Draco Malfoy and the Secret Inheritance

by Nattish

Summary

Draco is pregnant. Pregnant! At age 16, no less, and (if you hadn’t noticed) he’s a bloke. How on Earth did this happen? If that’s not upsetting enough, he has no idea who fathered the damn thing. Lust, lies, and scandal abound! EWE, NC-17

Notes

Not AU. But EWE! How? Best you read to find out. Thank you, thank you, thank you to eidheann_writes for helping me see the light with Draco’s POV and being kind, patient, and ever-insightful.
Part 1

Summer

just before 7th year

“We’ll have to have some new school robes fitted before Hogwarts,” my mother was saying. “I don’t know how you’re gaining so much weight, Draco. I hardly see you eat. But last year’s robes simply won’t do.”

I bristled at the mention of my waistline, wondering if I shouldn’t tell them now. It had been a couple weeks since I found out. The words were in my mouth, but I could not force them out. I nodded to mother, brought a strip of bacon to my mouth, and shuddered at the smell of it.

“What do you think, Lucius? Shall I buy him dress robes, too?”

My father’s lack of appetite was even more apparent. He raised his head slowly, looking, as always, pale and drawn. “Whatever you like.”

“That’s settled,” she said grandly, as if her tone would make it so that our family was not stuck in this tiny servants’ dining hall off the kitchen, while the Dark Lord dined in the proper one. “We’ll go today. It’ll be lovely to get some fresh air, don’t you agree? I just hope Bellatrix doesn’t try and join us,” she added dourly.

“I can’t go,” I exclaimed. I pressed my lips together. What now?

“Well, you have to. You need your measurements taken. The tailor can’t possibly flatter you without —”

“No, I can’t go to Hogwarts.”

“Not this again,” my father said, dropping his fork with a clatter. “You know it’s compulsory for purebloods now, and what about studying for your N.E.W.T.s? In addition, your coursework will be far more enriching now that Severus is Headmaster.”

“But, Dad—”

“Don’t argue with me, Draco. I can’t bear it right now.” He cupped his head in his hand, looking as sick as I felt.

I had already tried to sway them this week, saying I had the Witchpox, and then that I would miss them terribly, and then that I was allergic to ghosts. If I stayed home, I had hoped to hide the matter with concealment spells, if I could figure them out, but if that didn’t work I could lock up in my bedroom with bonbons and ride out the farce that I was getting fat. They’d never have to know. No one would have to know.

My mother put a consoling hand on mine. “If you’re embarrassed about the Dumbledore matter, you mustn’t worry. Severus was happy to complete the task himself.”

What a beautiful, sweet liar she was.
“It’s not that.” My eyes squeezed shut. “It’s...nevermind! It’s nothing.”

“Then there’s no reason to put up a fight. Come, let’s dress and go.”

_God, shit, fuck._ I could no longer avoid it. She was going to find out when the tailor took off my robes for measurements, anyway.

“No! Wait. It is something. I’m pregnant!”

Mum looked at Dad, as if for instructions on how to react. His eyes had gone dark. I never dreamed he’d be so menacingly angry. Upset, yes. Concerned, even. But not murderous.

“This is not the time for practical jokes,” he said quietly. “I can’t believe your gall. Not with everything happening in our home.”

_Oh._

“Dad, I wish I were joking, but I’m not. I swear on Merlin’s deathbed. I’m not getting fat.” I lifted up my shirt. I couldn’t bare to look at him, even my mother, as they examined the small mound that was my belly. “I’m pregnant. I don’t know how far along.”

“Draco,” she said, so quietly I could only hear the consonants. “You must be mistaken...perhaps it’s indigestion.”

“Mother,” I said, shaking my head over the surrealness of it all. “I took a test. Two of them. It’s definitely a child. I’m sorry...I’m sorry....”

“Put your shirt down,” my father hissed, looking around. Of course, there was no one in our private dining hall, but the Dark Lord could go anywhere if he chose. “Why would you do this now of all times?”

“I didn’t! I mean, not on purpose.”

“You’re a man. These things can only happen on purpose!”

“Well, it’s not unheard of, Lucius—”

He threw Mum a blazing look, and rounded on me again. “Then how? _How_, I say?”

_“I don’t know!”_”

Dad closed his mouth so abruptly his teeth clacked. He grimaced. I thought he was trying not to scream at me, but when he pushed up his sleeve to reveal the throbbing Dark Mark, I understood. “He’s calling me. We’ll finish this later. Obviously—I can’t get around sending you to Hogwarts. But we’ll think of something.”

When he strode out of the room, I slumped over my breakfast. Anger and fear be damned, I was so relieved not to be alone in this anymore.

My mother was still there. She brushed my hair behind my ear. I’d forgotten how long it had grown.

“I don’t care how it happened now that it has,” she said coolly. “But I do care _who_ it happened with.”

Perhaps it was the battering of new hormones. I did not normally cry, but I got rather misty as I revealed the most shameful part of all.
“I’m sorry, Mum. But I can’t say I know.”

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**One year ago**

It started in sixth year with Harry Potter—as all annoying things seemed to.

He thought he was subtle, but he wasn’t. The idiot had been eyeballing me since Katie Bell touched a cursed necklace and ended up in the hospital wing.

Shut up, I know it was me, but I don’t want to talk about that.

Potter had been a thorn in my side since summertime: practically threatening my mother in Madam Malkin’s, sneaking behind me, spying on me. I’d enjoyed stamping on his nose on the Hogwarts Express, and I wanted to do it again this particular day, when he burst in on me in the boy’s lavatory.

“Come to get a peek?” I drawled. I was washing my hands, staring at him in the mirror. “Well, I’m done pissing, so you’ve missed the show.”

“What are you doing?”

“Being hygienic. I know it’s nothing those Muggles taught you, but we purebloods—”

“No! You know what I mean. I know the necklace was yours.” He was entirely breathless, as if he’d sprinted to the loo just to get this off his chest.

“What’s with you, Potter? Did you just finish running from a pack of dementors?”

He did not answer, except to shoot air out of his nose and try to snap me in two with his mind.

“Well,” I said, drying my hands, “if you don’t want to chat like civil folk, then I’ll just be on my way—”

He had me by the collar before I could react, lifting me, letting my feet dangle uselessly. “Get off! Let me go!”

“Whatever you’re up to, I don’t feel like waiting around for you to succeed. And I certainly don’t think your objective was to harm a girl like Katie Bell.”

“Get off...can’t breath—”

“Just let it go, whatever it is, you don’t have to be an evil little twat—”

“All right, all right! Just put me down. Please, I’ll tell you what’s going on.”

