. Saying he’d dreamt about Arthur Weasley being attacked by a snake.

Neville seemed to believe whole-heartedly that it was true, and Hermione’s silence proved she believed the same. And though Dean said very little about his own opinions, it was apparent that Seamus thought Harry had rightfully gone mad. After all, the *Daily Prophet* failed to recognize Arthur being injured, so Seamus had a little bit of backing. Though, Hermione argued that the *Prophet* wasn’t being entirely reliable lately. Rather than snapping back at her and starting an argument, Seamus had glowered at her for a moment and said nothing.

Despite this, however, a few different rumors had flown around explaining why the Weasleys were gone. One said that the twins had so royally ticked Umbridge off that she simply threw the whole lot out of the school, adding in The Boy Who Lived since he was practically part of their family, anyway. Another was a rather long, animated story involving a Niffler and a trio of knarls.

After a while Remington excused herself on the pretense of having to use the bathroom, which, simply put, was not true. There was a certain person she wanted to at least wish a happy holiday to before they reached King’s Cross.

“Alvers,” She heard the voice before she saw the face. Having mostly been trying not to lose her footing in the slight undulation of the train, she hadn’t been paying as much attention to the people in the corridor.

“Draco,” She responded. She had trouble calling him Malfoy anymore. It felt as though, since he knew so intimately knew of bits of her past, a first-name basis was mandatory. He didn’t seem to see it the same way, obviously. Or perhaps he had taken into account that the student body was unaware of the time they’d spent together and what she’d confided in him. It didn’t particularly bother her, though. Her last name sounded just as good from his lips as her first.

“Not with your own lot?” He asked, though the tone wasn’t quite harsh enough to offend her.

“I was just looking for people I’d like to say goodbye to.” She said, her eyebrows arching slightly.

“Is that so?” He inquired, the slightly amused, self-satisfied look on his face telling her he knew he was on her list of such people.

“You sound so surprised.” She commented, “I’d figure someone who viewed themselves as highly as you do would already be wondering how a person could go three weeks without seeing you.”

He looked at her for a moment, still appearing mildly entertained, “I am curious as to how you’ve managed to survive avoiding me for these past couple weeks.”
She rolled her eyes, “I’ve coped.” She paused for a moment, hearing the whistle of the train, signifying their destination was approaching. She’d have to get back to her compartment to get her things, and say goodbye to Fay, Seamus, Hermione, and company. “Have a nice break, Draco.” She said half-heartedly. It wasn’t as if she hoped his holiday was horrid, but this was the first time she’d spoken to him in a while, and slapping another three weeks onto that wasn’t particularly appealing.

He nodded, watching her, noting the slightly insincere tone in her voice. “You too, Alvers.” He responded, stepping past her. Though they were both perfectly civil with each other, she had a feeling neither was particularly happy with the other quite yet.

With an inward sigh, she headed back towards her compartment, dreading having to look through the crowd for the woman whose blue eyes she shared.
Remington crossed her arms as she took in her room, feeling oddly out of place and twice as uncomfortable. There wasn’t a personal touch to the room whatsoever, all of her belongings were packed away in her school trunk, with the exception of a few robes and other attire her mother had thought to have tucked into the wardrobe at the back wall. Her eyes grazed over the mahogany poster bed, draped with gossamer curtains from each tall post, and the plush burgundy and cream duvet. It reminded her of a more extravagant, showy version of her Gryffindor bunk. But then her gaze found the matching vanity beside it and she nearly winced.

No doubt that her reflection was the same brunette she’d always been, but there were bruise-like swoops beneath her eyes that were almost impossible to miss. She knew her hair was carelessly thrown up, but she hadn’t realized that her messy bun was quite that messy. No wonder her mother had wanted to get out of King’s Cross so quickly. It was also quite possible that she’d lost some weight. That might not have been a problem if she hadn’t been perfectly healthy before she lost the weight.

She marched across the room, grabbing hold of the top of the mirror and pulling it down, turning its glassy surface towards the floor so all she could see was the embroidered rug and her sneakers.

“Yes, Wevel did not mean to startle Mistress Alvers.” Came the squeak of Wevel, the younger of the Alvers’ two house elves.

Rem spun around, having completely forgotten that this was the regular mode of being called to meals.

“Oh, Wevel did not mean to startle Mistress Alvers.” The house elf apologized sincerely, meekly, his already large hazel eyes widening.

“No, no,” Rem said, “It’s fine. And I thought we agreed that you could call me Remington.”

“Missus Alvers did not approve, she was very upset when Wevel called Mistress Alvers by that name.” He insisted. “But Missus Alvers asked Wevel to tell Mistress Alvers that supper is ready.”

“Thank you, Wevel.” She said, giving the elf a slight smile before heading out the door and down the hall.

“Of course, Mistress Alvers.”

As she sat at the oak table, long enough to seat nearly ten, she could feel the waves of disapproval rolling off Marissel. She was certain that her mother wasn’t happy with Rem’s selective choice of foods, taking from only a couple of the dishes. Not to mention that, but she’d worn sweatpants and a plain tee to the table. With her father, it would have been fine, but her mother didn’t appreciate such mundane attire. Such muggle clothing.

“How has your year been, Remington?” Marissel finally asked. Rem didn’t doubt that it was simply for formality. Building up to what she really wanted to know.

“Fine. You know, as school can be.” She replied noncommittally, “The castle is nice, the classes aren’t any worse than those at Nexxford, the people are human.” She shrugged.

“Who’ve you been getting close with?” Her mother asked casually. So that’s where she was going. Seeing if Remington was friendly with any young men she approved of.
If only to irritate her mother, she started off with those Marissel was sure to frown upon. “Harry Potter.” She replied, “The Weasley’s four youngest, Hermione Granger, Seamus Finnigan, Dean Thomas,” She started ticking off her fingers, then shrugged again.

Her mother was obviously not pleased, “Anyone... else?” But Remington knew she really meant, “Anyone who’s of respectable family?”

“Fay Dunbar,” She muttered, her mother’s look became slightly less disappointed and scandalized. “Draco Malfoy.”

“Malfoy,” Marissel said, the assent in her voice clear, “Now there’s a decent Pureblood family. You know, I knew his mother well growing up. That’s one boy I think you should pursue.”

“Mother!” Rem snapped, “I’m not discussing this with you. I’m not discussing Malfoy with you. He’s- not exactly the most desirable type of person.”

But that only seemed to intrigue Marissel that much more, “What do you mean?”

“He’s-” She honestly didn’t want to talk about boys with her mother, much less Malfoy. “An arrogant pig.”

Marissel rolled her eyes, which was a rather casual gesture that didn’t mesh well with her normally quite proper demeanor, “Your father used to call me the same thing.”

“There’s a line,” Remington informed her mother, a look on her face that was reminiscent of horror. “That parents should never cross. And you just gunned it right to the other side.”

Marissel’s gaze narrowed, but she said nothing else as she turned back to her dinner.
Preventative Measures

By the second day with her mother, she was fully prepared to slap the woman. It was only the third meal she’d eaten in her mother’s company, but she felt like it would never end.

“Remington.” Marissel chided, “Would you stop pushing your roast around the plate. It’s rude to play with your food.”

“I don’t much want to eat it.” Rem remarked, “What else do you suggest I do with it?”

Marissel pursed her lips at her daughter. “Watch your tone.” She advised sharply, “It’s not so important what you want-”

Remington made a hissing sound of disdain. “Why don’t you care about what I want?” She asked bluntly, snapping her fork down on her plate and sliding it forward so she could lean on her elbows. “You’re supposed to care, like Dad always-”

“Of course I care,” Marissel responded sharply, looking affronted, “Don’t be ridiculous.”

“Then why do you treat me like such a disgrace?” She demanded, sounding more hurt than she would have liked.

The woman’s lips parted slightly, staring at her daughter. “Remington-”

“Because, really,” Rem said, “I’m getting sick of it.”

“You are not a disgrace.” Marissel said, “I thought you’d understand-”

Rem gave a harsh laugh, “Understand what? That you only kept me because my father loved me, though you didn’t?”

“Remington Kallisto.” Marissel snapped indignantly, “Don’t you ever say that.”

“Then tell me what it is!” She said, a tiny thread of desperation in her voice, along with exasperation and anger.

Marissel looked like she was settling in for a lengthy explanation. “I trust you know what the situation is currently.” She responded seriously, shoving her plate forward as well, not without force.

“What situation?” Remington asked stupidly.

“The situation in the Wizarding World, Rem.” The girl’s insides jumped slightly. That was the first time she’d heard her mother call her by a nickname. She nodded slowly. “I think it would be safest for you to not attract negative attention.”

“What do you mean?” Remington inquired, her brow furrowing slightly, “Why-”

“Negative attention from the wrong sort.” Marissel cut across her. “I don’t want you getting too close to the Potter boy, or his lot. It wouldn’t be good for you. You’d just be drawing a target on your own back-”

“He’s the type I should be getting close to! They’re the ones who’re fighting for the right side!” Rem interjected.
“Remington, listen to me.” Marissel said, “I already lost your father.” As always, the woman’s voice was casual at the words, as if she’d said that the table was made from oak wood, or the world was a sphere. It was that sort of indifference that convinced Rem that her mother honestly didn’t care about her father’s death, but now she was having doubts. Could it have simply been that Marissel refused to let anyone see weakness in her? It would have made sense, as that was the mind set most Slytherins had adopted. “I don’t think I could handle losing you, too. Not only are you all I have left of him, but I do love you, whether you care to acknowledge it or not.”

Remington only just stopped her jaw from falling open. She knew this was a moment that wouldn’t be repeated soon. Things would go back to the way they were before. Her mother would not be telling her that she loved her, or that she cared, simply because she’d said it once. It wouldn’t change who Marissel was towards her daughter.

“I want you to act like a child raised under the customary Pure-blood traditions.” Marissel said, “For your own sake.” She took a deep breath, pulling her napkin out of her lap and folding it. “If we ever get out of these sort of times, you can do as you please, but until then, I want you to be exceedingly cautious.” She set the neat, square napkin on the table, “Do you understand?”

“I make no promises.” Rem replied.

“You never do.”
For The Sake Of Caution

She knew she’d been right to assume the night before that her mother’s regular attitude towards her wouldn’t be affected by the fleeting moment of truth. Though, Marissel seemed to be making an effort to be slightly gentler about it. They hadn’t said much else to each other, besides Marissel inquiring about certain aspects of school and Remington answering nonchalantly.

At the moment, she sat cross-legged at the end of her bed, watching her mother tear through her trunk, which was propped on a bench that set on the opposite side of the endboard on her bed. Beside it, there were two piles of clothes, and a third pile of everything that wasn’t clothes. She looked on in silence as her mother sorted the “acceptable” clothes from the “unacceptable” ones, the later of which consisted of her tee-shirts, sweatpants, sweatshirts, and the like. Her jaw was set rigidly, but she said nothing.

When she finished, Marissel gripped the edges of the trunk and leaned on her hands, looking up at her daughter. “Please, do try not to wear these—” She plopped a hand on the “unacceptable” pile, “Around the castle. I don’t mind if you wear them about your common room, considering there isn’t anyone too influential in your house—” Her look turned slightly dubious as Rem rolled her eyes. “But be careful around the Ravenclaws, and especially the Slytherins, understand?”

“Yes mother.” Remington droned in monotone, pursing her lips and glowering at the stacks of clothing.

“I need to take you shopping, don’t I?” Marissel remarked.

“We go to Hogsmeade occasionally, remember?” Rem said, “I can just buy something myself if I need it.”

Marissel sighed, “I suppose.” She looked down at the belongings spread before her for a moment, “Supper should be ready in a little over an hour, make sure you’re not late. Wevel will—” She was behaving as if she were about to leave.

“Mother?” Rem asked before she got too close to the door. Marissel ceased talking, raising her eyebrows, looking slightly annoyed that she’d been interrupted. “Can I— Would it be alright if I went back to the castle a bit earlier?”

She didn’t realize just how hurtful her request was until it crossed her lips. Even then, though, she didn’t want to take it back. She didn’t like it at this new house, and seeing the familiar house elves, knickknacks, furniture, and even her mother, just reminded her of her father. She couldn’t look at the grandfather clock, the one with the section dedicated to the moon phases, without remembering how he’d told her what the words around the edge of the gold plating said—before she’d been able to read. She couldn’t sit at the dining table without thinking about the time she’d accidentally broken the leg off one of the chairs when she’d had a mishap with Natalie and her new broomstick and he’d caught her trying to fix it with Spello-tape and fixed it himself. They’d promised not to tell Marissel. “Your mother would have a cow.” He’d said. “And a right fat one, at that.”

Marissel looked disappointed for only a short moment before saying, “Alright then. The next train from King’s Cross leaves in two days.” She paused for a moment, “But you need to promise me you’ll keep your distance from Harry Potter, and try to blend in.”

She thought for a second about objecting, but instead replied, “I will do my best,” Despite the fact she had no intentions of keeping her word.
That Element

The day after she’d gotten back to Hogwarts, sitting in the cozy common room of Gryffindor Tower, she decided to write the letters she’d certainly be expected to. The letters she’d written to Fay, Ginny and Natalie were similar. Words saying she missed them, inquiring about their break so far, hoping they were having a better time than she, loosely stating that she had chosen to go back to the castle, and so on. After writing them, she had the strangest urge to compose another letter. One to Draco. This one she found more trouble in writing.

Deciding that *Dear* would be an awful cozy greeting, she skipped that part of the letter.

*Draco,*

*You have no idea how boring it is here without you around to antagonize me every five minutes. This place is impeccably lonely over break. I haven’t even gone on any middle-of-the-night walks because it’s creepier here at night than comforting. I’m starting to wonder if talking with you on those walks was the only thing keeping me sane. Thankfully break will be over soon. There’s a lot I want to talk to you*

Suddenly she crinkled the paper and threw it into the fire without hesitation. She was going to sound like she was lovesick. Or that they were actually *friends*. For all she knew, she was the only one that felt close to him. He might not even care that she took a couple minutes out of her day to write to him because she *thought of it*. She knew she wouldn’t get a letter in return, whether he did care or not. Setting her jaw, she set back in on another sheet of paper.

*Draco Malfoy,*

I know you’re quite likely to hold this against me when you get back, but I figure that I may as well write to you. Considering I told my mother that I’m on speaking terms with you. Anyway, I suppose the niceties must be observed. On paper, at least. So, I hope you’re having a nice holiday, and I’m sure I’m supposed to make a comment about looking forward to seeing you again soon, but I’ll just let you imagine I did if you like. I won’t deny that it really sucks staying here when the castle’s nearly empty. And no, I’ve not been caught wandering around this place after curfew, either. I’ve been staying in Gryffindor tower because frankly, I’m frightened to leave at night. It’s not as if that’s not taking a toll, though. And don’t bother contemplating writing back. We both know you won’t.

Remington Alvers

Still not entirely pleased with it, but too lazy to redo it and think of something better, she folded it neatly, slipping it into a small envelope. She snatched a cracker out of the bowl on the coffee table and headed out of the common room, making towards the owlery.

When she walked in, she had to fight not to slip and fall from the ice, but she managed with only a couple minor missteps. “Harpreet!” She called out. The dusty grey-brown owl rustled on her perch a third of the way into the owlery, apparently just woken from a satisfying nap.

Remington walked down to the perch, offering the small owl her cracker. It made a low cooing sound, nibbling at the cracker contentedly. Rem smiled at the little creature. Her family had another owl, one much larger than minuscule Harpreet. A Barred Owl by the name Kamio. For school, however, she had to acquire her own, and had quite liked the Scops as opposed to many of the larger breeds.

Harpreet searched Rem’s hand for more cracker until the girl splayed her hand out palm-up for the bird to investigate. She smiled at how the owl straightened up on her perch when she realized there was only one, almost disdainfully.
“Oh, I know. You’d think I neglected you the way you act.” Remington realized that she couldn’t send all of the letters with Harpreet at once, and decided to send Draco’s letter with her own bird and the others with the school’s owls. She tied the letter onto Harpreet’s leg. “This goes to Draco Malfoy, Sweet. The Malfoy Manor.” She murmured.

The bird stretched its wings before Rem stepped out of the way and she took flight, heading out of the building. Remington watched after her for a moment before sending off another set of owls and leaving the owlery, wandering aimlessly until she reached the common room some time later.
She’d been ambushed by Ginny not long after students began arriving back at school again, and though the girl shared the unfortunate news about her father, she seemed to be in perfectly good humor since he was making such a steady recovery, and she seemed more than happy that Rem had thought to send her mail.

“I would’ve wrote you back-” She’d said, “But that owl you sent took off before I could even find a sheet of parchment, not to mention how unlikely it would be that I could use Errol. You don’t want to know how bad that could end. You know what happened last time?” And she launched into a story. Remington was under the impression that part of the reason her attitude was so positive because she’d been so worried over her father, and Rem could understand.

The twins had the audacity to yank her sweatshirt hood over her eyes and refused to let go until she guessed who it was. Of course, they each used one hand, so when she tried guessing their names separately, they insisted she was wrong.

She’d come down to the common room as some of the Gryffindors had just arrived from the train, Fay’d jumped forward to give her a hug. “Can’t believe you stayed here!” She’d remarked, “This place is sketchy enough with the rest of the students around!” After a while, she’d suggested that Remington could stay in her closet next time, before she’d let her spend a holiday at the castle alone. Dean had mentioned he’d offer the same, though it would probably be looked down upon by their parents. Seamus had seconded that comment.

“Any idea when the next meeting is?” Fay asked under her breath.

“So now you like it quite a bit, huh?” Remington inquired loftily, obviously pleased with herself.

“Oh stop playing the I-told-you-so card and answer my question.” Fay shot back.

“No,” She replied, “Dean asked Harry earlier, said he’d let us know.”

“I was really looking forward to it.” The other girl began.

“I told you so!” Rem declared loudly, sticking her tongue out.

“Shut up!” Fay retorted, but stuck her tongue out as well.

“Don’t be rude!” Remington chided before she heard one of the other returning students make a remark about supper and Rem linked her arm with Fay’s. “Hungry?”

“I don’t even need to ask if you are.” Fay said with a roll of her eyes.

Remington made certain she was facing the Slytherin table, hoping to see Draco. It had been so long since she talked to him. She knew she couldn’t really speak to him when other people were around. Perhaps in the library, where curious glances would be at a minimum and well-chosen spot would leave their conversation inaudible to the inquisitive listener could she talk with him, but anything more public would most definitely raise some suspicions. She was pretty sure that neither of them wanted the sort of attention it would bring.

When she was halfway through a plate of raviolis, she finally caught sight of the boy she’d been looking for, nearly as far down his table as he could get from her. While she ate, she found herself glancing down at him occasionally, almost hoping she might catch him looking back at her. She
didn’t, though, and apparently hadn’t kept a close enough check on herself, because she felt the trickle of disappointment.

Once she’d finished eating, Fay was just starting in on a very appetizing-looking slice of cake. But she’d seen Draco stand up from his seat at the Slytherin table. Without turning her head, she watched him. And watched his eyes flick to meet hers for a fraction of a second.

“Fay,” She said suddenly, getting to her feet, “I have to use the bathroom. I’ll be back.”

“But I was going to share this with you-” Fay began to protest.

“Save some for when I get back, then.” Remington offered, “Or eat it yourself, I don’t mind.”

Fay made a face and turned back to her desert as Rem strode away, leaving the Great Hall not far behind Draco Malfoy.

She glanced around before she headed towards the steps to the dungeons, not sure where else he’d go. About this time the thought finally struck her. What if he wasn’t hinting for her to follow? What that look really was nothing more than a look? She’d only have proved herself an idiot. It was obvious she didn’t need help accomplishing that.

It was when she turned the final corner, spinning around the column at the end without paying much attention, that a hand snatched her arm and pulled her back towards a small nook on the other side of the foot of the stairs.

She made a small noise of surprise, but let herself be tugged into the shadows, looking up at the familiar face once she had backed against the wall. Draco’s expression didn’t hold the usual look she’d seen on him for the first while she’d known him. His features seemed slightly more relaxed, rather than sneering. He leaned back against the wall opposite of her.

“I got your letter.” He remarked.

“Really?” She responded sarcastically, “Because I’d sent it hoping you wouldn’t receive it.”

“Oh, don’t be smart, Remington.” He replied, giving her a slight roll of the eyes.

“Is that your way of expressing appreciation, then?” She inquired.

“I suppose you could say that.” He said tersely.

“Was there a particular reason you pulled me down here?” She asked.

“From the way you were watching me, I figured you might have had something to say.” He arched an eyebrow imploringly.

She crossed her arms, “I was only checking to make sure you didn’t have anything to say.”

“Bullshit.” He smirked at her slightly.

She scowled back at him, “There’s not much I can say that won’t make your head that much bigger.”

His smug smile grew a bit, “Not really.”

She inhaled deeply, “And if I said I missed you?”

There was a more genuine edge to his expression, “I think you might be able to get by with that.”
“And do I get anything in return?” She prompted, earning little more than a wink in response. She shook her head at him in minor disdain. “How was your Christmas, then?” She inquired conversationally.

“Better than yours, I’m sure.” He said, eyes on her.

She gave a delicate shrug and tipped her head to the side slightly, “You’d be correct there. Mine wasn’t horrible, though.” She commented quietly, “I know now, at least, that my mother doesn’t hate me as much as I thought she did.”

“I can’t see how she could.” He remarked, causing her to stare at him, not quite sure whether she’d heard right. “You made it sound like she wanted to tie a boulder to your ankle and drop you in the Atlantic.”

She turned her gaze back on the floor, “Well, she treated me like the ugly step-child. Not terribly unlike you treat the Muggle-borns.” She looked back at him somewhat blamefully.

“Ugly step-child?” He repeated, amusement lacing his features, “That’s what you’d compare Granger to? You know, I wouldn’t disagree-”

“That’s not what I was getting at and you know it, Draco!” She hissed at him.

“Fine, fine,” He mumbled, a mildly smug look on his face as he watched her. “But what does she treat you like now? The ugly only-child?” She glowered at him furiously. “Alright then,” He said, “I was only joking.”

“I know I started the ‘ugly’ thing, but I don’t really appreciate you adopting it.” She muttered.

“It’s not as if it makes any difference,” He said, “You’re hardly ugly, anyway.”

She looked pleasantly surprised by this, “Really, Draco?” She asked slightly tauntingly.

“I’m not going to reiterate that.” He told her.

She smiled almost goadingly, “You’re not so bad yourself, Malfoy.”

“I already knew that.”

She rolled her eyes, “Conceited twit.”

“You’re-” He began, but she shushed him, a finger to her lips. She jerked her chin towards the steps. A group of younger Slytherins were heading back to the common room. They didn’t even bother to look back towards the space Remington and Draco were, not unlike Rem had when she’d descended the stairs.

Once they were out of earshot, she exhaled slowly, “I should be getting back, anyway. I told Fay I left to use the bathroom.” She remarked.

He rolled his eyes a bit condescendingly. Then he closed the space between them and gave her a fleeting kiss, effectively shocking her once again. At the look on her face, he smirked, “You said I couldn’t just act like it never happened.” He reminded her before heading down the hall.
Remington’s eyes flashed open and she scrambled into a sitting position, breathing heavy with wet tracks running down her face from tears. She glanced around the room frantically before the situation became clear and she calmed a bit. She ran the back of her wrist across her cheeks and slipped out of bed quietly, grabbing a heavy, but not particularly thick cloak off the post at the end of her bed, pulling it around her shoulders and exiting the dorms. She ran down the stairs and across the common room, slipping out of the portrait nearly silently. She angrily wiped at her eyes again, but they still felt damp and she knew she was still crying. She descended the stairs quickly, not bothering to wait for staircases to swing for her, simply finding her way to the proper floor.

She wrapped both the cloak and her arms tightly around herself as she paced down the corridor. She didn’t leave herself much time to think, but for to register that it was one of Draco’s nights to watch the halls, at least from what she’d observed previously. She was quite thankful for the fact, not knowing whether she would’ve been able to restrain herself to the common room after tonight’s dream.

She wasn’t paying nearly enough attention to her footsteps, letting them land loudly on the stone. Someone turned to corner just as she was closing in on it. She hesitated just long enough to recognize Draco before she threw her arms around his neck, burying her face in the crook of his neck. She hadn’t thought this through at all. What she knew was that she was still shaking from the nightmare and she wanted nothing more than to be comforted, not unlike a small child who’d been woken in the night by a sharp crash of lightning.

“Remington?” Draco breathed, at loss as to what he was supposed to do. He could feel that her face was tearstained, and he hadn’t the slightest idea what to do about it. He slowly wrapped his arms around her, lightly touching her back. Other than times he’d kissed her, he didn’t think she’d ever really touched him, nor him her.

She didn’t trust herself with words, and barely managed to suppress a sob, inhaling shakily. She squeezed her eyes shut, willing herself to calm down. Maybe she was damaged merchandise, but she didn’t need to fall to pieces in his arms. That was the last thing she needed- to be weakened to complete vulnerability with the boy who was likely one of the least compassionate people in this school. She already felt exquisitely exposed.

But then again, she was sure he didn’t feel much more comfortable.

She raised her hand towards the door, her wrist twitched slightly as if she were about to knock, but then withdrew nervously. Finally sucking up her anxiety, she rapped her knuckles against the door and waited for the answering drawl before tugging on the doorknob.

Inside, Snape was going through the seemingly perpetual stack of papers on his desk. He didn’t look up at her when she entered, closing the door quietly behind herself.

“I had something to ask you,” She stated, then paused.

“Go on, Remington,” Snape remarked, aware that she was waiting for acknowledgement from him.

“I’ve been having- nightmares.” She continued, wringing her hands slightly, “About my father’s death, you know. I was recently informed that it’s gotten out of hand and that I needed to seek help.”
The last bit she added somewhat bitterly.

After the incident with Draco a couple nights ago, he’d told her that if she didn’t speak to Snape about it, he most certainly would, claiming he wasn’t about to spend his nights patrolling the halls worried she’d come charging around the corner again. She knew he was right, that her searches for a solution to the problem were going to remain fruitless. She needed external help.

The Professor’s eyebrow arched, “Need I ask who so kindly enlightened you to this?” When she chose to scowl at him rather than reply, he plowed on, “I see. So you’d like a draught of sleeping potion, is that so?”

“Whatever is required to keep the nightmares away from me.” She responded.

“I know something of the such that would grant you dreamless sleep. You’d be required to take a certain dose before you go to sleep each night, though the particular potion will take some time to brew-” He began slowly.

“Sounds wonderful.” She interrupted, then asked, “And you would make this potion for me?”

“Considering your less-than-impressive talents in my class,” He said, “I’d rather make certain it’s done properly than let you make a mess of it all.”

“Really,” She commented airily, “It astounds me how considerate you are.”

“It’d be best not to be a smart aleck, Remington,” He warned her sharply.

“Alright, alright,” She held her hands up with her palms towards him. “Thanks.” She managed to say before heading back towards the door.
The Unusualness Of A Usual Routine

Things had gotten to the point where they were either going quite well, or going rather terrible. For one, she’d been informed that the making of her draught was going accordingly, and she’d been handling her nightmares with considerable placidity.

Dumbledore’s Army had held a few meetings. Most of the spells they had practiced she’d been taught about in Nexxford. Never had she used them, but she’d taken notes and written plenty of essays about them. Practicing defensive spells was seen as almost as unnecessary as Umbridge believed them to be. Though, at least at Nexxford, if she were to possibly need them in a test, they’d certainly go over them a few times, until they were generally mastered. But otherwise they weren’t seen as exceedingly important parts of a young wizard or witch’s arsenal.

She didn’t have much trouble mastering them, except stunning. She had a small issue with getting her spells to go in the right direction, but it didn’t take terribly long to get that in order. And she’d noticed that out of all of them, Neville was doing incredibly well.

Which brought her to the most recent issue. The mass breakout from Azkaban. She’d seen Hermione, Ron, and Harry pouring over the newspaper that day and had asked if she could look at it when they finished. When she’d gotten her hands on it, the first thing she noticed was the large images of the escaped sneering and snarling at her from the front page. She didn’t really recognize any of the names, except for Lestrange, and the victims of Bellatrix Lestrange. Who would guess that the Alice and Frank Longbottom would be any other than Neville’s parents?

And of course, it was far too much to ask that she keep her fat mouth shut when she was sitting in the library with Draco. He didn’t seem to be having any problems with Charms at all anymore, but she was still only barely fumbling through Potions with an average of Acceptable. She knew she had a long way to go before she could get her O.W.L. in that class, but she was determined. Herbology wasn’t as important to do well in, so long as her grades in the other classes were more than satisfactory, but Potions was a make it or break it. If she didn’t get that O.W.L., she could kiss becoming an Auror goodbye. And to her surprise, Draco was still helping her. He seemed to have gained a small amount of patience for her, too, having realized her common habits. Once he noticed that she would argue with him incessantly, but write what he said anyway, he’d stopped wasting his breath on her.

But that was all beyond the point. At the moment she was supposed to be learning the difference between a set of potions that all had similar effects, however one was classified as a philtre, and another was an elixir, she believed- Really, all of it was going straight over her head. And she was getting quite fed-up with how the words seemed to dance across the page of her book, making it impossible for her to read the text. She was just so tired-

About that time she decided that skipping one night of studying wasn’t going to kill her, so she looked up at Draco, who was sitting with his chin in his hand, elbow propped on the table, and watching an origami creature that he’d charmed to run around the table.

“Your aunt-” She began, then realized how horribly-executed her sentence was before she’d even gotten the second half out. Feeling it was too late to turn back, she plowed on. “She’s one of those, right?”

Draco didn’t look at her face, but replied evenly, “Bellatrix, yes.”

“What do you-” She started to say, once again unsteady as to where she was going.
“I never really got to know her, Remington.” He snapped suddenly, “It’s a bit difficult to familiarize
with someone who’s in Azkaban, don’t you think?”

“Only as hard as it is with someone who’s dead.” She responded bitterly.

“How do you even know she’s my aunt?” He prompted, “You haven’t even been here a year-”

“My mother speaks as though she was quite close to your mother.” Remington remarked, “Narcissa?
Black, right? My mother said that she had a sister who married a Lestrange, got into some bad
business and was locked up. Not that hard to sort out.”

“So she’s been informing you of the Pure-blood lines, has she?” He inquired.

“Yours.” She answered reluctantly.

The makings of a smirk began to show themselves on his face, “What’s so special about me,
Alvers?”

“I commented that I speak to you. As in, we’re friendly.” She rolled her eyes, “I left out the part
about how it’s only occasionally. She went into a whole thing about how you were from a
’rerespectable family,’” She made air quotes with her fingers, “And all that jazz. Next thing I knew she
was trying to give me lessons on your ancestry. I drew the line when she tried telling me that I should
‘pursue’ you.” She looked about as derisive as she could, “And don’t even start thinking that it was
justified. Your ego is already inflated quite enough.”

“Too late.” He murmured.

She gave him a look and forced herself not to kick his shin under the table. “How someone can think
themselves as great as you do is beyond me.”

“If you hang around the Slytherins for a while-”

“I don’t plan to, thanks.” She interrupted.

“You know,” He said, “If you weren’t so mislead, I don’t think you’d really mind us. We aren’t
sorted into Slytherin because we’re evil, manipulating gits. Sometimes that just comes with the
territory.” She looked at him for a moment without saying anything, he arched an eyebrow. “Don’t
you have work to be doing, anyway?”

She exhaled irritably and switched her attention back to the large book spread before her. “This is
pointless.”

“You want to be an Auror, don’t you?” He prompted.

“I’m not so sure, not if I have to go through two more years of Potions.” She muttered, flipping a
page in annoyance.

“Well then don’t do it.” He suggested. “Make some hapless, rich bastard fall in love with you so
you’ll never have to work a day in your life.”

She rolled her eyes at his naivety. “Firstly, I’m not going to marry anyone I don’t love. Regardless of
his financial situation. Second, it would get very boring to just sit at home all day.”

“So you’re one of those romantics, are you?” He inquired.

“I suppose you could say that.” She shrugged, “I learned it from my grandparents. When I’m over
fifty years into my marriage, I want to be able to say that my husband is the most precious thing in my life.” She flattened the page in her book before flipping the cover closed. “That’s what she said when he was dying.”

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The thinly snow-veiled grounds were just starting to get dark, a slight chill creeping through the castle as it seemed to on the more frigid nights. She was used to the cold, though. Back home, she’d endured nearly a third a year of snow-yielding temperatures, every year. And here, it seemed, with the warm-currented ocean much closer, the winters were a bit more mild. Either way, chilly weather was never her forte.

She particularly didn’t much want to travel down to the dungeons, but it was about the time that her draught should’ve been prepared, and since she’d not really slept the two nights before, she was anxious to get her hands on it. She knocked on the door, no longer feeling such an aversion to intruding upon Snape’s time.

“Who is there?” Came the response on the other side of the door.

She thought it a bit strange, being that this was the first time he’d asked such a question. “Remington.” She replied a bit sharply.

“Enter.” Was the terse acknowledgement and to it, she pushed the door open.

What surprised her was that she opened the door to find Harry Potter in the room as well. She gave him a strange look for a second.

“Don’t mind Mister Potter. He’s merely here for Remedial Potions.” Snape drawled, walking towards a wooden cabinet behind his desk, his cloak billowing behind him.

Remington watched Harry’s eyes go from imploringly watching her, to shifting slightly irritably to Snape. “I suppose you already know why I’m-”

“The draught.” Snape elaborated for her, picking a vial from the cabinet and turning to come back towards her, holding it out. His eyes were slightly narrowed as she took it. “Only one swallow.”

She couldn’t help her gaze flicking towards Harry to catch the look on his face. He was obviously curious as to what was up, if not a tad suspicious. She didn’t blame him; it didn’t make much sense, did it?

But she muttered a thanks and made her way back to the door, hoping to God that Harry wouldn’t ask her about it the next day.
“Maybe you could go to Hogsmeade with Seamus.” Fay suggested. “He’d like that.”

“That would be leading him on,” Rem disagreed. “I don’t do that.”

“Oh, come on.” Fay prodded. “You could go to Madame Puddifoot’s-”

Remington made a derisory noise, “That place is always packed with couples-” Her expression was one of mild disgust. “It’ll be even worse since it’s Valentine’s.”

“What? You don’t like couples?” Fay teased lightly.

“I’m not a huge fan of all the lovey-dovey stuff, is all.” She corrected.

“No wonder you’ve got a thing for Malfoy-”

“Don’t you even start, Fay.” She interrupted. “It’s not like that.” Ha-ha, lies!

“You’re right,” Fay said with a slightly lofty tone, “It would certainly blow my mind if he went for a Gryffindor.”

“Oh, just-”

“Or if a Gryffindor went for him, for that matter, or Ravenclaw, too. They’re smart enough to know better, Hufflepuff, though… Well, they’re too nice for their own good half the time. Probably pity the jackass rather than loathe him as they should.” She muttered, then saw that Remington had done the whole dramatic face-palm thing and now sat with her forehead in her hand, facing the table. “Well,” She said haughtily, “What’s your argument?”