Potter studied my eyes and seemed to accept this. The moment my feet touched ground, I drew back and spat in his face. He cried out. I grabbed for my wand, but Potter was faster, barreling into my gut and knocking the wind out of me, as well as my wand from my hand.

I landed on my back with Potter on top. Instead of cursing me, he was trying to punch me in the face, even though he still had his wand; it was just like him to insist on an equal playing field. I’ve never been one for a fistfight, so the best I could manage was to grab him by the wrists. He jerked, trying to free himself, huffing above me, passionately angry, and I could not help my reaction.

I got a little hard, all right?
Potter’s eyes widened. I swear, he simmered in shock for five full seconds before scrambling off me.

He wiped his cheek and slammed out of the bathroom, muttering, “Fucking disgusting....”

I did wonder if he meant the spit or the erection.

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Right, now you’re curious about my damage. What would make a sixteen year old boy horny while his enemy was bludgeoning him? Well, I’m not going to tell you yet. This next part is more interesting, anyway.

I kept clear of Potter until Christmastime. I kept clear of everyone, really, as worn as I was from a certain task concerning Albus Dumbledore. This task compelled me to crash Professor Slughorn’s Christmas party for one reason or another, and, when Filch dragged me in by the scruff of the neck, there he was again—Potter, ogling me like I was an animal on zoo exhibit. I fought not to look back. Surely, I would lash out and curse him in front of everyone if I had to look into those heavy green eyes again; they had developed a habit of meeting me in my dreams since the bathroom incident, and I wanted to hurt him for invading my fantasies, and hurt him more for distracting me from the burden on my shoulders.

In January, my luck ran out. I met Potter again when he burst into the Potions classroom, startling the only inhabitants, Slughorn and me.

“Er, sorry,” he said suspiciously. “Forgot my book after class.”

He raced over to his bench and snatched up his copy of *Advanced Potion-Making* like he’d misplaced a child. Then he looked around the room, first at me and my boiling cauldron and then at Slughorn, who had been half asleep at his desk.

“So, private lessons, then?” Potter asked.

I narrowed my eyes. “It’s none of your—”

“Oh, nothing, Harry,” Slughorn said cheerfully. “Mister Malfoy and I were just catching up on some of the work he missed this year.”

“And I certainly appreciate the extra assistance, Professor.” I said this glaring at Potter, all the while feeling absurd pangs of lust as he glared back. Bastard sexy brute.

That night, as I returned to my dorm looking forward to succumbing to the dark peace of sleep, Potter emerged from the shadows.

“Is he on your side too, then?” he asked, pointing his wand. “Who else is in cahoots with you besides Slughorn and Snape?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, but you’d better get that out of my face before Filch sees you.”

“Don’t play stupid. I heard your little chat with Snape at the Christmas party. You’re up to something—something to do with Voldemort, no doubt—and you’ve got others in on it.”

“Fuck off, Potter. I was making up a Potions assignment with Slughorn. And I’m not in on *anything* with Snape.”
Both statements were true for once.

The muscles of Potter’s jaw were bulging with tension. “I don’t care if no one believes me. I’m not letting you hurt anyone else. Get in here, so I can figure out what to do with you.”

I found myself in the spare Potions equipment room. Thinking fast, I pretended to have an itch on my neck. When my hand went up, a row of ladles clinked together like wind chimes, and Potter’s attention wavered. I took out my wand and spun around.

“Wait, no!” he cried. He knocked the wand out of my hand, only to send his wand flying with it. Once again—brute. He took me by the collar, pushing me into the nearest shelf with a great clamor of bottles. My hands flew to his, and I tried prying, and clawing, and even though blood was drawn, Potter’s grip held firm. “Stop,” he growled.

“Let—me—go!”

“Admit what you’re doing, and I’ll let everything go.”

I opened my mouth, certainly not about to admit anything. I can’t remember what I was going to say, but I remember stopping short. Potter was holding me at arm’s length. More than arm’s length. His pelvis was so far away from mine that he was bent at the waist for those last few inches. It was truly comical.

I began to snigger. “The gay can’t contaminate you, Potter.”

“What? The—gay?”

“Come on,” I said, growing confident. “I may have been hard up that day in the lav, but it wasn’t for you. You just came at an unfortunate moment. Or was it an opportune moment? Depends on what you like.” I reached out—slowly, so the bastard wouldn’t punch me—and took him by the shirt. I barely had to pull for him to walk dumbly towards me. “Though, I don’t know. Now that you’re getting all intimate with me, maybe I can be hard up for you.”

This seemed to knock Potter out of his stupor. He wrenched himself away and went to grab both wands.

I lifted my hands in mock surrender, all the while slinking towards him.

“I swear,” Potter said uneasily, “I’ll snap your wand if you do anything funny.”

“And what’s your definition of funny? This?” I invaded his space. We were practically belly to belly.

“Back away.”

“This?” I walked my fingers up the front of his shirt, and my breath nearly hitched. I did not expect Potter’s chest to be so firm. I smiled, and it was not entirely to mess with his head. “…Or this?” I pressed my thigh gently into his groin. Merlin’s hat, he had meat.

Potter’s grip tightened on the wands. He did not look at me as he said, “Why don’t you just cooperate with me and—then I’ll—I’ll leave you alone?”

“Oh, Potter,” I murmured, and (I shit you not) this what I said next: “Why don’t you just shut up and bend me over that desk?”

But you don’t want to hear about what happened next, do you?
You want to hear about how I got so hot to submit. All right, I’ll tell you.

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The summer after fifth year, right before all this nonsense with Potter, my mother was worried. Naturally, so. My father had been thrown into Azkaban and there were rumors that the Dark Lord was out for revenge on our family for his failures. She sent me away for my protection: first, to the Crabbes (but Lord Crabbe was cruel to me, out of spite towards my father) and then to my grandfather’s old friends, the Montagues.

The Montagues were an elderly couple who lived in Hogsmeade, and they were kind to me but largely absent. They were tending to their son, who had been transferred from Hogwarts to Saint Mungo’s for a Vanishing Cabinet-related injury; apparently, when the boy Apparated out of the cabinet, he’d ended up in toilet and was so crushed they’d had to turn him into putty and draw him out like gum from hair. He came home midsummer, walking into his family’s cottage with a wooden cane, slow but determined.

“Draco,” he said, taking my hand. That was an understatement. Montague’s hand consumed mine, plus much of my wrist. He had always been burly, and Saint Mungo’s had seen to it his growth hadn’t stunted during recovery.

“You’re looking much better, Montague.” And by that I meant the hazelness of his eyes had never stood out before today.

“Graham,” he said with a quirky smile. “It’s Graham to you.”