Rem looked up at her friend, her expression suggesting that she was thinking of a good answer that would allow her to win the little dispute. “You don’t know him.”

“Oh, and I suppose you do?” Fay countered.

Remington’s eyes narrowed. After all the time she’d spent with him, the words they’d swapped, what did she know about Draco Malfoy? Maybe a few feeble strands of what most people could already guess, but that was it. She’d nearly spilt her heart to him and he’d given her nothing in return. “Better than you.”

“Really? I suppose you waste enough time in his company, but name just three things that he’s not already bragged to the world about.” When Rem simply shook her head and declined to answer, Fay continued relentlessly, “See? You don’t know him any better than me, which begs the question-”

“That’s not true. Really, Fay, there’s more-”

“How can there be more? You can’t even tell me one thing I don’t already know about him.”

“What does it matter, anyway, Fay? I can judge for myself what sort of person he is and I don’t find him to be as bad as you all blindly believe him to be.” Remington shot at her under her breath.

“Blindly? Blindly? Everyone’s seen how slimy a git he is!” Fay hissed back.

“Maybe if you’d give him a chance-”
“He’s not worth a chance, Remington! Nothing he could ever do would make him worthy of a chance!”

Rem was taken a bit aback. She didn’t like how sharp-edged their tête-à-tête had become. She may have been firmly convinced Fay was in the wrong, but this was an argument she couldn’t win.

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“Oh, no! Catch it!” But it was too late, the candy frog launched itself off the table in the Three Broomsticks and splatted onto the stone floor in a small pile of faintly twitching chocolate. “Dang it. I love those things.” Remington mumbled, still leaning across the table and staring wistfully at the soiled sweet. “It was my last one.”

“I could get you another.” Seamus remarked, taking a drink of his Butterbeer.

“No reason to cry over spilt milk.” Dean added.

Rem sighed, sitting back up and wrapping her hands around her own mug of Butterbeer. They’d visited Honeydukes just before deciding to settle into a booth in the pub. Neville had tagged along with the four, since Dean had felt bad about him having to come to Hogsmeade alone. Remington hadn’t minded. Neville was a good kid. Shy and prone to being made fun of, sure, but sweet and kind, too.

She was pretty sure that Fay was giving her looks from across the table. Rem had already finished an entire mug of Butterbeer. There was only a little bit of alcohol in the stuff, but it was enough to lessen inhibitions. Not to mention she was sitting in the seat beside Seamus. She was sure the look in Fay’s eye was mildly suggestive. But so what? Rem was sitting next to someone of the opposite gender, big deal. So was Fay, who was sitting next to Dean, but Remington wasn’t shooting her pointed looks from across the booth.

“So does that mean we have to go back to Honeydukes before we head to the castle?” Fay asked.

“I don’t know, does it?” Seamus asked, nudging Rem in the side lightly with his elbow.

She sighed again, dramatically, “I suppose I’ll survive if we don’t.”

“But I should probably stop at Potage’s-” Seamus began.

“Need a new cauldron, do you, Seamus?” Dean inquired mockingly. Seamus shot him a slightly withering look.

“Could we go to Tomes and Scrolls, too? There was a book I wanted to-” Neville started to say.

“Of course, Neville.” Fay said agreeably. “Remington probably wants to go there, too. She hasn’t been running around with a new book for a while. Just that old thing-”

“Pride and Prejudice is a classic!” Rem interjected.

“I’ve never even heard of it!” Fay argued.

“Probably not, it’s by a Muggle author.” Remington muttered. She’d likely not have heard of it, either, if it hadn’t been for Natalie.

“Why haven’t I heard of it?” Seamus asked.

Rem grinned, rolling her eyes, “Probably because you’re a guy.”
“It’s some sort of love story, isn’t it?” Seamus prompted.

“Some arrogant rich guy falls for a girl with lower social status than him and treats her badly for most of the book.” Dean said in response, earning a couple strange looks. “My half-sister adored the book.” He reasoned.

“Sounds horrible.” Seamus commented.

“Oh, but that’s not it.” Remington said, giving Dean a sharp look. “Mister Darcy just isn’t sociable. People get the wrong impression of him. They don’t give him enough credit. After a while, Elizabeth realizes it, though. Not before he proposes to her a couple times-”

Fay was eyeing her, “Is this supposed to be a metaphor?” She asked dubiously. Remington turned a glare on her.

“Metaphor for what?” Dean asked, “Isn’t that like if I said ‘Fay is as irritating as a rouge Bludger?’” That earned him a disapproving scowl from the girl sitting beside him.

“No, similes are the ones that have ‘like’ and ‘as’ in them, right? A metaphor doesn’t have either.” Neville supplied.

“So... you’re saying that the storyline is the same as something else?” Seamus inquired, “That just doesn’t make any sense.”

“Exactly Fay, it doesn’t make sense.” Remington repeated bitterly, about ready to kick her friend beneath the table.

“Does too,” Fay disagreed. “You just won’t admit it.”

“I am not arguing with you again, Fay.” Rem told her.

“Again?” Seamus prompted, “Some bad blood, or what?”

“You could say that.” Fay muttered, jumping slightly when Remington’s sneaker jammed down on top of her foot.

“We just had a minor disagreement a couple days ago is all.” Rem said, giving Fay a pointed look as she finished the last of her Butterbeer.

“I hope you know you’re not getting another of those.” Fay remarked.

“You can’t decide that for me, it’s not as if you’re paying.” Rem countered. “What? Do you think I’m going to get drunk off Butterbeer?” Dean gave a concealed snort of laughter.

“I can see your inhibitions melting.” Fay informed her blandly.

Remington rolled her eyes, “Sure they are.”

They stuck around for a while longer, and just to spite Fay, Rem did order another Butterbeer. After some time, they agreed to head up to Tomes and Scrolls. When they got up to leave, Remington caught sight of Hermione, Luna, Harry, and some woman she didn’t recognize sitting at one of the tables and waved cheerily. Harry and the woman seemed too occupied with their conversation to notice, but Hermione offered a slight smile and Luna waved back dreamily before Rem slipped out the door with her little group.
“Today was good.” Fay declared from her bed, where she was braiding her dusty brown hair into twin plaits.

Remington looked up from her used and abused novel, “I suppose,” She allowed, “As far as Valentine’s Day goes.”

“I’m sure Seamus would agree.” Fay remarked. Remington’s stomach gave a jerk. “You sure you don’t have any... less-than-platonic feelings for him?”

“None that a relationship could form from.” She replied, hoping it was the safe answer. She couldn’t very well deal out a negative after what had happened when they’d gotten back from Hogsmeade, not without lying. But then again, she didn’t want Fay to know. She’d find out eventually, but that could hopefully be avoided for some time.

You couldn’t kiss someone and still be convinced that feelings were entirely platonic, could you? Would that mean she had it for Draco and Seamus, both? No. It wasn’t the same. Seamus was a great guy, a bit sharp-tongued and impulsive at times, but really quite good. He might have been attractive in a scruffy kind of way, and not bad at kissing, either, but she didn’t fancy him enough to actually call it anything special. Draco, though... That was a bit harder to figure out, considering she had a good idea of what Seamus was thinking and not a single idea as to what Draco was. He was absolutely attractive, but the quality of the appearance was nothing like that of the mind. He was arrogant and cruel, selfish and short-tempered. He wasn’t anything like a man she’d imagine herself being with for any length of time, but obviously, there was something that drew her to him. She couldn’t fathom why, but she knew she had a fondness for Malfoy that couldn’t be called platonic at all.

“I can’t believe you.” Fay mumbled, flicking a braid over her shoulder and pulling the curtains shut around her bed.
Sooner Or Later

There was quite a ruckus going on just a couple seats down the table, on Ginny’s other side. Owls upon owls were fighting for Harry’s attention. Hermione and the three Weasley boys were ripping open letters, announcing short summaries of the contents before moving onto the next handful.

“What’s going on over there?” Remington asked Ginny.

“Harry’s got an article published,” Ginny replied, “Hermione, could I see your copy?” She asked the other girl.

“Oh, of course,” Hermione responded, pausing from skimming one of the letters to toss a copy of *The Quibbler* to them. Ginny held it out so the two girls could read at the same time, with Fay leaning over Rem’s shoulder to get a peek, too.

“Merlin,” Fay breathed just as Remington had caught enough bits of the article to know what it included. Rem knew her friend had been on the fence about the whole return-of-the-Dark-Lord deal, but hoped this might sway her to believing it.

“That’s wonderful, Harry.” She said, leaning forward to look down the table at him as he tossed down a sheet of parchment and an envelope from the letter he’d just read. “Hopefully it, you know-”

“Yeah-” He began to agree just before the group of Gryffindors were approached by none other than the devil’s own kin.

“What is going on here?” Umbridge demanded with false sweetness. Everyone was looking at her, including most of the other students at their own houses’ tables. “Why have you got all these letters, Mister Potter?”

“Is that a crime now?” Fred asked with excess volume, looking quite contemptuous, “Getting mail?”

“Be careful, Mister Weasley, or I shall have to put you in detention.” The toad-woman informed him, “Well, Mister Potter?”

Harry hesitated a short moment before replying, “People have written to me because I gave an interview, about what happened to me last June.”

“An interview?” Umbridge repeated, her voice jumping an octave or two, “What do you mean?”

“I mean a reporter asked me questions and I answered them.” Remington gave a half-suppressed snort of laughter and received a silencing elbow to the sides from both Ginny and Fay. She gave a quiet squeak of discomfort. “Here-” He threw his own copy of the magazine at Umbridge, whose face seemed to start transforming into an eggplant as she took in the cover.

“When did you do this?” She asked slowly, her voice slightly shaky.

“Last Hogsmeade weekend.” Harry answered.

“There will be no more Hogsmeade trips for you, Mister Potter,” Umbridge whispered, “How you dare... how you could... I have tried again and again to teach you not to tell lies. The message, apparently, has still not sunk in. Fifty points from Gryffindor and another week’s worth of detentions.” And with that, she stomped away.
The rest of breakfast was spent hearing what Harry’s readers had to say, passing around Hermione’s *Quibbler*, and talking of how utterly infuriating and unfair Umbridge was being. By the time they left the great hall, another bulletin had been spread about the school. Umbridge had banned *The Quibbler*. Anyone found with the magazine would be expelled. This, of course, came as no surprise.

On the up side, Seamus and Harry had finally stopped disagreeing. Seamus actually apologized as they waited to get into Transfiguration, and admitted that Harry was right.

Though, she went into the library later that night, and noticed Draco sitting at a table with Crabbe, Goyle, and another fifth year Slytherin boy. Draco had left the table not long after she passed them and found her at a shelf rather far back.

“Don’t tell me you believe all this rubbish Potter’s putting out-” He began.

“I believed it before he published it, Draco.” She told him, turning away from the books to face him, leaning against the counter in front of the shelves.

“Did you even *read* it?” He prompted, glaring at her slightly, “Did you *see* what he said about my father?” At her silence, his eyes only narrowed even more malevolently, “I see.”

“It makes sense, though.” She said a bit defensively, “I don’t want to- I just can’t-” She paused, tipping her head to the side somewhat, “You would know, wouldn’t you? If he-”

“Don’t even continue that thought, Alvers.” He interrupted warningly.

“Why would Harry lie, Draco?” She demanded, “Give me one good reason why he-”

“He’s only looking for attention, Remington! That’s what he’s been doing all his life-”

“That’s not true!” She snapped at him quietly. “He never asked for his parents to die! He never wanted to be The Boy Who Lived! You can’t blame him for something he had no control over!”

“He could at least get by without accusing everyone he doesn’t like of breaking the law-” Draco began to argue.

“Are you sure he’s merely accusing?” She retorted, “It’d be dangerous to throw around falsities.”

“So you’re going to stick up for him? Calling my father a Death Eater-” He looked livid with her.

“Runs in the family, doesn’t it, Draco?” She shot back.

“How dare you-”

“I’ll treat you the same way you treat Harry.” She stated. “Blind accusations.” She paused for a moment, him giving her a deadly glare, her glowering back. “Though at least mine have some truth.” He looked as if he wanted to lash back at her, but she beat him to it. “Who’s next, Draco? You?” With those words, she spun, about to march away, but he grabbed her arm before she got far. She whipped around, yanking herself out of his grip, looking both angry and surprised that he’d had the nerve to touch her.

His words didn’t come soon enough, though, and she quickly turned away from him, and this time he let her leave the library, not finding the book she’d come to look for.
Not Every Day

She was rudely awoken by someone jumping on top of her. “Wake up! Lazy bum, wake up!”

Remington groaned, slightly in response and slightly in pain of Fay’s knee jamming into her back. “My alarm hasn’t gone off yet, Fay!” She snapped into her pillow.

“Do you know what today is?” Fay sang, “You can’t sleep in!”

“I’m not sleeping in!” Rem argued, “I’m not getting up earlier, either!”

“Come on!” Fay insisted, “You have to get up!”

“It’s my birthday! I can do what I want!” Rem disagreed, “Get off me!”

“If I had to get up early, you’d better, too.” Parvati told her from across the room. “Your little friend has been making all sorts of racket for at least half an hour.”

“Fay! Shame! Be quiet!” Rem chided, chucking a pillow over her head at the girl who’d finally stopped kneeling on her spine.

“I’m at the perfect angle to smother you with this.” Fay warned, “Get out of bed.”

“Fine! Get off my bed!” Remington countered.

“Fine!” Fay mocked, climbing off her mattress and yanking back the covers.

“Brat!” Rem shot at her, pulling into a sitting position. “I’m going to do this to you on your birthday!”

“Hah, you don’t know where I live.” Fay remarked, “Remember? My birthday’s in August.”

“Life enjoys taunting me.” She groaned, burying her face in her hands and dragging her fingers down her face as she looked back up. “At least it’s Friday.”

When she finally pulled herself out of bed, she found that the reason she’d been woken so early was because Fay had taken the liberty of planning her hair and make-up for the day. Remington resisted all her efforts as far as the make-up went.

“It’ll bring out your eyes!” Fay argued, “It’ll make you prettier!”

“If I’m not pretty enough without make-up, you can leave. We don’t need you.” Rem snapped. If it wasn’t horribly obvious to the other Fifth Year Gryffindor girls, she was most certainly not a morning person.

“Bitch.” Fay muttered.

“Whore. You called me ugly!” Remington retorted.

“I didn’t!” Fay said, patting Rem’s cheek in the mirror condescendingly, “Such a pretty little doll.” She cooed as if she were talking to a baby.

Rem swatted her hands away, standing up. “Are you done?”
“No! Sit! Your hair! It’s atrocious!” Fay pushed her back into the chair.

“Oh, decide if I’m attractive or not already.” She mumbled irritably.

By the time they left the dorm, Remington felt quite belittled, and Hermione gave her a couple pitying looks. She couldn’t deny that Fay was quite talented with fishtail braids, though. It made sense she supposed, considering how often Fay braided her own hair.

“I wish you’d let me curl it.” Fay lamented as they sat at the Gryffindor table.

“I don’t want people thinking that today is special by any means.” Rem said, snatching a piece of toast.

“It’s your birthday! How can-” Fay interjected.

“Shh!” Remington hissed, “Don’t go shouting it!”

“Why not?” Fay demanded, stabbing a bit of scrambled eggs and sticking them in her mouth, looking pointedly at Rem as she chewed.

The other girl simply rolled her eyes, just as an owl dropped a letter in front of her. She dropped the toast quickly, brushing the crumbs from her hands and picking up the envelope.

She looked it over for a moment, slightly disconcerted. It was apparent that it’d been tampered with. Why anyone would care what’s in her mail was beyond her, but she just ripped the envelope open regardless. Afterward she realized how stupid that was. What if someone had put something inside it? It sounded like something Fred and George would do. But all was fine. She unfolded the lined paper, fumbling the sheets for a moment when a couple other things fell out as well.

One appeared to be a wedding invitation. When she saw Celeste’s older brother’s name on it she couldn’t force back her grin. She could never see that boy marrying anyone. He was such a fruit loop. Not to mention, he’d only been a Seventh Year the year before. She flattened the lined paper, sure some sort of explanation could be found in Natalie’s neat, speedy script.

My Love,

I don’t really see how writing can make up for seeing you every day. Some days it feels like you’ve been gone a lot longer than you really have, but other days seem like you’ve just been sick for a while. Either way, I really, really, REALLY FRIGGEN hope I can see you this summer. Otherwise, I might just die of a Remmie deficiency.

Anyway, I’m sure you’ve already noticed, but Chuck is actually getting married. Yes, married. All of his siblings are in the wedding party, too. All five of them. Anyway, it’s three weeks after Nexxford’s classes are up, and I get out earlier than you, don’t I? So it’s two weeks after Hogwarts (LOVE the name) lets you leave. You could stay with me so you can come to the wedding! Celeste will be so happy to see you. She’s the one who talked them into inviting you and your mother. Chuck probably wanted you to come, anyway. He says he misses being insulted by you at dinner almost every day. Or maybe it was that he missed insulting you... I can’t really remember.

I Really Miss You A Whole Lot Of Tons,

Natalie

P.S. Check out the other paper!

P.P.S. I’m sending you a Howler if I don’t hear back in a week!
P.P.P.S. I love you!
P.P.P.P.S. I almost forgot! Isaac wanted me to tell you he misses you. I’m sure Celeste wants me to put a word in too.
She folded the letter back up and tucked it into the envelope, taking a quick look at the invitation in all its creamy off-white neatness, before she grabbed the small sheet of parchment that had fallen out as well. She was a bit afraid of what it was. She was sure this letter had been sent on account of her birthday, and since nothing had been mentioned of it as of yet, there wasn’t a doubt in her mind that this last sheet was solely dedicated to her turning sixteen. She slowly started to unfold it, only for a chorus of “Happy Birthday” to spill from the page. Fay’s eyes shot up at her, along with several from the others sitting around her. Embarrassed, she quickly folded it back up, resolving to read it when she got back to the dorm.

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During Charms class, she caught Draco looking at her from the Slytherin side of the room. She held his gaze for a moment, then mouthed, “What?”

“Wait after.” He responded silently before turning his eyes on the stout Professor at the front of the room, who was talking about the Silencing Charm.

When the bell rang, Remington hovered at her seat for a moment.

“Are you coming?” Fay asked, looking back at her friend.

“I just have a question for Flitwick.” She lied smoothly.

“Alright,” The girl said, “See you in History of Magic.” She made a gesture of hanging herself by a noose before turning to leave. Rem watched Fay until she walked out of the door, acting as though she was taking her time gathering her things before leaving the room as well. Draco was waiting on the other side of the threshold.

“Not admitting to your friends how much time you spend with me?” He inquired a bit tauntingly as they began to head towards the stairs.

“Do you have any idea what sort of earful she’d have in store for me every time it was brought up?” Remington countered. He shook his head lightly, wearing a slight smirk. “So, what was it you wanted?” She had a fairly good idea what it was.

“I’m under the impression that today’s of some importance to you.” He remarked.

“Not really.” She said, “Everybody’s acting like it should be, though.”

“Well, it only comes once a year.” He reasoned.

“Alright, say it.” She demanded.

“Happy birthday, Alvers.” He said, smiling with only a hint of smugness.

“There, now you don’t need to mention it anymore.” She commented decisively.

“You really hate your birthday that much?” He prompted, giving her an odd, sidelong look.

“Too much attention on me. I don’t like it.” She said with a small shake of her head, watching her feet so she wouldn’t trip on the way down the steps.

“Maybe you aren’t so suited for Slytherin.” He noted. “We tend to like excess attention.”

“So I’ve noticed.” She rolled her eyes. “When’s your birthday, anyway? Soon, I’d hope.”
“Why soon?” He inquired.

“Well,” She began a bit uneasily, obviously not entirely comfortable. Her volume dropped a couple notches. “Normally the guy’s supposed to be older. You’re younger than me, and you’ve kissed me. Twice!”

“That doesn’t mean you’re any more mature, Remington.” He informed her. “Far from it.” She made a derisive sound. “Besides, it’s only June.”

“June—” She began imploringly, prompting him to continue.

“Fifth.” He finished.

She smiled, “Good. We’ll still be in school.”
“She is not going to be happy about this, but I know she wouldn’t be able to come back to that house anymore.” Marissel said, shaking her head lightly. It was not long after hers and Remington’s arrival in Britain, and she’d sought to speak with her daughter’s godfather quite soon. “She’s too fragile.”

“And you believe that bringing her to the origin of the disturbance in the wizarding world would be good for her?” Severus Snape asked. He trusted Marissel Alvers’ judgment, certainly, but such a risky move begged to be questioned.

“She’ll see it in America soon enough. It won’t stay quiet there much longer.” Marissel replied, not without bitterness. “And it gives a good excuse to separate her from her Muggle-born friend.” It wasn’t so much that she disliked Natalie Ravscroft, but the closeness between her and her daughter could have become dangerous. She couldn’t very well expect Remington to obey her if she asked the girl to keep a healthy distance.

“You know moving her here will not guarantee that she keep better company.” Snape pointed out.

“I’ve noticed that she gravitates to those with pure blood more so than the others. It was simply unfortunate that Miss Ravscroft happened to be such a... vivacious young lady.” Marissel remarked. It was true. She had full confidence that her daughter would do fine in choosing companions. She clicked better with those who, like her, had wizarding parents. Timothy and Marissel may have allowed Remington to intermingle with the Muggle society through her younger years, going to an elementary school and all, but Rem did not keep tabs on the Muggle world any longer afterwards. She knew what there was to know about the wizarding world, but any news or advancement in the Muggle counterpart was beyond her. Natalie Ravscroft was her only tether to the non-magical universe. It was Marissel’s wish to sever that bond, or to at least obscure it from plain sight.

Being that all of the Pure-bloods in America had moved there from elsewhere, there was only a handful of elitists in the country, and a similar amount of families that still claimed old magical blood, though they didn’t much care to flaunt it. There were considerably more Pure-blood elitists in Europe than America, relative to the size of the areas. It would be a better bet that Remington would associate with a child from at least one of those families if she enrolled in Hogwarts.

“It would not be in her best interest to get too terribly close to the Pure-bloods, a certain few, that is.” Severus reminded her, giving her a testing look.

“She’s not an... easily influenced girl. Quite the bullheaded young lady.” Marissel argued.

“You need to decide which she is, Marissel.” He said, “She can’t linger in the middle of the issue. She’ll merely be caught in the crossfire.”

Marissel took a deep breath, knowing he was right, but not wanting to admit that there was any sort of danger for her daughter. When the pot had just barely started to stir up news that pointed inconspicuously at the rise of the Dark Lord, Marissel had very much wanted to ignore it. The fact of the matter was, however, that it was smarter to be safe rather than to be sorry. And if You-Know-Who was going to make a reappearance, flanked by all his former Death Eaters, she needed both herself and Remington to be prepared. It was only luck that Severus did not question her decision that Voldemort was again on his ascension of power.

“If it comes to the worst,” She said slowly, “I’d rather have her on the side that is fighting the more
merciful opponent. It’d be less risky for her-”

“Though she’d be more likely to be the witness of heinous acts.” He drawled, for once feeling as though the woman was being quite naïve.

“She’s already witnessed something appalling enough.” Marissel mumbled softly, then shook her head. “There isn’t anything to be done to stop this from coming. I need to trust that she’ll be able to hold her own through it.” She said decidedly, though what she wanted to do was tear Remington out of school and keep her from the turmoil. “You’ll be sure to keep an eye on her, Severus?”

“I will.” Though he very much disagreed that Remington should lean towards the side of the Dark Lord for safety. It would permanently alter her to be subjected to that sort of ruthless ambition. Not to mention, Remington wasn’t much of a bystander as Marissel seemed to believe her to be. If Remington chose to manipulate her talents from charms to curses, it’d be all too easy, considering how closely related the branches were. If her attitude soured, dark magic wouldn’t be terribly difficult for her. And he wasn’t going to let Marissel influence her daughter to shift to the darkened side.

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She was with him in the library again, this time sitting nearby as he finished Astronomy. She’d not been assigned another Potions assignment, and she was certain he was soundly adept at Charms—well enough to get him through his O.W.L.s. She knew he could probably do without her help in Astronomy, as well, but she wasn’t going to pass up the opportunity to spend some spare time with him. Though, Fay was getting irritated with the large gaps Remington seemed to be leaving in her schedule now and then.

The most recent homework in Astronomy was to accurately locate and name the stars and nebulae of and around the Orion constellation. Being that Orion was one of her favorites, she didn’t have much trouble. Though, she couldn’t deny that it’s somewhat distant Northern neighbor, a constellation nicknamed the Dragon, was beginning to capture her attention. She knew he was named after it, and if the boy himself was intriguing, why not his namesake?

She leaned her head in her hand, lazily watching him dot the stars about the paper, then setting in to label them. The first few were all inarguably correct, but then she caught him about to mark the star of Orion’s leg as anything but so proper.

“Not Betelgeuse!” Remington suppressed a laugh.

“But I thought—”

“No, Betelgeuse is on his arm, that’s Rigel.” She explained, “Easy mix-up.” She said softly, watching him correct his mistake before drawing Bellatrix and Saiph in their respective places in the constellation. “A lot of your family is named after stars and stuff, aren’t they?” She remarked thoughtfully.

“It’s a Black thing.” He offered.

“There’s only one Black left, isn’t there?” She inquired, “That still has the name, anyway. And I’ve the feeling you don’t much like him.” Sirius Black, she knew, had been very literally evicted from his family. The whole story confused her greatly, however. Her mother told her that he was turned away from the family for his Muggle sympathies, but yet he’d been detained in Azkaban for murdering Muggles and working under the Dark Lord. It made no sense.
“That doesn’t mean they can’t keep the tradition merely because the family is extant only in the female line.” He argued.

“I suppose,” She allowed, “Does that mean you’ll name your children after constellations, too?” She looked at him in a slightly entertained way as he made a face.

“I can’t stand children.” He muttered.

She laughed slightly, “Neither can I. But you’re going off subject. You can’t tell me you’re not going to have kids. You need to pass on the Malfoy name and all, don’t you?”

He gave her a mildly irritable look. “It’s not a requirement.”

“But you do, don’t you?” She prodded, “And I was asking if you’ll name them after constellations. I want to hear some possibilities.” She eyed him for a moment in thought. “Well, there can’t really be anything too ridiculous, can it?” She commented, “I mean, they named you Draco, after all.” She grinned, “If it’s a girl you could name her Norma or Aquila or Delphinus, or a boy you could name Capricornus or Microscopium or Grus-” She appeared far too amused.

“You’re being entirely too ridiculous.” He told her. “Draco is a perfectly acceptable name, but Microscopium? What are you thinking?”

“You could call him Mike.” She offered, but gave in when he continued looking at her pointedly, “Alright, alright. Judging by the names already used in your family...” She thought for a moment. “Maybe Corvus, or Capella, even Scorpius.”

He shrugged, “I suppose those aren’t too horrid.”

“I like Corvus for a boy. It’s a bit more modern than the others.” She suggested.

“I prefer Scorpius over that one.” He disagreed, slightly scathingly.

She tried not to roll her eyes. It wouldn’t be past him to argue with her just for the sake of arguing. “Alright then. It’s not like I’ll be naming your kids, anyway.” She reasoned indifferently.
“Oh come on!” Fay growled off to her left. “Expecto Patro- Expect- Damn it all!” She jerked her arm as though she were about to chuck her wand at the floor, but thought better and simply crossed her arms with a huff. Remington giggled slightly under her breath, but Fay noticed and turned on her. “I’d like to see you do it, then!”

Rem rolled her eyes. “I wasn’t laughing at your failure,” She said, earning a sneer from Fay, “I was laughing at your frustration.” When the other girl raised an eyebrow pointedly, Remington shook her head lightly and lifted her wand, collecting herself and trying to ward away all thoughts but a good memory- something about her father.

“Expecto Patronum,” She said deliberately, a wisp of silver light swirled from her wand, not unlike most of the others about the room. Fay was looking on somewhat bitterly, her arms still folded. Remington tried her best to intensify her thoughts, her eyes narrowing a bit. Slowly, it started to take shape, pulling into the form of a smaller wild cat, kind of lynx-like... but leaner. Rem smiled to herself and looked up at Fay, only for the Patronus to blink out. She groaned in irritation.

“Keep trying, that was good.” Harry remarked as he passed, commenting on everyone’s work, giving encouraging words. She gave him a half-smile. “Not so violent, Fay-” He said when he reached Fay.

She’d been jabbing her wand at the air as she recited the incantation, as if the more force she used, the more likely the gods of proper spell execution were to take pity on her.

Rem tried not to laugh, about to attempt the charm once again, but the sound of the door opening and resealing itself had caught her attentions. Everyone began falling silent, first at the front of the room, then slowly encompassing all the way into the back, where she was at. People turned and Patronuses vanished like light bulbs burning out. Remington couldn’t see what it was through the crowd, but she heard the squeak of a house elf explaining, or at least attempting to, to Harry that Umbridge was on a mission and that they were all quite close to being caught.

She heard Harry shout for everyone to run, but she had an idea that she wouldn’t make it anyway. She knew who’d be on the other side of those doors, ready to hunt down D.A. members like wild animals. And when she was caught, Draco would be absolutely livid.

She slipped out the doors a couple beats after Harry, hugging the shadows so she wouldn’t be seen right away. She should have taken off immediately, silently, but she saw Harry on the ground, apparently under the influence of some sort of tripping jinx. And she saw Draco, obviously the caster, a smug look on his face. Finally deciding she’d wasted enough time, she turned, moving away soundlessly, her profile mostly concealed as she stuck close to the wall. A hand roughly snatched her arm, pulling her around, a wand at her neck. She looked up into Draco’s face, not putting up a struggle, but flexing what muscles she had in her arm against his tight grip, wishing he’d let up a bit.

“Should’ve figured it’d be you.” He hissed, “The only one that tries being sneaky.”

“You are despicable.” She snapped under her breath. She didn’t know if it was an actual observation of his character, or a sudden buildup of her anger at him for helping Umbridge, and the way the disdain and venom in his voice flared up a decent amount of loathing inside her. Her stomach felt heavy and she really just wanted to hit something.
“You’re the one slinking around with Potter.” He shot back just as quietly, shoving her down the hall the way they’d come. It wasn’t a particularly painful shove, and she felt that it was complete impulse rather than what he’d really been intending to do. As if when the chance presented itself for him to degrade her, he took that opportunity with forcefulness.

Back towards where the door to the Room of Requirement normally appeared, she could see Pansy standing, looking inside with the door propped open about a foot or so. “What do you say we investigate, Draco?” She called, not having realized that Draco had actually caught somebody. “I bet we could find something useful in this.”

Remington immediately thought of the list hanging on the mirror in the back, holding all the signatures of the D.A. It would pretty likely be the end of the figurative road if Umbridge got her hands on it.

“Go ahead, Pansy.” Draco responded from right behind Remington. She hated the jealousy that inched over her at the tone he used. Where his voice was sharp and merciless with her at this moment, it was smooth and almost soft with Pansy. She had to remind herself that when he wasn’t angry with her, she was spoken to in a similar way, as well.

Pansy looked back, her expression becoming smug and satisfied when she caught sight of Rem. “That’ll be nice.” She remarked before slipping into the room. Remington came to a halt, glaring after the Slytherin girl.

“Don’t stop, Alvers.” Draco’s hand nudged her forward again.

She turned to him, reaching towards her back jeans pocket, where she’d put her wand before she’d fled the room, only to find it gone. Her eyes turned on him to see him smirking, twirling her cedar wand in his left hand. For a moment she looked positively affronted, her mouth opening to say something, but she couldn’t seem to formulate the words. She lurched to grab it, but his fingers closed around the thin strip of wood, held just out of her reach. His other hand rose to point his own wand at her. “Keep moving.”

“No,” She objected, “You give me my wand.” She held her hand out, palm up.

“I’m hardly that stupid, Alvers,” He countered, flicking his wand forward as a gesture for her to continue onward. “Keep walking.”

“That is my property and I demand you give it back.” She insisted, setting her jaw.

“Do you really think I care?” He prompted sharply, “Stop complaining and take your punishment.”

“And if I refuse?” She inquired derisively. His wand moved to only inches from her face and she glowered down it at him bitterly.

“I only found this, Draco.” Pansy’s voice drifted from behind her just before the dark-haired girl was at Draco’s side, showing him the list of all the members of Dumbledore’s Army.

“I guess we don’t need her if we’ve got evidence that she’s a part of it.” Draco remarked, his eyes flicking towards Rem with distaste.

“Professor Umbridge has Potter, anyway.” Pansy agreed. “Though maybe we could keep the wand.” She suggested, her gaze turning tauntingly at Remington, “Just to be sure she didn’t attempt to attack.”

Draco shook his head lightly, tossing the wand back at Rem, “She’s hardly a concern.”
Remington was quite glad she managed to snatch her wand out of the air, not wanting to look like an idiot for dropping it. “Careful who you’re saying that about, Malfoy.” She retorted, starting backwards to head to Gryffindor Tower.

“Careful who you’re threatening, Alvers.” Pansy sneered back.
Lovely Judas

They’d taken their time walking back up from the Herbology greenhouses, not having much else to do for the rest of the day. Sure there was some homework from Transfiguration, a spell to practice in Charms, and of course the usual potion to study in Snape’s class, but that could all be done later. Besides, why hurry back to the castle when they could procrastinate?

“I’ll murder her if she dares to get all high and mighty-” Remington was muttering about the bulletin that’d been posted all about that morning, about Dumbledore’s replacement. The she-devil.

“You always say you’re going to punch somebody or murder somebody-” Fay interrupted, “But you never do!”

“I swear I will this time, I-” Her words ground to a halt as they entered the castle and Rem’s eyes landed on a group of fellow Fifth Years standing in the Entrance Hall. Harry, Ron, Hermione, and that Hufflepuff- Ernie, were all standing, where they’d likely been talking, and Draco and his cronies (Fay liked to call them the Guard Apes) seemed to have confronted them. “Curious.” She remarked under her breath before approaching the group.

“Rem...” Fay groaned, following reluctantly and hovering behind her friend.

Draco’s eyes shifted to her, “Got something to say as well, do you, Alvers?”

“Actually-” She began, but caught the warning look Hermione shot at her. “I was only making sure everyone was playing nice.” She cocked an eyebrow, looking pointedly at him.

“That’s not your job, Alvers.” He informed her, causing her eyes to narrow on him malevolently. He tore his gaze from her, “Be good now, Potty... Weasel King...” He called before turning away from them.

“Somebody hex him while he’s not looking.” Fay whispered from over Remington’s shoulder.

“He was bluffing,” He breathed, appearing both affronted and appalled. “He can’t be allowed to dock points... that would be ridiculous.... It would completely undermine the prefect system....” They were looking at the hourglasses set into the wall, one for each House, with a precious stone color-coordinated for all of the four. It was apparent to even Remington that all of the Houses, with the exception of Slytherin, had lost points since that morning.

“What happened?” She asked.