Graham had always been strange for a Slytherin. We all thought he’d been wrongly Sorted. His focus in academics made Pansy peg him as a Ravenclaw. But I saw him as a Gryffindor: twice he had leapt into the bare sky during Quidditch practice to save someone from a rogue broom. Once it was me, back in second year, when I lost control of my Nimbus 2001. If he’d missed my broom, he would have plummeted several stories to his death. He hadn’t seemed to care. If Graham had Slytherin qualities, they were hidden under his deliberateness and bravado.

One morning, I awoke to the sounds of hard, rhythmic breathing.

“Must you do that everyday?” I asked, stretching out of the covers. Graham finished a set of deep squats, and went right to the floor for pushups. “You’re already big enough.”

“It’s less about getting big and more about discipline. How do you think I’m healing so fast? By never letting an opportunity to improve pass me by. Come here, you try.”

I stayed on my cot, not having a proper bed like Graham’s. His family was old, yes, but not wealthy.

“No,” I drawled, watching him huff up and down. “It looks so plebeian.”

“If you want to get anywhere in life, you need to learn some discipline, Draco. Especially now that your dad’s—well, you know—”

I rolled my eyes and then off the cot, not wanting to get into That. I mimicked Graham’s position, balancing my weight on my hands and toes.

He swatted me. “Bum down, this isn’t a wank mag.”

I did as I was told, quite aware of the residual sting of his hand on my arse. I bent my elbows, lowering my body a couple inches, and then pushed back up. Easy.
“Touch your chest to the floor,” Graham said. “Here, like this.”

Easier said than done. Once my chest was on the floor, it was a strain to return to the starting position. It was probably easy for him because his chest was the size of a barrel, lower to the ground and all that.

“It’s too hard.” I flopped onto my belly.

“You’ll get the hang of it. Practice everyday. Just like studying for your N.E.W.T.s or something, right?”

“Easy for you to say, you’re done with all that.”

Graham sprawled on his side, staring at me with his head propped on his fist. I felt a bit on display. I rather liked the feeling. “You’ve always been a slender little thing, haven’t you? Can’t fend for yourself.”

“I can fend for myself just fine,” I snapped, producing my wand. For good measure, I stuck it into his chest. “Care to duel?”

“No,” he said, and there was that quirky smile again. “That’s cute, though.”

Cute? How dare he? I ignored him for the rest of the day.

Except it was impossible to ignore Graham. He had a bearing that demanded attention. He was a voracious eater—no wonder his parents were poor—and in the mornings he consumed half the table’s porridge, a full box of strawberries, and a pint of milk. His mother was forever leaning out the kitchen window, telling him to rest, but once he’d kicked his cane, Graham would run, lift logs, and ride his broomstick over the rose gardens. I would peek from over my magazine and wait until the wind drew up his shirt to reveal a flat, pale stomach with a black trail running down his shorts. His ankles and thighs gripped the broom handle, vise-like, and I wondered what it might feel like if he gripped me that way.

Sometimes I would join Graham for callisthenics. He was always on me, saying, “Get your bum down!” about pushups and “Stick that bum out!” about squats and “Use your bum to push yourself up!” about lunges. If it was the only way to get him to notice my bum, then I didn’t much mind.

In August, he sat next to me in the garden, damp with sweat and smelling of it, too. “I’ve got to ask you something. You know He’s coming, right?”

I didn’t look up, too distracted by Witchcraft Couture’s centerfold. A new designer was gaining popularity for his vanishing underwear collection, and the Italian bloke modeling them... well, if I just stared a little bit longer...

“Yes,” I said distantly. “I’ve known for quite a while.”

“No, Draco, I mean He’s coming for you.” When my eyes flicked up, Graham’s brow wrinkled. “We’ve all got our part to play. I’m afraid he’ll give you yours, and it won’t be easy.”

“How do you know? I thought my mother sent me here because your family was neutral.”

“Not quite,” he said, and leaned in conspiratorially, “but perhaps someday. In the meantime, protecting your loved ones is more important than doing what’s right, wouldn’t you say?”

Maybe he was a Slytherin.
“And how are you protecting your family?” I asked.

“When the Death Eaters came for my father, I said I’d take the Mark in his place. He’s very old. I
couldn’t let them rope him in, even if his task was simple.”

“What was his task?”

“Hm,” he said, looking at me sideways. “That would be making sure you don’t run away before they
come get you.”

My mouth opened, wanting to ask, “And why would that be a task?” but I did not have the courage.

That night, I lay in my cot, staring into darkness. I could not get Graham’s words out of my head—
they were so casual, as if it were obvious the Dark Lord had his eye on me. Not my family, but me.
Graham fell out of bed. I sat up, afraid he was dead, but then he started counting and breathing
rhythmically. Can you believe it? He was doing push-ups in the still of night!

“You really didn’t know, huh?” he asked breathlessly. “You stayed here because you wanted to?”
I fell back onto my pillow. “Stayed because my mother said it was safer.”

“If safe means hidden from the Dark Lord, then she’s wrong. Now what?”

“I’ll...continue to stay.”

I couldn’t see him, but could feel him working next to me. “And what if you get scared?”

“Doesn’t matter. I have a duty to my family. And, by extension, Him.”

“Yeah?” he huffed. His movement ceased. The room was black, but I could sense he was looming
over me now, speaking softly. “Have you met him? Have you seen his white flesh, and his red eyes,
and the way his tongue flicks like a snake?”

“N-no.”

“Then how are you sure you won’t run?”

“Because I have a duty to my family honor. And protecting myself comes second to that.”

“What if his task involves killing someone?” he asked, so close I could feel his breath on my cheek.

“Are you capable?”

“Of course. I’ve been studying the Dark Arts for ages.”

“Is that all? What if you have to overpower someone bigger than you? You can’t even manage a
proper pull-up.”

“It doesn’t matter. We’re wizards, right? All I have to do is—”

Graham forced my wrists over my head. “Practice getting away,” he said. “Can you do it? You have
no wand, and unless you’re a powerful wizard your wandless spells are going to be child’s play.”

I arched my back, trying to throw him off, but couldn’t get leverage. My hips rocked. My feet
kicked. Graham responded by throwing one huge thigh over me, straddling me. Those broom-
gripping muscles flexed, and I was lost in the pleasure of his handsome body bearing down on mine.
“Come on! Get away, Draco.” There was a grin in his voice. His full lips descended to my ear. “If I wanted to choke you, I could.”

“Oh, God,” I moaned. My whole body convulsed.

“So, you’ve got to get away,” he whispered. My eyes had adjusted to the darkness. I found him staring at me, nose to nose. “Or else you’ll be mine.”

“And if I want to be?”