“The Inquisitorial Squad, that’s what’s happened.” Ron muttered.

“What did Malfoy say? ‘A select group of students who are supportive of the Ministry,’” Hermione said, “Umbridge started it all.”

“They can dock points and everything.” Ernie added.

“So the hag went and got herself some lapdogs, has she?” Fay inquired.

“That just- really ticks me off. Them? In charge of House points?” Remington glared at the hourglasses along with the others.
“Noticed, have you?” Came Fred’s voice. While they’d been preoccupied, the twins had come up behind them.

“Malfoy just docked us all about fifty points.” Harry said, sounding quite furious.

“Yeah, Montague tried to do us during break.” George commented.

“What do you mean ‘tried’?” Ron asked quickly.

“He never managed to get all the words out,” Fred answered, “due to the fact that we forced him headfirst into that Vanishing Cabinet on the first floor.”

Remington laughed, but Hermione looked incredibly shocked, “But you’ll get into terrible trouble!”

“Not until Montague reappears, and that could take weeks, I dunno where we sent him.” Fred reasoned calmly, “Anyway... we’ve decided we don’t care about getting into trouble anymore.”

“Have you ever?” Hermione prompted.

“’Course we have,” George replied, “Never been expelled, have we?”

“We’ve always known where to draw the line.” Fred agreed.

“We might have put a toe across it occasionally,” George allowed.

“But we’ve always stopped short of causing real mayhem.”

“But now?” Ron asked, as if he were a bit afraid of the answer.

“Well, now-” George began.

“ - what with Dumbledore gone - ”

“ - we reckon a bit of mayhem - ”

“ - is exactly what our dear new Head deserves.” Fred finished.
“Have you seen the bulletin?” Fay asked, leaning over the back of the couch, where Remington was curled up, flipping idly through her Herbology book.

Rem look at her friend, “No, what bulletin?”

Fay grinned and wove around the end of the couch, grabbing Rem’s hand as she passed and yanking her along. “We’re supposed to have consultations with our Head of House, McGonagall.” She began to explain. “Mine’s not until Wednesday.” She continued as they reached the list posted on the wall. “But yours is…” She trailed off, trying to find the time Remington was assigned.

“Two o’clock Monday.” Rem answered for her.

“You would be lucky enough to miss some of Potions.” Fay mumbled, heading back to where Rem’s book lay on the couch cushion.

“Only the very end.” Remington argued, following Fay back and plopping into her spot. “What do you think you’ll go for?”

Fay shrugged, leaning forward to snatch up a pamphlet with the Department of Magical Accidents and Catastrophes’ logo stamped across the front from the coffee table in front of the couch. “I’d really like to be a Healer, like my sister.” She said, “But the requirements are so high, I’d never make it… I guess it wouldn’t be bad to work in the Department of Transportation. I could do that.”

“Yeah,” Rem agreed slowly, “But if you really want to be a Healer, you should really try.” She said. “You know how they say all that, ‘get a job you like and you’ll never work a day of your life.’”

“I don’t really care all that much.” Fay muttered, tossing the pamphlet back after flipping through it swiftly, and grabbing another. “What about you?”

“You know I want to be an Auror.” Remington said. “And unlike you, I really do care all that much.”

During Potions, she managed to brew her Invigoration Draught in the amount of time she had of class. She filled her flask with the potion, feeling like she may have done reasonably. Though it was questionable as to whether it looked precisely as it stated in the book, she was rather confident that she’d followed the instructions well enough.

She glanced at Fay, who seemed to be struggling slightly with her own concoction, and whispered, “wish me luck,” before heading to the front. When she reached Snape’s desk, she set the flask down and waited for his attention for a moment. “I’m supposed to go to Professor McGonagall’s-” She started to say.

“I’m aware, Miss Alvers.” He said, waving her off.

She gave a nervous smile that likely appeared more like a grimace before striding to the door, glancing back into the room as she pushed it open. She caught the fleetest glimpse of Draco’s eyes turn in her direction, but just as soon, he was glaring towards Harry and she was out of the door. Despite the D.A. incident happening a couple weeks ago, Draco still seemed set on either ignoring her, or shooting dirty looks.
As she walked to the first floor of the Defence Against the Dark Arts tower, she contemplated whether she should even mention anything other than Auror to McGonagall. She didn’t much care for anything else, really. She’d be able to settle if she failed, of course, but the only thing she really wanted was to be an Auror. She’d been mulling the idea of bringing up the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures as an alternative, but she assumed that was more an interest on behalf of her father than a real occupational choice.

Not sure whether she was to just walk in or not, she knocked lightly on the door when she arrived. When McGonagall’s brisk “come in,” drifted through to her, she slipped inside.

She noticed the foul, pink-clad toad sitting in the corner as soon as she stepped in and death wishes began to make a reappearance in her mind. “Have a seat, Miss Alvers.” McGonagall said. Remington obediently did as told. “Now, we were fortunate enough to acquire records of your grades from Nexxford Academy. That will certainly make things easier.” Rem could already hear Umbridge scratching away with her quill. How could the woman have anything to write about yet? “As I’m sure you’ve figured out, this meeting to discuss any career ideas you might have, and to help you decide which subjects you should continue into your sixth and seventh years.” Professor McGonagall explained, “Have you any thoughts of what you might like to do after you leave Hogwarts?”

Remington took a deep breath, shifting slightly in her chair. “Well for a while now I’ve been set on being an Auror. I know it’s a really, really demanding job, but I hope my best will be sufficient.”

Umbridge made a sound from her corner. It wasn’t quite the ‘I’m about to interrupt you’ cough, but a rather derisive version of it.

“A very demanding career choice, indeed.” McGonagall remarked, pulling out a darkly colored pamphlet from the stacks on her desk. “They accept only the best. You’d need to achieve a minimum of five N.E.W.T.s, and nothing below an ‘Exceeds Expectations’ grade. Then you would be required to undergo a stringent series of character and aptitude tests at the Auror office.” She pressed the leaflet onto the surface of her desk, looking back up at Remington.

“The classes I would advise would include Defence Against the Dark Arts, naturally. I can see that you averaged ‘Exceeds Expectations’ in that particular class while at Nexxford, which will get you into N.E.W.T. classes.” Umbridge gave an almost disdainful sniff. It was generally ignored. “Transfiguration would also be important, which I’d say you’re somewhere between ‘Outstanding’ and ‘Exceeds Expectations’ in my class, so you’d very well meet the requirements to continue. Charms is necessary, too, of course. No need for you to worry about that one. Herbology would be helpful.” McGonagall gave her somewhat of a pointed look. “And Potions. The way you began the year was a bit questionable, but I find that your grade has been steadily improving to perhaps slightly beyond the ‘Acceptable’ range. I must inform you that Professor Snape will accept absolutely no less than ‘Outstanding’ from his N.E.W.T. students.” She arched her eyebrows slightly. “So long as you can keep your Charms and Transfiguration grades constant or better, and work on getting your Herbology and Potions marks up to scratch, I see no reason why you shouldn’t pursue- Yes, Dolores?”

Umbridge had finally exhibited her annoying little cough. “I’d like make just one quick little interruption.” She said with far too much sweetness. “At best, Miss Alvers is only earning an ‘Acceptable’ in my class. In order to go on to N.E.W.T. level she needs no less than an ‘Exceeds Expectations’.”

“I’m fairly confident that Miss Alvers will do perfectly well on her Defence Against the Dark Arts O.W.L.” McGonagall said, not turning her gaze on Umbridge. “Any questions, Alvers?”
Remington’s eyes had flicked between the two for a moment. “Well, I was kind of wondering whether having high marks in other classes as well would make any influence.”

“I assume you’re referring to Astronomy?” Professor McGonagall said. Rem gave a weak half-smile in response. “Yes, more ‘Outstanding’ grades will certainly make you a more appealing candidate.”

“Alright,” Remington said, shifting to stand. “Thank you, Professor.”

“You’re welcome, Miss Alvers. You’re free to go if that is all.” McGonagall told her.
She couldn’t believe the twins had actually left Hogwarts. At the time it’d been exciting, what with the hallway-turned-swamp on the floor above, and such an open challenge to Umbridge’s authority. But now, things seemed to be both quieter, and more uproarious. It certainly wasn’t the same without the Weasley twins roaming about, and their well-orchestrated pranks were missed, but at the same time, students seemed to take Fred and George’s departure as a cue to multiply their use of the Weasleys’ products. Skiving Snackboxes were inducing dozens of sicknesses. Peeves seemed to have dedicated himself to Fred’s request to give Umbridge hell. The swamp was still festering up in the east wing of the fifth floor. The Inquisitorial Squad was constantly taking hits. There was always one or another up in the hospital wing. She still seemed unable to not feel a bit relieved Draco hadn’t been sent to Madam Pomfrey yet.

She was managing Potions. Struggling to, certainly, but yet managing. Thing was, help in Potions wasn’t the only thing she liked having him around for.

It wasn’t terribly unlike the time just after Harry’s article was published-- Draco sat in the library with his lackeys, Crabbe and Goyle, and the other boy, whose name she’d learned was Theodore Nott. She hadn’t been planning on going into the library, but she’d caught sight of them inside, and had taken a bit of a detour.

Luckily for her, he looked up as she passed, catching her eye. She jerked her chin slightly in a gesture for him to follow, before weaving her way all the way to the very back, where the light was rather dimmed and most students didn’t pass through. She leaned back against the counter that lined all of the shelves, waiting a bit impatiently, pressing the heels of her palms onto the countertop. Just when she started to think he wasn’t going to bother coming back to see what she wanted, Draco turned the corner.

She watched him come to a halt across from her, folding his arms and scowling at her.

“Come on, don’t be angry at me.” She said, her voice gentle, but her eyes settling on him somewhat bitterly.

“You broke Educational Decrees.” He reminded her, “And participated in something you knew I wouldn’t approve of.” He eyed her for a moment, “You don’t suppose you should’ve thought of it sooner?”

“Sorry I fell for the misconception that you might have some respect for doing the right thing.” She countered.

“When has breaking the law been the right thing?” He argued, “You had no viable reason-”

“We needed to do something to learn how to defend ourselves-” She began to protest.

“Just give it a rest, Remington.” He snapped. “You’d be just fine if you weren’t attracting attention to yourself like this.”

She was reminded sharply of the warnings her mother had given her over Christmas break. “Not once the First Wizarding War gets repeated.” She hissed, about to continue.

“Just stop.” He interrupted her, glaring at her with a venomous gaze, “There isn’t anything suggesting there’ll be another war.”
“Don’t tell me you can’t see it happening.” She stated sharply, but quietly. She knew better than to bring up Harry anymore. It only ever seemed to make things worse. She noticed she was gripping the edge of the counter so forcefully that her knuckles had turned a blotchy white and quickly relaxed her hold. “I don’t want to argue with you.” Though the words were a bit harder to get out than they should have been.

“I’d never guess.” He commented dryly.

“You seem to make it a bit easier than it should be.” She retorted softly as he continued to look at her with a touch of disdain. “Where’s Pansy, anyway? She’s been awfully friendly with you since that night.” Rem asked conversationally. She wasn’t dumb, though. She knew why Pansy suddenly seemed to think she was Draco’s best friend. It must have seemed that Draco was interested in Remington more than Pansy liked, but now that it was so obvious that he was upset with Rem, Pansy must have figured it was one less potential obstacle to worry about.

“She’s been in hospital wing.” He replied tersely. “What does it matter to you?”

“Just curious as to why she’s currently not hanging on your side.” She shrugged.

“Jealous, more like.” He remarked.

Her eyes flashed up at him. “Don’t pretend you’re not of Seamus, either.” She figured she’d not get away with denials, so the next best road to take was the one of accusations.

“There’s no need to pretend.” He countered.

“Oh, don’t lie to me, Draco. I know better than that.” She said quietly.

“Besides,” He said, “I don’t get jealous.” Liar- “If anything, I don’t like other people touching my things.”

She looked at him incredulously, “Your things? Excuse me?” She snapped in disbelief as he rolled his eyes at her outburst. “Draco Malfoy, I’m far from being yours.” But he’d started walking back. She grabbed his arm as he passed to stop him. “I’m not done with you-”

He turned to face her and she took a step back against the counter again, but this time his hands were on the counter on either side of her, keeping her there. “I could have guessed that.”

“Don’t you start-” She began to chide.

“Alright, how about I finish?” He cut across her. Thanks to his lack of suggestive expression, if it hadn’t been Draco, she wouldn’t have caught the second side of the blade in his words.

Her jaw was open in affront, but she recovered quick enough, “That was bloody inappropriate!” She said, shoving his chest with both hands.

“Don’t act as if you’re any better.” He argued. “He probably only wants to get in your pants.” He quoted Fay, cocking an eyebrow.

“Well, you tell me.” She said, thrusting her hands onto her hips, “Is it true?”

“Or you could tell me,” He began, leaning forward again to rest his hands on the counter. “Why I’d put up with all of your drama for this long without bedding you. If I wanted sex, I could just go to Pansy.”
“Haven’t you?” She said contemptuously before she could stop herself.

“Have you?” He asked, eyebrows arched as he looked at her.

Her eyes stayed unwaveringly on his. It wasn’t as if she had the audacity to speak aloud of her sexual status, in a library, no less. He seemed just as determined to glare at her until she cracked. “Why w-”

Just then a small second year turned the corner, causing both of the older students to turn their eyes on her, and Remington’s face to turn a pretty shade of light pink. Noticing the situation, the girl rushed past them and turned the far corner about as fast as she could, likely to avoid the dark look on Draco’s face. Once she was gone, he looked back at Rem, yet awaiting a response.

She shoved his chest again, still blushing furiously. “I have not.” She hissed, glaring, before marching away and out of the library.
Everyone was going absolutely insane. O.W.L.s were practically jumping on them, and the entire fifth year was freaking out. From black market trades for intelligence-enhancing, studying like mad, to a certain few (namely a certain Draco Malfoy) making it a point to instill fear in their classmates.

“Of course, it’s not what you know,” He told Crabbe and Goyle as they stood outside the Potions room, waiting for Professor Snape, only a couple days before the exams themselves. “It’s who you know. Now, Father’s been friendly with the head of the Wizarding Examinations Authority for years -- old Griselda Marchbanks -- we’ve had her round for dinner and everything....”

Remington gave a quiet derisive snort, but heard Hermione whisper in fright, “Do you think that’s true?”

“Something to say, Alvers?” He asked in her direction.

“You’re so loud.” She remarked, glancing at him, flashing the ghost of a smile for the sake of not starting a scene.

“Understatement.” Fay muttered from beside her where she was leaning against the wall, just as the door swung open.

Their first exam was Charms, and Remington was strangely excited. In a nervous, slightly giddy way. She, not unlike the entire rest of the fifth year, was quite afraid of the O.W.L.s, but Charms was something she knew. She was fairly confident. All Sunday, the Gryffindors of her year were spread about the common room, studying and practicing.

“Look. I know a Hover Charm is different from a Levitation Spell,” Seamus said, lying on the floor on his back, his head next to Remington’s knee. “But what is the difference?”

Dean flipped through his *Standard Book of Spells, Grade 5* to find the right page from his own seat on the couch. He’d already been hit in the back of the head twice by Parvati and Lavender, who were using locomotion charms to race their pencil cases about the room.

Fay was on her stomach on the floor alongside the couch, flipping idly through her own book, occasionally posing a question and looking across at Rem for an answer by way of testing the latter’s knowledge. Remington was seated Indian-style, leaning her side against the couch, for the most part just watching Fay. The other part was spent glancing at the clock.

“With the Hover Charm, you can control the object’s movements as you levitate them.” Rem remarked blandly. “And-”

“You don’t need to have contact with the object.” Dean finished, looking a tad proud of himself.

Rem lazily clapped her hands. “*Wingardium Leviosa.*” Fay mumbled, as if to pound the incantation into her mind, accidentally making Dean’s quill lift off the couch for a short moment before falling down and rolling off the cushion onto Remington’s lap.

Rem picked up the quill and tossed it a bit forcefully at Fay. “Watch yourself.” She warned jokingly.

“I didn’t try!” Fay countered, throwing the quill back, but missing entirely and hitting the floor. “I’m just so nervous!”
“Deep breaths, Fay,” Remington teased, “We’re all nervous.”

“You don’t show it.” Seamus commented, looking at her, upside down.

“You think I want to?” Rem prompted, eyebrows raised as she looked back down at him. Her eyes turned back onto the clock mounted on the wall across the room. “I think I’m gonna head down and see if there’s anything useful left in the library.” She said, stretching and pulling herself onto her feet.

“Don’t lie, Rem.” Fay told her dubiously. “We know you won’t be back until the library closes.”

“We do?” Dean said, turning a quizzical look on Fay before amending his previous words, “Oh yes, we do.” His voice was serious and almost fatherly as his eyes landed on Remington.

“You don’t remember, do you?” Fay muttered, Dean shook his head minutely.

“You’ve been talking to them about it?” Remington hissed.

“Well obviously I can’t talk to you about it. Who cares, anyway? You can’t honestly expect that it’s some big secret that you’re seeing Malfoy.” Fay rolled her eyes bitterly.

“I’m not seeing Malfoy.” Rem shot back. “We’re helping each other with school.” She went to step past Fay and Seamus, the latter of which was scowling at the ceiling silently.

“That’s not all you’re helping each other with, I’m sure.” Fay mumbled under her breath.

Looking quite affronted, Remington spun to look down at the other girl, “I hope you’re not implying what I think you’re implying.”