Graham smiled slowly, and said, “That’s a different matter, entirely.” My heart was pounding. I bit my lip, growing impatient with his staring. “Please, Graham.”

He kissed me with such tenderness that I was startled by the contrast. His grip relaxed.

I shook my head. “No, keep holding me.”

“You like that?” He pinned both of my wrists in one giant hand, and brought the other to my cheek. Without warning, he slapped me. I cried out, more in shock than pain. “I asked if you liked that.”

“Yes!”

He bit me on the neck. It crossed my mind, as I exposed my throat for him, that he was less attracted to me than the idea of overpowering me. Not that I cared. I enveloped him with my legs, felt his erection against mine, and imagined I’d be happy to take whatever he wanted to give. Or give whatever he wanted to take.

“Have you ever been with anyone else?” he asked.

“No.”

“Good. I like that.” When he kissed me, his stubble scraped over my lips, his fingers dug into my flesh, and I couldn’t help making weak, breathy noises. He pulled back, shaking with desire. “I’ve been wondering about you. Whether I’ve been imagining you looking at me. If I fucked you, would I be the first? You can’t be more than fourteen, but you know what you want, don’t you?”

“I just turned sixteen,” I moaned.

“Not my point,” he said, flinging off his shirt. I was caught by the sight of his washboard stomach, the muscles barely visible underneath an expanse of hair. I’d seen it many times, never touched it, though, never....

His hand was on me now, covering my bulge, squeezing it. He could take my entire cock and balls into that hand, and still have a spare finger to touch down below, pressing the cloth of my pajamas against my hole.

The bedroom door flew off the hinges.

There was no time to jump up. Bellatrix Lestrange was already standing there, wand out, smirking at the sight of us: me, sprawled on my back, and Graham, between my legs with his shirt off.

“Is this how you kept my nephew contained all summer?” she asked. “I don’t believe our Lord asked you to ravage the boy.”

“No! No, madam.” Graham stood, snatching up his shirt. “It’s not what it—”
“Spare me. It’s no matter. Draco, gather your things.” She lowered her wand, as Mr. and Mrs. Montague ran in, tying their night robes, and she smiled in her terrifying way. “Do forgive me. My Master informed me he might try and run. But you don’t seem to be in the state for that, do you, Draco?”

Once again, I was struck by the mention of me running. What was this task of mine? I would find out that very night, but right now I wanted nothing more than to kiss Graham Montague goodbye and ask him when we would meet again.

The answer would turn out to be not till next summer.

I didn’t know that yet, but I threw a look over my shoulder, as Bellatrix led me out, and from the weighty stare Graham sent back, I imagined he was telling me we would continue tonight someday and until then I should save myself for him.

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The day I confessed my pregnancy, Mum took me shopping for robes anyway. Or that was the cover.

She shuffled me into a physician’s office in Knockturn Alley, not such a dank and secretive place now that the Dark Lord’s influence was spreading. The placard on the door said, “Doctor H. Wayman, MD, OB/GYN, OB/WIZ. Practitioner of Pureblood Pregnancy Since 1959.”

Doctor Wayman entered the exam room, all gray hair and thick spectacles, and held out his hands.

“Narcissa Malfoy,” he said, “I haven’t seen you since this one was born. All two point eight kilograms of him! How are you, darling boy?”

I couldn’t manage a word, disturbed by the surroundings: diagrams of babies in the womb; a fleshy, detailed model of a lady’s privates that looked like it had been used for demonstration a few too many times; a thick glass wand labeled ultrasound only.

“Mrs. Malfoy,” the doctor was saying. “Are you really with child after all these years? The spirit of Venus has blessed you.”

“No, Doctor.”

Her head turned. I could feel them staring.

“I see.” His excitement ebbed away, but he remained gentle. “Draco, son. Come, sit. Before we begin, was it a potion you took? Or did you see someone about a charm?”

“I didn’t do anything. It wasn’t planned.”

“I see. You’ll have to excuse me, but unplanned pregnancies in wizards are relatively unheard of, so you’ll have to—”

“I already told my father and I’ll tell you, too. I simply turned up pregnant, and that’s that!”

“Draco, hold your tongue,” my mother snapped. “This is embarrassing enough without you being ill-mannered.”

Wayman smiled indulgently. “It would be helpful to know the mechanism that enabled your pregnancy, but if you don’t know, then there’s nothing to be done. My job is to maintain your health
and the health of the darling child, and I can still accomplish that. Now, then—Accio parchment! Accio quill! Let’s start with the basics. The other father...of course, he’s a pureblood?”

My eyes flicked to my mother, who was still a little frosty. Then back to Wayman. I nodded.

His eyes brightened behind his glasses, but I cut off his next question. “What would happen if he were not—erm—pureblood?”

Wayman and my mother traded a look. “Naturally,” he said, “we would discuss your alternatives to bearing this child.”

“Naturally,” I said, not knowing what else to say.

“Well. Ahem. Moving on! When did you first start noticing symptoms?”

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You’re probably wondering about Potter. Fine.

My invitation to Potter—“Why don’t you just shut up and bend me over that desk?”—was met with disbelief, and then a mad escape from the storage room. He popped back in to throw my wand at my chest, only to bolt again.

Sex as a defense mechanism. Imagine that. Still, I would not have come onto him if the idea were repulsive.

You see, Potter was a side character in the theater of my mind, with Montague playing the lead, as I harkened back to that night this past summer—Montague’s hands on my wrists, his lips on my ear, his erection bearing down on mine—and then the stage lights would flash and Potter was there, right on cue, as I penetrated myself with a gentle finger, and Potter was fucking me on the lavatory floor with that passionate, hateful stare and a dick I imagined was just as heavy. God, coming to that image was strange and sweet. And I would not have to imagine for long.

Potter emerged from the shadows again as I was leaving the Room of Requirement. He’d probably been stalking me with that Invisibility Cloak of his, but he seemed too out of sorts to note our location.

“I’ve heard rumors about you,” he said, falling into stride. “That you’re—you know. And that you even asked Blaise Zabini to the Yule Ball or something. Back then. I didn’t take it seriously.”

I stopped, pursing my lips in annoyance. “And now?”

“Well, after the other night, I don’t know what to think.”

“And what does my sexuality matter to you? Unless you want to take part in it.”

Potter flushed. “I don’t! I don’t even care.”

“All right. Then bugger off.”

He did not bugger off. He followed me to the dungeons, scuffing his ugly trainers, positively steaming some emotion I couldn’t place. I led him in a circle, not wanting to show him our common room entrance.

“Were you being serious?” he finally asked.
“About what?” Of course, I knew.

“About,” he said slowly, “me,” quietly, like the whole school was listening, “buggering you,” he finished, looking like he wanted to cut out his own tongue.

We were in front of the empty Arithmancy classroom. I shrugged, walking in. “Care to find out?”

Potter was supposed to flee again. I was supposed to laugh and go to bed and continue to wrack my brain about the Vanishing Cabinet and spatial continuum charms. Instead, his footsteps sounded behind me. The door shut. The hairs on the back of my neck stood up. What now? This wasn’t Montague. This wasn’t the Italian bloke in the fashion magazine. This was Harry Potter, my enemy and my nuisance.

I decided to do what any Slytherin would do. Up the ante. I spun on my heel and untied my robes, holding Potter’s gaze as they fell down my back. When he did not react, I began undoing my shoes and trousers.

He made an abrupt movement. This is it, I thought, the coward’s going to run. But he only adjusted his glasses and stepped forward. He seemed to be getting a better look at me now that I was only in pants and a white shirt. I could detect no certain reaction. That is, until—

His belt buckle clinked. I looked down, and his dick was there, a clearly defined bulge within the blue jeans still hanging around his waist. Well then.

I upped the ante again, placing my thumbs in the elastic of my pants and slowly, deliberately, working them down my legs. I would rather have taken off my shirt, but I didn’t want to show my Dark Mark.

All right, I thought. Now stopping looking at my junk and walk away. No—away! Not towards me!

As Potter approached, I held his gaze, but I was also aware of his hands, how they held up his jeans, and how his boxer briefs were starting to reveal themselves. If only they would slip a little bit more. As if I’d said it aloud, Potter toed off his trainers and yanked down his jeans; his gusto caused his pants to slip, too, and from my periphery I saw his dick pop over the rim, swollen and bouncing, and fuck, it was probably very nice if I could just break down and look directly.

If it hasn’t been established yet, I fucking love bravdo. Potter was the epitome of bravado, standing tall, holding my gaze while holding his dick, that muscle twitching his jaw, his chest heaving with anticipation. He would probably take me by the hair next and pull my head back, and leave bite marks on my throat. He would probably trip me and catch me with strong arms and penetrate me before I could speak and leave fingerprints in the flesh of my shoulders and soreness in my arse. That is, if he didn’t command me to service him—leaning against one of these dusty desks, his hands gripping the edge, as I clasped mine behind my back gently sucking that huge, thick, pink shaft.

“Don’t touch yourself,” he would say. “Don’t you dare.”

And I wouldn’t. I would run back to my dorm and only then, in privacy, would I let myself take pleasure.

Or none of that.

That’s right. You heard me. Instead, Potter ruined it.

“So, er, now what?” he asked.
“What?” I said flatly. I put my hands on my hips, taking in the sight of him. The bravado had been an illusion. It was just skinny Potter there, gawking, covering his normal-sized prick with an annoying amount of modesty. I threw my hands up. “Fine, fuck it, I’ll just do everything.”

I dropped to my knees, slapped his hands aside, and enveloped him in my mouth. He gasped, and popped out again, tripping backwards in surprise. He landed in a chair with his glasses askew.

“So you even want to fuck me?” I asked, taking in his anxious face. I crawled the inches towards him, pushing my hands up his thighs, letting the flat of my tongue drag up his dick, before looking him in the eye.

“I don’t—I mean, I’m not gay—”

“That’s not what I asked.” I straddled him. It was hard not to smile at his reaction: he had craned his neck toward the ceiling, as if not looking at our dicks would mean they weren’t really touching. “I asked—do you want to fuck me? As in, do you want to put your cock in my arse?”

He didn’t answer, so I didn’t ask again. I was willing to make this a collaborative decision, but only if Potter was able to rise to the challenge. He might not have been, but his dick certainly was. I rose up and slowly began to push myself onto it.

“Oh!” he exclaimed. “Oh—gah—”

Indeed. This was somewhat new for me, too. It took a bit to find my rhythm. I had to stand up, spit on his dick, and reposition us. I steadied myself on Potter’s shoulders, since he was no help, scratching his fingernails into the underside of the chair as he opened his mouth to the ceiling like he was trying to catch a snowflake on his tongue.

I grabbed his chin and hissed into his face. “Grab me. Smack my arse. Do something, Potter.”

He did. He grew tense, and made a strained sound, and shot warmth up into me. See, now would have been a good time to stun him and stamp on his face again.

“I stood up, snatching my underwear to hold against my bottom. I made an embarrassing noise as his semen drained out of me.

“Son of a bitch,” I said. “That was not what I had in mind.”

He buckled his belt, looking out from under his eyelashes. “Can’t you—I don’t know. Isn’t there a cleaning spell of some kind?”

“If there is, I don’t know it.” I shoved the pants into my robe pocket and began to dress.


***

After that, I thought Potter would give up his investigation of my task. How naive I was. I was shocked to find him eavesdropping in the middle of Apparition lessons in February.

“Look, it’s none of your business what I’m doing,” I told Crabbe, when I thought the rest of the students were distracted by the lesson. “You and Goyle just do as you’re told and keep a lookout!”

Potter’s cocky voice turned up behind me.

“I tell my friends what I’m up to, if I want them to keep a lookout for me.”
I spun around, ready to curse him for sticking his nose into my business again, but the Heads of House admonished us for talking, and I decided to finish the job later.

I didn’t even have to look for him. He lingered after Transfigurations, Weasley having gone ahead with Lavender Brown and Granger running off to the library. The Room of Requirement was calling me, but I sensed Potter following. I rounded a corner, pointed my wand, and waited for him to catch up.

He stopped in his tracks.

“I swear, Potter,” I said, backing him up with my wand. “if you don’t leave me alone, I will Imperio you to drown yourself in the lake and then I will finish my task.”

His eyes flashed. “So you are up to something specific.”

Damn my pride. “Shut up.”

“What are Crabbe and Goyle on the lookout for?”

“I said shut up! Incendio!”

He dodged my spell, only singeing the sleeve of his robe. I turned on my heel and ran. By habit, I ended up in the left wing of Hogwarts, near the Room of Requirement. I ran past it three times, thinking, “I need to stop Potter...I need to stop Potter....”

I flung open the door and tried to lock it behind me, but the bolt would snap back with each attempt. There were footsteps echoing behind it. Shit. I whirled around, finding I was not in the Room of Hidden things. It was a much smaller space, with padded walls and plush animal furs covering the floor. There was only one piece of furniture: a tiny wooden stand in the corner, which held a vial. I picked up the vial. The contents were clear and viscous. Should I drink it?

I uncorked it and held it to my lips, but the smell hit me: it was the same lubricant I used when I wanked. I flushed and cursed my subconscious. Then I realized.