“Well let’s see.” Fay shifted to hold up her hands, “The list of reasons he’d be interested isn’t very long. He either wants to use you,” She ticked one finger off, “Or he wants to sleep with you- which they’re pretty much the same-”

“I’m not listening to this.” Rem said determinedly. She wasn’t about to inform Fay of the conversation that had taken place a few days ago in the library.

“Neither am I.” Seamus added, getting to his feet as well.

She looked at him for a moment, glanced at the other two still settled around the couch, and headed towards the portrait. It was about halfway there that she glanced over her shoulder, feeling followed. Indeed, Seamus was behind her. She stopped and turned halfway towards him. “What do you-”

“Keep walking.” He said, gesturing towards the portrait.

Not feeling entirely happy about this, she did as instructed, exiting the common room and coming to a halt on the landing. “Is there something I can help you with?” She asked, trying to sound less anxious and more soft as she turned to look at Seamus.

“I just wanted to know what this was about Malfoy.” He said, with the closest to a nonchalant shrug she was sure he could manage.

She pursed her lips. It was bad enough not knowing herself, but to have him asking about it as well? “Not much really. I’m just helping him with Charms and in return he was helping me with Potions. You know that.”

“But we both know what Fay said-"
“Oh, now. Not you too!” Remington interjected. “Really Seamus, it’s not much your concern-”

“I apologize for being a bit confused.” He said, giving her an imploring look. “Are you with him or not?”

“No!” She said, looking almost amused, “Do you really think he’d let himself get in a relationship with a Gryffindor?”

“But would you let yourself get in a relationship with him?” He asked.

“I don’t really think we need to worry about that.” She reasoned.

“I just want to have an idea of where you stand.” He pressed. “I don’t really want to make a fool of myself.”

She smiled at him good-naturedly, “Not that you need any help with that.” When his expression didn’t waver, her smile faded slightly. “I’m just not sure enough to tell you.” She said.

“And you’re certain that’s not just your nice way of saying you don’t feel anything for me?” He prompted.

She opened her mouth to say something, but it didn’t come out right away. He nodded a bit as if in understanding, taking her minute hesitation for an admittance. “Seamus, that’s not-”

“Easier for both of us if you just admit it now.” He said, his eyes meeting hers for a fraction of a second before he slipped back into the common room, leaving her alone on the landing.

She didn’t much want to see Draco anymore after her little confrontation with Seamus, but he’d be waiting. The least she could hope for was that he’d be in a good mood -- comparably. The last thing she needed was to get in a fight with Draco, too, on the night before her Charms exam. Almost every time they were in the same vicinity they seemed to end up arguing, though. Somehow, she still didn’t have enough initiative to leave him be. She crossed the threshold into the library, expecting to head towards the back, near where they usually sat when he helped her with Potions, or she aided him in Charms or Astronomy, but she saw, much to her displeasure, that he was seated at one of the tables towards the front, near where they usually sat when he helped her with Potions, or she aided him in Charms or Astronomy, but she saw, much to her displeasure, that he was seated at one of the tables towards the front, against the wall, Pansy claiming the seat beside him.

If she hadn’t already been in an affectable enough mood, she probably would have continued forward and sat down at the table, if only just to spite Pansy. But as soon as she caught sight of Pansy’s hand touching Draco’s, even just for a moment when she laughed at something he said, Remington turned and left the library, heading down the hallway, not planning on going anywhere in particular, besides possibly outside for some fresh air.
It finally seemed things could quiet down. It’d been an absolutely exhausting couple weeks of exams, punctuated with a few slight shocks and scares. For one, Professor McGonagall had been shot with multiple Stunners out on the grounds during their Astronomy O.W.L. And that was while they were trying to drag Hagrid off. Not to mention, Harry had to be removed from the Great Hall towards the end of the History of Magic O.W.L. Remington had a feeling she could somewhat relate. He must have dozed off, and the sort of fright he was in when he woke up suggested he’d had some sort of nightmare. It almost made her feel like they had something more in common than she thought. Of course, she had to remind herself that she had no idea what his issue was.

She was on her way back up to the common room, Fay in tow as always. The only problem was that it seemed everyone else in the hallway was moving in the opposite direction. Though that seemed slightly suspicious, she pressed on, knowing this was the quickest way. Not far ahead, the end of the progression of students loomed, with Ginny warding them off.

“You can’t come down here!” She said, “Someone’s let off Garroting Gas just along here.” She was waving at the crowd like she was shooing a pesky feral cat.

“We should turn around,” Fay remarked, grabbing the cuff of Remington’s shirt.

“You can go on, I’m just going to talk to Ginny for a moment.” Rem told her, squeezing through the last of the crowd and finally reaching Ginny.

“Oh, not you too.” The girl said, looking a sliver exasperated. “I know I’m not going to be able to get rid of you.”

“What do you mean?” Remington asked, a tad dubious, “There is no Garroting Gas, is there?”

Ginny opened her mouth to respond just as Luna’s voice drifted from down the hallway and began to sing out ‘Weasley Is Our King.’ Her chorus was quickly cut off, and Ginny had already started running down the hall, Rem on her heels. Umbridge turned a corner at the end of the hallway they were running towards, moving about as fast as her stout legs would carry her. “No- Professor!” Ginny called out hurriedly, “You can’t go down there! Garroting Gas!” She yelled.

Behind the vile toad-lady, it seemed the whole of the Inquisitorial Squad followed. Luna was in the grasp of Goyle, and looked as unconcerned as ever. There was a large upperclassman Slytherin holding onto Ron. Remington’s first impulse was turn the other way, but Ginny kept going, trying to block Umbridge from getting any closer. That’s when Rem noticed that they were on the hallway that housed Umbridge’s office. Clearly, something was going on inside that room, and Ginny, Luna, and Ron were supposed to be preventing anyone from discovering it.

“Catch them!” Umbridge ordered, still barreling towards her door. For the first time, Rem heard the sound of running footsteps behind her, and caught sight of Neville, which surprised her quite a bit. As soon as she looked back, the Inquisitorial Squad had caught up, what with the three of them running towards the others.

“Let go of me!” Ginny demanded when Warrington snatched her arm and started dragging her towards the office, where Umbridge had already disappeared; her shrill voice could be heard quite distinctly out in the hallway. Neville had rushed forward, his wand raised at Warrington, only to be hit with a Trip Jinx.
In Neville and Ginny’s defense, Remington reached to pull her wand from her back pocket, but Montague caught ahold of her upper arm before she could get a good grip on it, and they were all pulled into the office. Inside, Hermione was already pined against the wall by Millicent Bulstrode, and Draco was leaned up against the windowsill, tossing Harry’s wand idly in the air, watching the confrontation between Umbridge and Harry with a smirk on his lips, which turned a slight more menacing and disgusted when he caught sight of Remington being ushered through the door by Montague. She knew that look was reserved for her. For once again doing something that he despised her for.

Her arms were held behind her back, which made her feel like some sort of criminal, which was just as well.

“So, Potter,” Umbridge began from her seat in a -surprise- pink armchair, “You stationed lookouts around my office and you sent this buffoon,” She nodded at Ron. Draco gave a laugh, that was accompanied by a couple chuckles from others of the Inquisitorial Squad. Remington’s eyes narrowed on him, and couldn’t ignore that he gave a couple sidelong glances in her direction. “To tell me the poltergeist was wreaking havoc in the Transfiguration department when I knew perfectly well that he was busy smearing ink on the eyepieces of all the school telescopes, Mister Filch having just informed me so.

“Clearly it was very important for you to talk to somebody. Was it Albus Dumbledore? Or the half-breed, Hagrid? I doubt it was Minerva McGonagall, I hear she is still too ill to talk to anyone....” At that, a few gave a bit more laughter.

“Ignorant, barbaric-” Remington hissed under her breath, hating every one of the Inquisitorial Squad with a fresh vigor, her gaze still burning into Draco. Her mutterings quickly ceased when Montague’s grip tightened and she forced back a wince of pain, gritting her teeth.

“It’s none of your business who I talk to.” Harry snapped at Umbridge. She could tell that the others’ amusement over McGonagall’s condition grated on his nerves just as much as it had hers.

“Very well,” Umbridge said in her most dangerous and falsely sweet voice. “Very well, Mister Potter... I offered you the chance to tell me freely. You refused. I have no alternative but to force you. Draco, fetch Professor Snape.”

Draco crossed the room, smirking, towards near where she was held captive, next to the door. As he passed, Remington attempted to pull out of Montague’s hold, wanting to slap Draco, or kick him, or at least trip him, if nothing else, but the older boy’s hands clenched yet tighter on her arms and she only just managed to bite back the yelp of pain that rose in her throat. The last thing she wanted was anyone thinking she was weak, particularly Draco. He’d seen too much of her with her guards down. Too much of what she kept locked away inside. Now she needed to build those walls back up. She couldn’t trust him like this anymore. Not when they kept going back on each other, getting upset, and knowing it was only going to happen again.

How did they even get into this sort of situation? How could they have ever even remotely trusted each other? She was a blood traitor, he a Pure-blood supremacist. She was a Gryffindor, and him a Slytherin. Dumbledore’s Army, and Inquisitorial Squad. It didn’t make any sense.

With Draco’s departure, a sort of quiet settled. A quiet that was disrupted by the muffled sounds of struggle. Hermione was fighting Millicent’s hold, Ron was trying his damnedest to squirm out of Warrington’s half nelson. Neville was looking like he could pass out any moment from a lack of oxygen, thanks to the tightness in which Crabbe was holding onto him. Ginny was determinedly trying to stomp on the feet of the girl holding her. Luna and Remington seemed the only ones not putting up an ongoing grapple.
From the look Draco shot her when he walked back in, she could tell he noticed her attempt to have a go at him. And, though it was a completely inappropriate time to remember something like it, she thought of the bet she’d placed with Ron at the beginning of the year. Nothing had been said about it, and she’d almost lay another bet that Ron’d forgotten about it as well. Now, it seemed, as soon as she was released, one Slytherin or another would get a nice knuckle to the face. Or stomach. Whichever worked better.

Though Snape’s face was the usual mask of indifference, she could see a hint of disapproval in his eye as he glanced past her and about the other students in the room. She was certain he was aware of her mother’s wishes that she stay far away from trouble. It seemed as though she was doing an absolutely atrocious job of accomplishing that. “You wanted to see me, Headmistress?”

Umbridge proceeded to ask for Veritaserum, which it appeared was fresh out. Eventually, Umbridge started to get impeccably frustrated. “You are on probation!” She shrieked, causing Snape’s eyebrows to arch. “You are being deliberately unhelpful! I expected better, Lucius Malfoy always speaks most highly of you!” Remington’s eyes trailed to Malfoy again, this time of their own accord. That must have been his father. It would make sense, for how amiable he and Snape seemed. “Now get out of my office!” Umbridge concluded heatedly.

Ever the collected one, Snape gave an ironic bow and turned to leave. But Harry called out before he could get through the door. “He’s got Padfoot!” He shouted, causing all the eyes in the room to rove to him. “He’s got Padfoot at the place where it’s hidden!”

Snape merely paused at the door, but Umbridge seemed to have a piqued interest. “Padfoot? What is Padfoot? Where what is hidden? What does he mean, Snape?”

Slowly, Snape replied, “I have no idea. Potter, when I want nonsense shouted at me, I shall give you a Babbling Beverage. And Crabbe, loosen your hold a little, if Longbottom suffocates it will mean a lot of tedious paperwork, and I am afraid I shall have to mention it on your reference if you ever apply for a job.”

Harry looked crestfallen, as if he were a young child told that Christmas was cancelled, as well as his birthday, and Easter, and all the other holidays of the year. As soon as the door had closed behind Snape, however, Umbridge began to take out her wand. “Very well. Very well... I am left with no alternative.... This is more than a matter of school discipline.... This is an issue of Ministry security.... Yes... yes...” She took several deep breaths, as if preparing herself, “You are forcing me, Potter.... I do not want to, but sometimes circumstances justify the use.... I am sure the Minister will understand that I had no choice.” The anxious, hungry look on Malfoy’s face made Rem almost as sickened as it made her angry. She knew what was coming next. Some sort of punishment. Likely not allowed by the school’s discipline plans. “The Cruciatus Curse ought to loosen your tongue.”

“No!” Hermione interjected, “Professor Umbridge- It’s illegal!” Umbridge’s wand raised itself to aim at Harry. “The Minister wouldn’t want you to break the law, Professor Umbridge!”

“What Cornelius doesn’t know won’t hurt him,” Umbridge insisted, “He never knew I ordered dementors after Potter last summer, but he was delighted to be given the chance to expel him, all the same....”

“It was you?” Harry asked incredulously, looking even slightly disgusted. “You sent the dementors after me?”

“Somebody had to act,” Umbridge breathed. “They were all bleating about silencing you somehow -- discrediting you -- but I was the one who actually did something about it.... Only you wriggled out of that one, didn’t you, Potter? Not today, though, not now...” And with a last deep breath, “Cruc...”
“No!” Hermione cried. “No- Harry- Harry, we’ll have to tell her!”

“No way!” Harry yelled back.

“We’ll have to, Harry, she’ll force it out of you anyway, what’s... what’s the point?” That’s when Hermione began to cry.

“Well, well, well!” Umbridge said triumphantly, “Little Miss Question-All is going to give us some answers! Come on, then, come on!”

Ron made an attempt to tell her not to, but Hermione continued, “I’m- I’m sorry everyone, but I can’t stand it—”

“That’s right, that’s right, girl!” Umbridge pulled Hermione forward to sit her down in the abandoned armchair. After an explanation about how they were trying to contact Dumbledore, and that there was a weapon hidden on the grounds, Umbridge finally took Hermione and Harry, for them to show her to this weapon. Malfoy did try to persuade her to bring along a couple from the Inquisitorial Squad.

“You will remain here until I return and make sure none of these-” She gestured to Ron, Luna, Ginny, Neville, and Remington, “Escape.”

“Alright.” He responded, if not a bit disappointedly.

Now. For the escape.

Everyone else was quiet for a moment. Nobody had a plan, and just barely half of them had their wands- Luna’s and Ron’s being confiscated earlier. Remington realized that if she could reach, just a bit, she’d be able to grab her wand. When she moved slightly, however, the grip Montague had relaxed the tiniest bit tightened once again to full force, and she gritted her teeth, sucking in a breath to fight the pain. She could sense the familiar feeling of certain eyes on her, and nearly thanked Montague for all the pain she took as punishment for not stopping herself from glancing in Malfoy’s direction. His expression was about as disdainful as always. Little did she know, he was debating whether he should tell Montague to loosen up a bit, seeing that her eyes looked a bit more moist than usual, and her breaths were sharp.

Even if he wanted nothing more than to give her hell for all the hell she’d so willingly gotten herself into time and time again, he supposed he had a bit of a leniency for the Gryffindor girl. For how much of the year they spent in each other’s company, it’d be a wonder if they hadn’t grown a bit on each other. Just the slightest.

Remington’s gaze met with Ginny’s for a moment, and they seemed to tell her that as soon as one person made a move, they all would. Almost at the same moment, Ron began to wrestle feverishly with Warrington. Remington stretched just the last bit to snatch her wand and managed to yank herself from Montague’s grip, elbowing him in the abdomen in the process. Once she got turned around, she slapped him across the cheek with enough force to make her hand go numb. Not even a second later, he was flung into the corner by a Stunner.

She looked back, to see how the others were faring, to notice that most of the Inquisitorial Squad were rather thoroughly incapacitated. She saw that Ginny was about to cast the final hex at Malfoy, and Remington wasn’t sure if it was out of mercy, or rather a desire to get her own revenge, but she fired a Stunner just before Ginny sent what was likely to be one of her worst Bat Bogeys at him. He hit the wall a bit hard, considering he was only about a yard from it to begin with, but Ginny’s hex missed. And with the Squad down for the count, they exited the room with all due haste.
“So I’ve got this feeling Hermione was lying.” Remington remarked as they rushed down the hall.

“I’ll tell you when we get out of the castle.” Ginny replied tersely.
She knew she hadn’t been told everything. For that reason, her knowledge had a few holes. From what Rem understood, someone who meant a lot to Harry (They called him Sirius, but when Remington inquired as to whether or not this *Sirius* was a bloodthirsty murderer, they assured her that he was not. Whether they meant it was a different Sirius or that Sirius Black was, in fact, not a killer, wasn’t sure to her.) was being held hostage in the Department of Mysteries at the Ministry. How this was even possible was beyond her, but she didn’t raise any excess questions. She also didn’t understand how they knew this, or why they didn’t tell someone about it. There were still reliable teachers in the school. Flitwick, or Snape. Even Madam Pomfrey and Professor Sprout - But this was now a rescue mission, including all seven of them. She knew she wasn’t a necessary part of the group, but it was not only too late to turn back, but if the situation was as bad as it sounded, they would have use for someone who was handy with charms.

As they navigated the abandoned-feeling Ministry, she couldn’t stop her feeling of foreboding. This was in no way going to be a clean operation. That fact became even more apparent when they got to the circular room with the moving walls. All of the many doors were identical, and once the wall moved the first time, it was obvious they would have enough trouble getting to where they wanted to be, not to mention getting back out. There really was no turning around.

At length, after a couple short misadventures, they finally ended up in the right place. Row ninety-seven of the shelves of glass orbs, in the huge cathedral-like room. From the silence everyone but Harry was exhibiting, it was obvious that they all shared the same thoughts. Though he was so convinced that Sirius was here, everyone else was feeling some profound doubt.

“Harry?” Hermione finally spoke up, seeming to be the only one who had the guts to say anything.

“What?” Harry said, his tone a bit sharper than she knew he meant it to be.

“I... I don’t think Sirius is here.” Hermione said quietly, her tone probably the gentlest Rem had ever heard it.