No working lock.

Lubricant.

Soft surfaces.

The only thing missing was a bottle of elderflower wine, a roaring fire, and—

The door slammed behind me. Then it locked.

Potter stood there, panting, holding me at wand point. “This is the last time I’m going to do this. Confess. Dumbledore will be lenient, I’m sure of it.”

What to do? The Room knew this scenario would help me stop Potter. But I still had to be clever with the tools I was given. The answer dawned on me as Potter’s wand shook in my face.

I slowly held out my own wand and placed it on the table.

“What are you doing?” Potter asked. “Confess or fight.”

“No,” I said quietly. I stepped forward.
“You’re not going to distract me like that again.” Not too convincing. He backed away, tripping over a bear skin rug, until his back met the pillowy soft wall. “Malfoy,” he breathed, eyes fluttering closed, black lashes laying against his cheek. He was really quite fetching up close.

I took off his glasses and tossed them aside. With his face clear, I could see light freckles on the bridge of his nose. His eyes opened. I thought he might smile.

So I punched him in the face.

“Argh!” he cried, careening into the doorframe. Ha! Ironic, him landing on the only unpadded part of the room.

Potter launched towards me and slammed me into the wall, trying bash my head into it, but the padding broke the force, and I began to laugh.

“Fuck you,” he said, reeling back his fist. “You crazy, fucking—”

His fist connected, and I saw stars. I fell to the ground, clutching my face, but he was already on me again, fisting my hair and pulling so hard I had to arch my back to avoid pain. He knelt behind me, his wand at my throat.

“No wands,” I rasped out. “S’not fair.”

“What is this, a game to you?”

“Little bit. So much better than last time, don’t you think? You’re not afraid to touch me now.”

I relaxed into him. His chest supported my back. I felt his pulse everywhere: in his hands, in his heart, in his trousers. His dick twitched as soon as my arse settled there.

He was breathing hard into my ear. “I don’t trust you a lick.”

“Yet you trust me to lick.”

“I ought to hex you for the other day,” he said hotly, his hand trembling on my hip. “I’m not...fuck you...I’m not even—”

“Yes, fuck me. I don’t care what you are, just hurry up and fuck me while you’re still angry.”

I don’t know how it happened, still dazed from my beating, but there were clothes and then there were no clothes. There was lube. And then there was me, legs spread out shamelessly with one knee pressing into my shoulder and Potter penetrating me powerfully. There was skin, so warm, and God did he have a chest on that skinny body, and there was sweat. It dripped off the tendrils of his hair, onto my face, over, and over again. He was so very worked up.

I whined like a cat. So what? It felt good. For a moment, concern flashed in Potter’s eyes. I wanted it gone. I reeled back to punch him in the face, but he caught my hand and growled, pushing deeply into me, bending me farther in half.

“Stop doing that,” he said into my face.

“How else does one get a proper response out of you?”

Potter seemed to understand. He pulled out with a wet sound, flipped me onto my knees, and sank into me again.
“That’s it,” I urged him. “Give me your dick. Give it to me, fuck me. Fill me up.”

When Potter finished, it was not like last time. It was a gasping, grabbing, prolonged sort of affair. He took me around the middle with his cheek on my shoulder, muffling his shout in my neck. It was a strained “Hah! Hah!” and when I felt the heat this time, he did not stop. He kept fucking me after he was soft, as if he didn’t want to let go, and I stayed there with my arse up until my muscles forced him out.

He was lying on the floor, his dick soft on his stomach, as I pulled on my robes.

“Malfoy,” he said weakly. “What...is this...?”

“Whatever you’d like it to be. As long as you stop spying on me.”

***

“I swear, I’m not lying to you.” I was sprawled on the sofa in my father’s study, once again fending off his accusations. “Can’t even fathom a reason why you think I would get pregnant on purpose.”

“To punish me, no doubt. For all I’ve put our family through.” He said this staring out the window at the Death Eater children practicing hexes on each other.

“Lucius,” Mum said, perching on the edge of his desk, “since when are you one for self-pity? Do trust our son, and save your wallowing for privacy.”

He sighed and returned to his paperwork, stacks of birth records, provided by a Dark Lord sympathizer working at Saint Mungo’s, under the guise of Dad wanting to make a log of recent pureblood births.

“I can’t make heads or tails of it,” he said. “Eight out of ten male pregnancies are the result of genetalia-shifting through potions administered by a mediwizard. The others involve a charm that let the men conceive through—well, typical homosexual relations. And they had to have cast the charm themselves. Only two men in the past decade have conceived on accident, and both had Veela ancestry within the century. You have zero Veela ancestry ever, Draco.”

“Are you quite sure?” I asked, examining my nails. “We are very blond. And angular in bone structure.”

“I’m sure your grandmother would be pleased that you attribute your inherited features to her being an androgynous humanoid bird. But I will double check the family histories....”

“Do research the Blacks, too,” Mum added, tapping his desk and summoning a tea tray.

I stood up, still bothered by my poochy stomach. I was about three months along, if Dr. Wayman was right, 13-weeks in his words, so I couldn’t imagine what I’d look like in half a year.

“Are you supposed to be this big so early?” I asked my mother.

“You are rather lean, Draco. Perhaps it shows on you easier. Come have some tea.”

“I don’t want to eat ever again. I don’t want to get bigger.”

“You will eat and you will be much bigger by the end of this.” She handed me tea with milk and a biscuit.

“I don’t know. Perhaps it’s not too late to—?” I made a throat-slitting motion with my hand.
“Are you mad?” she whispered, leaning in so Dad didn’t hear. “A pureblood baby aborted? Our family would never recover from the scandal. Far worse than even a bastard child.”

“No one would have to know.”

“My love, people always find out your secrets in the end.”

“Blast it all!” My father slammed a fist into the desk, rattling the cups and saucers. “There was a wizard in the fifties who turned up pregnant on accident, but his psychological records indicate that it might have been a trick to keep his lover around.”

“Why is it so important how it happened?” I asked. “Mum doesn’t care.”

He flipped a page, eyes glued to the records. “I do not care how it happened for the sake of knowing. I care because I want to protect you.” He seemed to feel my confusion. He leaned back in his chair, and studied me. I realized it was the first time he’d looked me in the eye in days. “What you’re not grasping, son, is that rogue magic is a dangerous thing. You weren’t born with the ability to conceive. Someone, at some point, had to intend this. If not a potion, or a charm, then what about a curse? What if this thing growing inside you is harmful?”

I glanced between my parents. “That’s not likely, is it?”

Mum sipped her tea. Dad frowned.

“I don’t know,” he said. “But it is possible the fault lies with the person with whom you conceived this child. I have been avoiding this question, as it is not a thrilling subject for me, but I suppose I will have to know sometime. Who is it you slept with?”

I looked at my mother imploringly, but she was still face-first in her teacup. Embarrassed, I muttered, “Montague. Graham Montague.”

“All right,” he said, emotionless. “He is unlikely to have designs to harm you. Unless it has to do with money....”

Mum made a funny, strangled sound.

I sighed. “And, maybe, Blaise Zabini.”

“Maybe?” my father asked.

“Definitely.”

He shifted in his seat. “The Zabinis are also sympathizers of the Dark Lord, and unlikely to want to harm you or our family. Anyone else?”

“No,” I said quickly.

“Well.” He was oddly pleased-looking. “At least paternity will be obvious once we get a look at the child.”

It felt wrong to lie to my father. I wanted to confide in him, and in Mum, the third possible candidate. You can probably guess why that was not an option. I had imagined the disappointed look in their eyes, yes, but that was nothing to compared to this; the picture of Dad standing in the Dark Lord’s circle, trying desperately to shield his mind from thoughts of Harry Potter; the Dark Lord, tapping in and seeing my child there, possibly still in the womb, and smiling that devilish smile.
Would he simply punish me for my treachery? My father? Or—if the child was Potter’s—would he take it and use it for his purposes?

I never wanted to know. So, my father could never know.

***

I want to get back to Potter, and you’re probably wondering about the moment when I finally slept with Graham Montague, but I have to admit something. Long before either of them, there was Blaise fucking Zabini.

I was first drawn to him in fourth year, when his chest and arms filled out and his dick seemed to thicken overnight. He caught me staring as he bathed once and smiled a great wide smile that was bright against the darkness of his skin. I was so cocky back then that I’d asked him to the Yule Ball afterwards. Yes, Potter had heard right.

“Are you serious?” Zabini asked, pulling on his pajamas, those ones that slung low on his obliques.

“If you’re interested I am.”

“What do you think people would say?”

“The purebloods wouldn’t say anything. Who cares what the rest of them think?”

“Your father would care. My mother would care. Look, two blokes at a ball together? That’s a bit poofy even for the civilized upper-classes. They might not say anything to your face, but you know it’s not ideal. Best you ask Pansy.”

“I don’t want to go with Pansy. I want to go with you.” I stepped closer. God, I remember how he smelled like spices and shaving cream. I didn’t shave yet. It was so hot!

“No, Draco.” He put a hand on my chest, gently urging me away, and I felt the instant sting of rejection, just like first year on the train when—

“Fine,” I snapped, and practically flounced to bed. I could just make out Crabbe’s smirk from across the dormitory. I felt like a fool. Zabini was right: they might not say anything to my face, but if Crabbe had heard my proposition all of Slytherin would be whispering about it by the end of the tomorrow.

As a cover, I did ask Pansy. She accepted with no mention of my sexuality. So far so good. But when Zabini sidled towards me during the Ball, looking dashing and succulent in plum blue robes, my Housemates began to murmur. It was like they anticipated me breaking into a sweat at the thought of him asking me to dance.

I decided not to care. Yes, I was cocky and a romantic. I edged in front of Pansy, not wanting Zabini to think she mattered, not one bit.

He held out his hand. “Would you care to dance?”

I placed my hand in his, and mine was so white and his was so brown and—God, when had he become sexy?

Zabini smiled slowly. “I meant Pansy.”

My sweat turned into a tidal wave of horror. My Housemates were stifling sniggers. Thank goodness
we were isolated in the corner, no Gryffindors to be seen. Pansy and Zabini swept away, and I whipped around, catching Crabbe mid-laugh.

I took him by the lapels and barked, “Do you want me to tell my father how you’ve been spreading lies about me?”

“But—I haven’t been —”

“Good. Keep it that way.”

One dark look, and the rest of them shut up, too.

I dated Pansy religiously for another year or so, somehow managing to avoid touching her excessively or kissing her at all.

But I digress. Back to sleeping with Zabini. This didn’t happen until sixth year.

After Aunt Bellatrix broke up my night with Montague, I was on edge for the rest of the summer. I was so pent up that I bought a dildo in Knockturn Alley, but all fucking myself on it did was make me want the real thing more. The romantic in me wanted to wait it out for Montague. The boy in me just wanted to get laid. You can probably guess who won.

There was a party in the dungeons the first Friday of the school year, a Slytherin-Ravenclaw mashup that somehow went unnoticed or ignored by Professor Snape. I lost myself in the music, the alcohol, and the dancing, overwhelmed with how I would go about completing my task (Montague hadn’t been any help with figuring out the mechanics of the Vanishing Cabinet he’d been stuck in). That’s when I caught Zabini eye-fucking me from across the room. This was not unusual. He had been toying with me ever since I made my attraction clear. I imagined it made his ego hard. Then he would run off and snog some girl, leaving me wet in my pants. But not tonight, I told myself. This year I was a Death Eater, and I could do anything.

Halfway through my third glass of mead, I saw Zabini running into our dormitory. I sloshed my drink into Pansy’s hand and followed, finding him standing over his trunk with his shirt over his head.

“What are you doing?”

Zabini jumped. “Shit, I didn’t hear you. Just changing my shirt. Millicent spilled whiskey all over it. If she didn’t have those nice tits, I’d have hexed the bitch.”

“Oh,” I said, suddenly bold at the sight of his bare chest. “You don’t need a new shirt.”

“Malfy,” he said, chuckling to himself, “I don’t like blokes. In case you haven’t gathered.”

“You don’t? Well, maybe I’m the exception. I am good looking.”

“Maybe I’m pissed, but I can’t argue with that.”

I sauntered towards him, enjoying the lazy way his eyes followed my hips. “And I am gifted in a variety of ways,” I reasoned. “I don’t see why this should be any different.”

Zabini looked at the ceiling, as if he were trying to talk himself out of something, and then he rolled his head down and grinned. “Why don’t you prove it, then?”

My heart skipped a beat. I dropped onto my knees, undid his trousers, and found that some things
looked much bigger up close. Like scary big. But I’d wanted this for so long. I closed my eyes and swallowed him whole. It was too much, the fullness of him, the way his hair tickled my nose. I choked and spit him out.

He took me by the hair and held up his dick. “Come on, then. You said you were talented. I’m not seeing it.”

There it was again, that long, dark, wet thing, so imposing in his grip. It was rosy brown at the head, and as he worked it against my lips I tasted bitterness and salt.

“No...fuck me,” I slurred.

“Yeah? You’re an eager slut, aren’t you? How many guys have you fucked, and yet you keep after me?”