After a couple beats of silence, Harry looking at each of the other six that were gathered there, and them looking either back at him, or at the floor in a slight tinge of pity, Harry started running down the ninety-seventh row, looking for Sirius. He ran back past them to search the other way just as Ron seemed to notice something, staring at a shelf, laiden just like all the others with hundreds of dusty orbs of glass.

“Harry?” Ron called.

“What?” Harry asked, not sounding like he very much wanted to hear.

“Have you seen this?” Ron continued, pointing at one of the spheres. By now, the whole of the group was peering at the orb Ron had indicated, trying to read what the label below said.

“What?” Harry repeated as he reached them.

“It’s- it’s got your name on.” Ron remarked.

“My name?”

Sure enough, just below the orb, Harry’s name, along with the Dark Lord’s, was written neatly underneath a bunch of initials that made little sense to Remington. Harry had reached out towards the
small globe, but Hermione stopped him, saying that she wasn’t sure if he should be touching it. Neville offered his agreement with Hermione. Arguing that his name was on it, so he had some right to it, Harry grabbed the orb.

“Very good, Potter. Now turn around, nice and slowly, and give that to me.” The voice had such a familiar edge to it. The sort of condescending drawl that tinted the speech of two people she knew, both of which were Slytherin. Both of which had traces leading to Death Eater activity.

The cloaked, masked figures melted out of the shadows, and one in the frontmost was unhooded, revealing a man who looked so like Draco, Remington knew it must have been his father. There was little questioning it. She couldn’t manage to draw her eyes away. It was all true, then. Draco’s father being a Death Eater. It seemed, a rather high-ranking one, at that. A bit of understanding for how Draco thought he could get away with anything settled in her. Who would dare call out the distaste of a man who not only had plenty of influence in the Ministry, but influence in the ranks of the Dark Lord?

What followed was a tense, dangerous tête-à-tête, during which one of the other Death Eaters pulled back their hood to reveal none other than Bellatrix Lestrange. While Harry was biding time, lowering the Death Eater’s guards, he managed to communicate a plan with Hermione that traveled around the circle of D.A. members. When Harry instructed them, they were to bust as many shelves as they could. Not a bad idea for a distraction, though Remington couldn’t help but feel a slight bit of shame for all the prophecies going to waste. Ah, well, it was worth it for their escape.

In the middle of Lucius Malfoy’s sentence, Harry yelled out, “Now!” And immediately, all hell broke loose.
Ron, Ginny, Luna, and Remington had gotten chased off course by a couple Death Eaters and been run into a room where a bunch of planets coasted through the air. At some point, one of the Death Eaters managed to grab Ginny’s foot, and from the way it looked, it’d been broken pretty nicely. Ron, on the other hand, was hit by something of a different sort, and now was acting like a certifiable lunatic. It had been a good enough struggle for Rem and Luna to get the other two back to the circular room, where they met back up with Harry, Hermione, and Neville.

They’d found their way back into the room with the brains and had hardly gotten half the doors sealed up before a handful of Death Eaters busted in, throwing Luna across the room, where she landed on the floor and did not stir. Neville was shooting curses, but they didn’t seem to be doing any damage, and somewhere in the mess, Ron had accio'd a brain and was now tangled in its tentacles. It was when the Death Eaters fired curses at both Neville and Ginny, the latter of which was hit, that Remington decided that she’d be most useful to incapacitate the main threat.

Her wand snapped at attention, “Petrificus Totalus-” She began, aiming at one of the Death Eaters, but the spell vanished quickly with a wave of his own wand. Even at this, she started sending a short barrage of curses, only to have them dissipate before hitting their target. And another of the Death Eaters, noticing her ignorant resilience, shot a curse at her that struck her before she could cast a shield charm, and it sent her sprawling backwards before she slammed into the ground and rolled a couple times until her path was intercepted by a desk. Her head and a section of her side hit the beams of the desk with considerable force.

She felt a sharp, biting pain in her side, and for a moment couldn’t tell which way was up or down or whether she was lying on her stomach or back or even hanging somewhere in the air. But soon, her vertigo was cleared and the black spots in her vision grew smaller. She pulled herself onto her elbows, trying to assess her surroundings again. Ron was the first person she saw, locked in his struggle with the brain on the floor a few yards from her, otherwise the only people she could see were the girls who had been struck unconscious. She pulled herself out of under the top of the desk and stumbled to her feet, her side burning the whole way.

She wanted to help Ron, but the sounds of battle were blaring from an open door across the room. The brain didn’t seem to really be hurting him... Just when that thought crossed her mind, however, Ron’s body suddenly went still. A thought of his death caused her to feel the prick of panic, but she quickly reasoned that the brain must have been cutting off his breathing, and he subsequently passed out from a lack of oxygen. Yeah. That would be a better explanation. She knelt next to him, careful not to touch the brain or its tentacles. She’d heard Harry trying to rid it with Diffindo. And that hadn’t worked.

She pointed her wand directly at the brain, careful so she wouldn’t accidentally hit any part of Ron, “Depulso,” She said forcefully, and for a moment, the brain seemed to shudder before it vanished. It seemed that a good Banishing Charm was all it needed.

Once the brain was gone, she pressed her fingers on the side of his neck, just under his jaw where she knew she should find a pulse, and as soon as she caught one, she lurched to her feet, ignoring the stinging in her side, and ran to the open door.

It was the large stone room, with the tiered steps circling the dais below. She recognized the curtained archway that sat centered on the dais. Inside, streaks of light were flying in every which direction, and there seemed to be more people there than there should have been. She realized after a second, that the reason was because there were more people there. Adults had shown up and were
going after the Death Eaters with everything they had. The Order of the Phoenix, she realized with a start. Just down the way, she could see Harry and Neville, the latter of which looked as though he’d been struck by a jinx that left his legs trying to tie themselves into a knot. Harry was attempting to help him up the tiers and back into the room she’d come from.

“Harry!” She called as she ran down to where they were, ducking out of the path of a stray spell on the way. He looked up for a moment to spot her, and as he did she caught sight of a Death Eater, one of few who were still masked, aiming a spell from a couple tiers behind and below the two. She slipped around Harry to point her own wand in the direction of the spell, “Protego!” She managed just before the green jet could hit them. The force still managed to nearly make her lose her footing. “I’ve got your back.” She said over her shoulder at them. “Just keep moving!” She barely blocked the next curse that was sent her way from the hooded Death Eater, and felt a sharp flare of pain in her arm, but ignored it, not having time to worry before she had to fend off another spell.

Seizing her chance to fire a hex of her own, she shot as strong of one as she could, but he only reflected it. Not expecting such an act, she couldn’t entirely finish a shield charm before it hit her, knocking her back onto the step above the one she’d been standing on. Thankfully, Harry and Neville hadn’t been right behind her, so she didn’t end up pushing them over as well, but her side gave a glancing sting. While she was down, the Death Eater took the opportunity to send another curse her way. She only managed to get her wand up in time to create another far-from-satisfactory shield. A couple more stings, but his focus suddenly was torn from her. In fact, almost the whole room’s focus was now occupied. She turned to look back up the way she’d come, to see Professor Dumbledore standing at the door.

At that point, most of the Death Eaters started to run. Most of them were towed back by a simple flick of Dumbledore’s wrist. Down by the dais, however, Bellatrix was still fighting determinedly with a man who looked a bit familiar. It took Remington a couple seconds to recognize him as Sirius Black, whose face she’d seen plenty of times on posters and newspaper articles.

And now she finally understood that the Sirius they had been looking for had indeed been the claimed mass murderer, and that what Ginny had meant was that he was truly not a murder at all. Not that any of that mattered now.

A sort of silence put a pause on the whole of the room as Bellatrix’s curse hit Sirius straight in the center of the chest, and he fell backwards into the mysterious arch. Harry ran past her and towards the dais, however, Bellatrix was still fighting determinedly with a man who looked a bit familiar. It took Remington a couple seconds to recognize him as Sirius Black, whose face she’d seen plenty of times on posters and newspaper articles.

But then Bellatrix managed to hit the man with a spell that made him cry out in pain, falling back onto the steps. Bellatrix ran towards the door to the room where Dumbledore had come through. Remington tried to get to her feet fast enough to hex her, but in her haste, she forgot about the pain in her side and the new cut on her arm. The shock of that pain making a reappearance forced her back to sitting. She called out Harry’s name as darted past her again, even though she knew it was futile to try and stop him. He was determined that he would kill the woman. And though Remington didn’t blame him, she knew it was near a death wish for him to get himself caught in a one-on-one fight with Bellatrix.

Dumbledore was gone from the room just as soon, and many of the Order began to round up the Death Eaters. There were people moving in different directions in different places of the room, she couldn’t entirely distinguish. But a man, Rem had heard Neville call him Lupin, stayed particularly to help them. She got to her feet, mindful about her injuries this time, and went up a couple steps to where Lupin was helping Neville up as well, recently freed from his dancing-legs jinx.
“We’ll go check the others, shall we? The Order will sort this out, don’t worry.” She knew he was saying it mostly to ease their nerves. She half resented him for it, knowing that this wasn’t over quite yet. Harry was elsewhere in the Ministry, chasing down Bellatrix Lestrange. But, she reminded herself, Dumbledore was close on his heels. Maybe it would be alright in the end. They’d lost a man, sure, but at least they hadn’t lost any of the D.A. members as well. The loss of a child could’ve been far worse.
Remington stared down at the stone floor of the hospital wing, the usual near-silence of which had been broken for the couple days or so by the bustling sound of moving feet and the occasional moan of pain, both of which had pattered off over the duration. There had been six of them who needed tending to. Apparently, Harry had held his own well enough not to have been injured so much as to need Madam Pomfrey’s help. The rest of them, however, had received a colorful assortment of bumps and bruises, though escaped any deep inflictions.

Hermione had gotten a nasty curse, though after some time she’d be good as new, with no lasting effects. Ron was a bit loopy, but they’d sorted him out well enough, and he didn’t seem terribly affected by the brain attack with the exception of some pretty welts where it’d attached to him. Ginny’s broken ankle had been fixed up with considerable ease. Luna was rather untouched, now that she was conscious again. It turned out the pain in Rem’s side was actually a couple cracked ribs, which were easy enough to take care of. All of them had had a fair amount of cuts and bruises, including a rather deep gash across the upper arm that Remington had received from the hooded Death Eater, but one simple spell could be used to banish all of those.

Not long after they’d first arrived in the hospital wing, just after Ginny’s ankle had been looked after and as Madam Pomfrey was measuring out a dose of some slightly greenish-hued potion to cure up her ribs, the redhead girl had wandered over and sat at the side of her bed, beside Remington, who refused to lay down and insisted she was fine to sit up.

“You weren’t ever really supposed to come with us.” Ginny remarked quietly. And though the words themselves could have been taken offensively, Rem knew that wasn’t what Ginny was getting at. “You probably shouldn’t’ve come.”

Pomfrey held out the small glass of the liquid and Remington took it hesitantly, making a face before she quickly lifted it to her mouth and swallowed it, forcing herself not to gag as she trust the glass back towards the woman, who gave her a slightly disdainful, but yet gentle look as she took the glass and left to do something elsewhere.

“But I guess it was good you were there.” Ginny said. “You helped.”

Remington winced minutely as a flash of pain, followed by a strange tingling sensation washed over her right side as her bones mended themselves. She looked at the fiery-haired girl beside her. “I was just in a particular place at a particular time, Ginny.” She said, “But that’s how it happened. I don’t regret it being that way.”

“I know, but I just,” Not having any exact words, she shrugged instead.

“I do regret that I didn’t stop that one from grabbing onto your ankle, though.” Rem said. “I-”

“You wouldn’t have been able to, I was too far away, and any spells probably would have hit Luna.” Ginny interrupted, then sighed. “Oh well. It’s done.”

“It sure is.” Remington breathed.

At the present moment, though, they were all gathered about Ron and Hermione’s beds, talking about the Daily Prophet and a little about Umbridge, who was lying generally unresponsive in the bed across from them. Then Harry got up, saying he wanted to go down and see Hagrid. When he’d walked off, Remington got to her feet as well.
“Well where are you going, then?” Hermione inquired. Remington wasn’t in such an acquaintance with Hagrid that she’d be going to see him as well, certainly.

“Around.” Remington answered off-handedly. “I’ve been gone for a while. Somebody’s probably wondering.”

“Alright,” Hermione said, “Come back with news whenever you like!” It was obvious that Hermione was getting bored having to sit up in the hospital wing all the time.

“I certainly will, Hermione.” She said, waving at them as she left.

She’d kept herself out of classes the last couple days, not much wanting to associate with people at the moment. Not people who would be wondering about what happened in the Ministry.

She’d talked to Fay a bit, of course, but not much of anybody else. Only when she was spoken to. Another thing was, she was dreading having to talk to Draco.

She’d have to eventually, and a part of her was anxious to see him. She hated him with every atom of her being, but at the same time, she couldn’t possibly. She didn’t have much choice but to talk to him sometime before the year was up, and it may as well be of her own accord.

She descended the stairs, thinking perhaps he’d be outside, much like the majority of the rest of the students. When she reached the ground floor, however, she could see that Harry had found him even before she had. Or perhaps Draco had found Harry. Either way, it looked as if neither Draco, nor Harry, were particularly happy. Snape and McGonagall were nearby, though, so she was sure nothing would happen. And before she’d reached them, Harry headed out onto the grounds, and Draco caught sight of her.

She felt herself grind to a halt before she’d given her body permission to do so. She looked at him, waiting for him to decide whether he’d take the time to speak with her or not. After a short length, he seemed to come to a decision and walked down the hall towards her.

“Well, Alvers,” He said, his expression bitter, uncaring, and hard. His voice was just as sharp. “I suppose you’re just as much to blame as your precious Saint Potter.”

“To blame?” She said, not in any mood to rise to his antics.

“For all the damage you’ve done-”

“Damage I’ve done?” She interrupted him with faint incredulity, “Your father ordered them to kill us, Draco.”

He gave her a look, then grabbed her wrist. She tried to pull away once, but it was a feeble attempt. She let him lead her partially down a hallway and into a disused classroom. He thrust her in first, and closed the door securely behind himself. “You don’t just say that in the middle of the hall, Alvers.” He snapped.

“I don’t see why not, it’s the truth, isn’t it? Don’t you think-” She began.

“I don’t give a damn who you think you are, Alvers,” He said, pointing at her, “I’m not going to allow anyone to berate my family any more than you already have.”

She crossed her arms. “I could have died, Malfoy, and you insist on blaming me.”

“My father could very well die yet.” He interrupted her harshly.
She felt a pang. Now the conversation was getting dangerous, for the both of them. “He made his decisions.”

“And so did you. If you hadn’t gone there, you would never have been in danger.” He stated, his jaw set as he looked at her.

That shut her up well enough. He was right, of course. “But I was doing it for something good.” She disagreed finally.

“You did it for a lie. What you went there for, wasn’t there.” How he knew this, she wasn’t certain, but she didn’t get the chance to ask. “Your motivation was a few of Potter’s words and nothing more.”

“I’m not in the wrong.” She said determinedly. “You can try to rectify this all in your favor, but I wasn’t the one in the wrong.”

“And you can argue your case all you like, but we both know that you doubt yourself.” He countered.

“You don’t know how I work, Malfoy.” She told him, “Don’t pretend you know.”

“Don’t I, now?” He inquired. “Is there a person in this castle that knows you better than I do?”

She gave him a venomous look before uncrossing her arms and heading towards the door, not looking at him as she was about to pass him. He caught her around the waist and blocked her from passing, pushing her back the way she’d come. She backed up quickly, avoiding his touch. Her eyes narrowed on him sharply as she folded her arms across her chest again. He mirrored her, crossing his own arms.

“You’re an evil, foul git.” She hissed.

“At least I haven’t got a habit of trusting them.” He remarked.

“I never trusted you.” She shot at him.

“Nor a habit of lying to them.” He added. She opened her mouth to argue. “Or falling for them.”

She glared at him for a moment, then dropped her arms again, striding in his direction so she stood right in front of him. “I never fell for you, Draco Malfoy, and I know for a fact that I never will.” She said, her voice edged like a knife before she slipped past him and out the door.

He made no move to stop her this time, glaring at the wall opposite him as he heard the door slam shut. After a couple beats, so he was sure she would not still be walking down the hall outside the door, he left as well, closing the door to the disused classroom just as forcefully as she had.
Another Confession To Make; I'm Your Fool

She stared at the draping that hung over the top of her bed, not sure whether she wanted to sleep or not. Of course, it was no longer the nightmares that kept her awake. No, those had left her to peace since she’d been taking that draught. But there was very little left of her stay at Hogwarts before she had to travel back to the shell of a home her mother resided in. Two nights to stay in the Gryffindor dormitory, which felt far more like home than her mother’s could ever be.

The past few days, she had felt a bit... alien. She’d shared a roller coaster of an experience with six people, most of which she’d hesitate to call anything more than casual friends, where those she’d call her closest friends hardly knew anything of what even really happened there. Ginny was the only exception. Remington considered Ginny a very good friend, and though they weren’t quite as close as her and Fay were, she was still a bit comforted that there had been someone at the Ministry that she really knew.

She wasn’t traumatized or anything, not that she really could be very much so. Not after she’d been shaken up so much from her father’s death. She was immune enough to trauma-inducing things. But it was just that feeling of isolation that got to her. She didn’t really know how to combat it. She’d been skipping classes regularly, and even Hermione seemed a tinge irritated by it. Fay didn’t even try to argue with her about it anymore. There wasn’t much left of school anyway, and next year would certainly spell an improvement.

She hadn’t really spoken to Seamus, either. She wasn’t entirely sure if it was because of their confrontation a while ago about what she thought of him, or if it was something different. Something to do with the Ministry incident, maybe. Or how she was acting now. Perhaps it was her own fault, for hardly spending any time with anyone other Fay, Ginny, or occasionally Hermione, the last of whom she seemed to get along with surprisingly well ever since the battle a week or so ago.

She’d mentioned the bet from the beginning of the year to Ron. He claimed that he’d rightfully won, but he wasn’t going to make her follow through with eating the Puking Pastilles, out of the kindness of his heart, but Remington protested that she had given Montague a good slap across the face, and what with the context of it, it may as well qualify as getting into a tussle with a Slytherin. He’d just rolled his eyes and nodded his head in mock condescension while stuffing a chocolate frog in his mouth.

She hadn’t talked to Draco, really. Not that she thought she could. Though she’d never admit it aloud, his arguments had been surprisingly reasonable. Not to mention that there was a certain subject that she’d felt he’d hit too close to home. Because, really, why else would she feel so partial to him? She was falling for Draco Malfoy, and she didn’t like it one bit. If there was a legitimate reason to like him at all, she wouldn’t be bothered so much, but she hated him. There wasn’t anything about his personality that was even remotely agreeable. It’d been happening without her knowledge, or her approval. He was the last person she’d ever want to fall in love with.

But, if she hated him so much, then she couldn’t possibly be falling for him, could she? Maybe it’d been the boy who’d listened to her after her nightmares that she held so much deference for, and the fact that his face was the same as the boy she detested made it hard to realize that they were the same person, and that the true Draco was, in fact, not who’d walked with her in the halls late at night.

She didn’t know whether she was glad she finally figured some of the puzzle out, or if she was yet more annoyed because her new knowledge only confused her that much more. She was about ready to just give up on figuring it out. Everything had given her so much trouble this year, there seemed to be nothing that was easy. She felt like a whiney little brat, but she was just so sick of nearly all of it.
And still, she had to keep in mind that this war was starting. This was the beginning of what could, so prophetically, be the end. It was already getting geared up, and it wasn’t something that could be stopped until it’d run its course. She didn’t know what all it’d bring, but she knew what her mother’s advice would be.

Realizing that she wasn’t going to be getting to sleep anytime soon, she pulled herself into a sitting position, running her hands over her face and glancing to see that the other girls were all sound asleep. She climbed out of bed as quietly as she could, neglecting to put on any shoes or a jacket. It was reasonably warm, what with summer finally turning over its leaf on the grounds.

She left the dormitories and started heading down the stairs, her feet making only quiet, muted pats on the stone steps. She went down mostly out of habit. She contemplated going to the dungeons and possibly seeing if she could run into Draco, just to see what would come of their meeting in relative private, but she ruled the idea out. She didn’t really care to see him just then. Not so soon after their little spat.

She’d have to talk to him before long, she knew. She didn’t want to walk away from this place still upset with him, or with him still upset with her. She wasn’t going to apologize or tell him she’d ever been wrong, but she didn’t want to be stuck in limbo between hating his guts and also wondering if something could have happened between them.

She knew there was something different about the way he regarded her. How he treated her had always seemed a bit off. He never turned her away, and he even showed hints of what she had convinced herself was concern or even a sliver of compassion. But then, she always seemed to be able to bring out the worst in him, as well. She didn’t know what all to associate that with, but since he’d shown some interest in her, she hadn’t quite yet ruled out that he might be somewhat partial to her as she was to him.

She thought she was quite observant and witty to have put that together, but then again, she knew that if she was wrong, she’d not only feel humiliated with herself, but she’d also be quite disappointed. She was very pleased to think that she might be fitting to even Malfoy’s selective tastes. If she was wrong...

She found herself standing near a window, having thought she caught sight of something moving outside, but it was only the Whomping Willow.
The sky was just barely showing signs of lightening. Not a sliver of the sun had risen yet, but a fraction of light managed to filter through the windows of the castle, brightening the halls just enough to make it possible to maneuver without running into a poorly-placed statue, or tripping on a stray object that had been lost in the halls by a student. Hogwarts was quite silent, but for a corridor where a pair of soon-to-be sixth years argued quietly between themselves.

“There’s just no end with you, is there?”

“I went for a walk; why is that so baffling for you?”

“Why sneak out of your dormitory to sit by a window?”

“I couldn’t sleep.”

“I’ve heard that enough.”

“Leave me alone, Draco.” She said, irritated by the way he insisted on walking at her side as she headed back up to Gryffindor Tower so that she could get ready for the day.

She’d sat on the ledge of the window the whole night, which was only a couple hours in reality. She hadn’t even fallen asleep. Of all people to find her first, it had to be Draco. Why he’d happened to be walking that way was beyond her, and she was greatly annoyed by it.

“And if I refuse?” He prompted.

“I really don’t want to deal with you right now, Malfoy.” She snapped. “You’re one of the last people I’d voluntarily talk to at the moment.”

“Leave that as it may,” He said, “You’d hunt me down sometime before we get to King’s Cross.”

“The way it’s looking, I wouldn’t have to.” She muttered. She came to halt, adding, “You could at least have the decency to wait until I’m no longer entirely incensed with you.”

“You don’t have as much reason to be upset-” He stopped as well, glaring at her.

“You’ve done so much that I can’t stand-” She said feverishly. “Why on earth-”

“You’ve done plenty that I can’t stand, yourself, Alvers.” He shot back at her.

“Well your disapproval is ill-founded.” She countered. “It’s far from my fault that you were raised with selfish, unreasonable prejudices.”

“Ill-founded!” He repeated incredulously. “We’re worth more than they are, Remington.” He said darkly, “Our blood is entirely magical. Not simply a fraction. Muggle blood is tainted with-mutations. Our blood is pure, theirs isn’t.”

“They’re still human beings, Draco!” She protested, “And what about the pure-bloods? You don’t think inbreeding causes its own complications?”

“So some haven’t been careful enough to look farther out of their family trees.” He said, “But most of us have better sense.” She shook her head lightly, irritably. “You’re criticizing your own parent’s choices, you realize.”
She’d not really thought of it that way before. She’d always thought it’d been more than that, but why else would a man like her father marry a woman like her mother? But then again, it isn’t as if her father ever tried to tell her she was better than other people because of the blood in her veins. It didn’t make a lot of sense to her. She couldn’t believe that her father ever held those sorts of views, though.

“My father would never-” She paused, trying to formulate the proper words. “He wasn’t like that. He didn’t care about blood status-”

“That’s certainly not how it sounds.” Draco remarked.

She shook her head, “He couldn’t have possibly believed all that-”

“In that case,” He said, his eyes were just as sharp as his voice was, “Less work for the Dark Lord?”

Her lips parted as she stared at him for a couple beats, then, her hands shaking slightly, “You’re a damn heartless leech.” She managed before turning to walk down the hallway, feeling a smidge light-headed.

Before she’d gotten much more than a couple yards away, though, she knew she was being pursued. When his hand caught a hold of her wrist, she whipped around, “What more could you want, Malfoy?” She demanded, all her efforts into not letting her voice tremble.

“Listen.” He said, still holding her wrist. She didn’t try to evade his grip anymore, glaring up at him with a fair amount of indignation. “Neither of us want to end the year hating each other.”

Her glare didn’t soften much, but he could see the slight shift. “What you’ve said-”

“I’m not entirely proud of what I just said to you.” He admitted, so off-hand that she didn’t realize right away that that was as good as an apology from him. “But then again, I’m sure there’s things you’ve said...”

“Perhaps there is.” She said slowly, her eyes narrowing as she pulled her hand back from him. “But I’ve had good reason, and none of which would’ve hurt you so-”

“Really?” He interrupted her, eyebrows arched. He shrugged slightly. “Nonetheless, you still don’t want to hate me, Alvers.”

“You have no idea how much I want to hate you, Malfoy.” She said, seriously, but without anger or venom. “I wish I could hate you just as effortlessly as everyone else in my House, but-” Her shoulders rose and fell as she rolled her eyes slightly. She ran a hand through her hair before looking at him again. “It’d be easier if we hated each other.”

“It wouldn’t be.” He disagreed, “What would you done this year if-”

“I’d have figured something out.” She argued defensively. “I’m not helpless, thank you.”

“You aren’t very strong, though.”

She looked at him for a moment. “I’m as strong as I need to be.”

“We’ll see about that.” He said.

She took a deep breath, “Is it worth it to give you any more chances, Draco?”

“That’s not for me to answer.” He replied.
She got a few looks as she walked down the hallway. All seven of them did anymore. Especially Harry, of course, but word had spread feverishly and exaggeratedly across the school. There wasn’t a student who didn’t know about their little escapade, or the standoff at the Ministry. Details were pulled out of thin air and facts were twisted. Even when Remington had slipped into the second floor girls’ lavatory to get some quietude and a couple seconds to herself without being late to Divination the first day she’d gone back to her classes, Myrtle had asked her whether it was true that there was a dragon in the Department of Mysteries that almost killed Ron.

Of course, it didn’t help that she was a Gryffindor wandering about the Dungeons during a free period.

She’d long since stopped fearing Snape, or rather, feeling uncomfortable around him. It’d been a long year, and having classes with him twice a week, it curved any aversion she normally felt. Not to mention that she’d had to come to him regularly about the sleep draught, and occasionally for some business or another involving her mother.

She pulled open the door to his office as soon as he’d answered her knock at the door, closing it behind her as quietly as she could and walking over to settle into a chair near his desk. She wasn’t sure where he managed to get all of the papers that he was perpetually going over, but she wasn’t about to ask.

For once, he turned from his work right away to settle his hands across each other on his desktop, looking at her with his usual mask of disdain and indifference. Surprised, but feeling slightly favored, she stated, “I’ve got a proposition for you.”

“I’m just dying,” He drawled, “To hear what must be your brilliant plan.”

She glared at him for a moment for sounding so condescending. “A friend of mine is having a wedding in a few weeks, and I was hoping I’d be allowed to attend.” She said, looking down her nose at a leg of Snape’s desk. “And possibly stay for a while to visit with my friends.”

“In America, I’m sure.” He remarked.

“Naturally.” She said, “I’d stay with Natalie.”

“You realize what your mother will think of this idea?” He inquired, eyebrows arched.

“It’s a wonder I came to talk to you first, isn’t it?” She commented, arching an eyebrow pointedly. “Just mention it to her, if nothing else. I can always argue until I get my way. Or severely piss her off.”

“Language, Remington.” He interrupted sharply.

“What? She’s very easy to pi- tick off.” Rem shrugged. When he just looked at her sternly, she plopped her hands onto her chair dramatically. “Well, if that’s-”

“I’ve got my own recommendation for you, Miss Alvers.” Snape said as she had started to lift herself out of the chair. She immediately relaxed back into her seat, quite attentive. “I’d suggest you don’t attach yourself too much to Mister Malfoy.”

Slightly shocked, she stared at him for a moment, “And why not?” She asked, inquisitive and
unbelieving. “He’s pretty much your favorite student, why would you object to-”

“You’re not in any position to question me, Remington.” He cut across her.

“But I deserve to know why.” She argued. “If I’m going to obey an order, I’m going to know why I’m doing such.”

“Your reason for obeying would quite simply be that I’m your guardian and your superior.” He told her. “I want you keeping a healthy distance from the Malfoy boy.”

“And if I don’t want to?” She demanded, standing up.

“And if I don’t want to suggest you be allowed to attend the wedding?” He prompted.

She exhaled irritably through her nose and spun around, exiting the room and closing the door behind her with more force than was called for.
“Here.” Fay said, holding out a chocolate frog. She’d just gotten back from visiting the trolley. “I got one for you.” Remington hesitated to take it, at which time Fay added, “If you don’t eat it, I’ll be forced to shove it down your throat.”

“Well thanks.” Rem said sarcastically. “I can tell that you’re a very kind-hearted person.”

“I am.” Fay said decidedly, “You’re just ungrateful.”

Rem gave a contemptuous snort, opening up her chocolate frog and shoving it hastily in her mouth, whole.

Fay gave her a weird look. “Hungry? Do you... want another?”

Remington held up a finger until she’d swallowed the candy frog. “They always seem to get away from me.” She reasoned.

Fay rolled her eyes, sitting back in her spot and peering around the compartment for a moment. Once again, they were seated with most of the Gryffindors of the same year, with a few exceptions of course. Fay and Rem had managed to get the two window seats, with Parvati and Lavender sitting next to them, and Neville and Seamus on the other side of them. It was rather obvious that Seamus was no longer giving Rem any of the same attention that he had before. She wasn’t really overly bothered about it, though. She felt a bit horrible, sure, and regretful, but she knew that she didn’t need to be in a relationship with him.

“Where’s Dean, anyway?” Fay inquired.

“Probably got roped into Ginny’s compartment. They’re dating now, you know.” Remington remarked. “That reminds me,” She said, “I need to talk to her before we get to King’s Cross.” She got to her feet, “I’ll be back.”

She slipped into the corridor from the compartment and started moving toward the back, knowing that’s likely the direction the Weasley girl would be in.

There was a slight hold-up on the way, though. It seemed that Draco was meant to get some sort of revenge on Harry without adult interference. His timing was atrocious, considering he was confronted by a whole handful of D.A. members. Remington had shown up just in time to squeeze between the two groups and place herself in front of Draco, her wand pointed at the other Dumbledore’s Army members. Any curses that had been fired ceased, mostly out of surprise.

“What do you think you’re doing, Remington?” Ernie Macmillan demanded in disbelief.

“What does it look like?” She countered. “Hex the other two if you want.”

“Why Malfoy?” Anthony Goldstein asked in derision and incredulity.

“Come on, guys,” Harry said, his eyes a bit sharp as he looked at Remington. “We’ll leave them be.” His gaze flicked somewhat pointedly at her neck as they all filed back into the compartment. She knew what he’d glanced at, and immediately cursed herself, but didn’t dare flinch as she glared back
at him. She didn’t dislike Harry any, but he seemed to have a slight attitude with her over the whole infatuated-with-Malfoy thing.

Once the corridor was cleared from all but Rem and the Slytherin boys, she heard Draco remark, “Well, Alvers.” She turned to flash him a scathing look, but he just jerked his chin towards the back of the train and started walking away. Reluctantly, she followed, Crabbe and Goyle trailing behind.

They stopped when they reached a compartment that was leaking the murmurs of idle talking, the curtains on the glass were all drawn. Crabbe and Goyle entered right away after a quick signal from Draco. Remington could hear the talking inside die down quite fast after the door shut.

When she looked back at Draco, she could see that he had a slightly pleased look on his face. “Is that my work?” He commented, gesturing to her neck and leaning against the frame of the door into the compartment.

She ran a hand through her hair so that it fell over her shoulder, effectively hiding the hickey that adorned the side of her throat. She gave him a bitter look, daring him to make further comment about it.

She hadn’t been able to deny going down into the dungeons late at night a couple more times before the day they had to go home. Mostly because she knew she wasn’t going to see Draco for most, if not all, of the summer, but also to spite Snape. It was a simple flaw of hers. Tell her not to do something and you’ve pretty well guaranteed that she’ll disobey your wishes.

Nothing serious had happened, of course. Just a bit of talking to help soothe the resent he’d managed to instill in her, and possibly some snogging in the deserted corridors.

“It’s a pretty good job, isn’t it?” He smiled at her teasingly.

“I’ve got places to be, Draco.” She told him, shifting her weight from one foot.

“Right.” He said in a voice that held sarcastic agreeability. “I’m sure you’ll have to go apologize to dear Potter-”

“Not quite.” She interrupted him, closing the space between them so that her lips met his. It was a swift, fleeting kiss, but a kiss nonetheless. A kiss that she initiated.

“You, too, Alvers.” He said quietly as she turned to walk back towards the front of the train.

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She did, in the end, manage to find Ginny, who was, in fact, in the same compartment as Dean, and assured the girl she’d write much, and she’d write often. She’d also promised Hermione that she’d send a letter or two over the summer, before she went back to Fay’s compartment to sit out the last quarter of an hour of a ride.

As she descended onto Platform 9 3/4 to find her mother, she carefully, inconspicuously made sure her hair was pulled over her shoulder neatly to obscure the red blotch that decorated her neck. It wasn’t something she needed anyone asking her about, particularly her mother.

Much to her dismay, however, it appeared that Marissel was speaking with a tall, lean woman with blond hair that fell neatly down her back. There was a faint similarity about her and the boy who
stood at her side, having gotten off the train before Remington had.

She deliberately slowed her pace, trying her hardest to stall before having to be noticed. The time it bought her, however, was quite scarce. When she approached, Draco’s mother seemed to recognize whose daughter she was immediately, “So this must be Remington?” She remarked, her voice showing more signs of kindness than she’d heard Draco’s express. She also seemed a bit pained, though, too. It was apparent that she was trying to conceal it, but she certainly seemed a bit distressed. Remington supposed that having your husband taken into custody could do that.

“Indeed.” Rem responded when she reached her mother’s side, the latter casting her a furtive glance. The way Draco was looking at her, amused, taunting, made her a bit uneasy.

“Well, it was very nice seeing you again, Marissel,” Draco’s mother remarked, then nodded at Rem, “Remington.... Draco and I should be getting home.”

“As should we, Remington.” Marissel said, “My best wishes to your family, Narcissa.”

“Yours as well,” Narcissa added before they started to turn away.

“See you, Alvers.” Draco murmured with a smirk, not loud enough for their mothers to hear.

“I’m sure you will, Malfoy.” She whispered back, shooting a covert wink before following her mother.

Chapter End Notes

If you enjoyed the story so far, be sure to continue onto "Burning Bridges"!

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