The answer was none. His was the first dick in my mouth, then in my arse, with no more than a spattering of saliva to ease the pop past my opening. It hurt, but not much. Perhaps the alcohol helped. He bent me over the bed, his trousers around his ankles, my robes around my waist. There was something exhilarating about him panting against my neck. When he kissed me there—I don’t think he realized he’d done it—I felt warm all over. It was the first affection I’d had since Montague. My Mark had been burning since arriving at Hogwarts, but not now. Not with Blaise loving on me. He took me by the neck as he came, pressing my face into the pillow. God, how I loved to be handled with abandon! It was like a forceful, physical declaration: You’re mine, all mine!

I stayed in bed for the rest of the weekend.

***

Potter seemed to be heeding my wishes. He didn’t nose around in my business for a while, except to pull me into a storage closet or empty classroom to tear off my clothes. He was studying me one afternoon, as he pulled up his trousers.

“You’ve been...off the map a lot these days.”

I narrowed my eyes. “What map?”

“Oh, just an expression. Haven’t seen you around much, is all.”

“I’ve been occupied, not that it’s your business. Homework and all that. Slughorn’s pretty tough.” So is ruddy Dumbledore.

“Right. No need to hide from me, or anything. That’s all.”

“You arrogant sod. You think it has anything to do with you?”

“What has?”

I snatched my book bag and left without a word.

As the school year approached its end, the weight of my task was so stifling it was hard to breathe. Fantasies about Potter’s hands on my face became nightmares about the Dark Lord’s hands on my
throat. I wondered if he could read my mind from afar, know how much time had I spent sucking Potter’s dick instead of fixing that damned Cabinet.

The thought made me violently ill. I ducked into a boy’s lavatory one day to lose my lunch. When I ran out of stomach contents, I lay my head on the rim of the toilet and burst into tears.

That was when I felt a ghostly hand on my shoulder.

***

One day in April, Potter caught me by the arm after dinner and tugged me into a dungeon classroom.

“Are you avoiding me?” he demanded. I did not respond, except to begin disrobing. All except my shirt. He’d still never seen my Mark. Potter followed suit, and was promptly inside of me. So easy, I thought, as he pressed my face into the desk. “Still busy with your scheming?” he asked, as he fucked me.

“Sod off,” I said, though it came out weaker than intended. “Stop following me. I’ll stop fucking you if you don’t.”

“Haven’t been following you.”

“Then why did I find you pacing back and forth in front of the Room of Requirement?”

Potter stopped moving. “You saw me?”

“Once again, you’re not the picture of subtly. On that note, did I catch you making eyes at me in the Great Hall today?”

He pulled out and whirled me around, searching my eyes with ferocity. “You wish.” His face relaxed. “Hold on, you’re just trying to distract me. I’m on the verge of figuring you out, and you’re trying to put me off course. Is that what all these...afterhours shenanigans are about?”

“Potter, you’re the one accosting me.”

“Well, you’re the one tempting me!”

“You find me tempting?” I asked, smirking.

“Shut up.” He tried to back away, but I grabbed him around the waist with my legs, and took him by the penis.

“Where are you going? We still have this to deal with.”

“Is this a part of your plan?” he asked, though his jaw was growing slack and he was getting hard again. “You mess with my head, try and get me obsessed with you, and then you pounce on me with your scheme?”

“Oh, my. Obsessed, are you?”

“Shut up! I have half a mind that you slipped me a lust potion.”

“Don’t make me laugh.” Though, laugh I did. “A lust potion? Why would I brew you a lust potion when I’m clearly trying to keep you out of my business? No...you’re lusting after me on your own, Potter.”
“Then you’re fucking me...because you like me?”

“Nothing could be further from the truth.” I licked my hand and rubbed it on the head of his cock. His eyes were shut now. “Liking your...endowments...is not the same as liking you.”

“Just like a Slytherin to keep them separate.” Potter leaned into my neck, and I shuddered as his lips grazed my skin. Was this the first time his lips had touched me?

I pushed him away. “What am I, your girlfriend? Get on with it.”

He flushed with embarrassment. Then he hiked my legs over his shoulders and nudged his cock into me.

Once Potter stopped talking, he let himself go. He threw his head back, mouth open, pinning my thighs to his body, occasionally smiling, perhaps forgetting who he was fucking. I touched the hair on his forearms, the curve of his lean biceps, and the muscles that ran from there up over square shoulders. I touched his firm, tan chest. I may have grabbed his hands. He may have grabbed back. I don’t know. I was too caught up to tell. He had no care for touching my privates, nor did I ever prompt him; the idea of him using my body solely for his pleasure made me ache with desire. He seemed ignorant to my prostate, too, how his hardness worked within me, urging me dreadfully close to climax without pushing me over. Though, now his angle was unwittingly perfect. My pleasure grew as his cock did. I smiled, keened, and came all over my thighs without laying a hand on my cock. Potter blinked at me, mystified but pleased with himself.

It was all so distracting, I never noticed the door open and gently close.

***

“What do you mean you’re not going to keep watch for me anymore?”

Crabbe shrugged, and turned over in his bed.

I flung all his blankets off and pointed a finger at him. “Get up and get to that corridor! I’m this close to finishing, and I won’t have it messed up by the likes of you.”

“Finish what? You won’t even tell us what you’re doing in there. And if it’s what I think it is, then I want no part of it.”

“What are you talking about?” I asked, boggled. I looked around the dormitory. Goyle was there, pulling on his robes. Nott was absent, as usual. Zabini was asleep. “What I’m doing is of utmost importance for Him.”

Crabbe glared from over his shoulder. “Which him?”

I was shaken and confused. Which him? Did Crabbe mean Dumbledore? Snape? He couldn’t possibly mean....

“What are you on about?” I asked urgently.

“Nothing I want to relive,” he said, pulling the blankets back over his head.

Anger flared within me. There was no time for this!

I ripped off the covers, throwing them onto the floor. “Get—up—there. If I fail at this task, yours will be the first head the Dark Lord takes after mine. I’ll make sure of it.”
My days were spent in the Room of Hidden Things. Still no luck. Which meant my evenings were spent in the boy’s lavatory, pouring out my soul to the ruddy toilet ghost.

“I know how dreadful you must feel,” Myrtle would say, resting her hand on the back of my neck. I was red from weeping and hot all over, and her deathly cold flesh was a strange comfort. It was fortunate I had that comfort. Potter had stopped seeking me out.

There were rumors that Dean Thomas and Ginny Weasley had split up. I had seen Potter at Quidditch practice, staring up at her like a great, mindless sod. It bothered me. I didn’t know why. I must have been envious that Potter was able care about inconsequential things, like sports and girls, while I forever had my head in a piece of magical furniture, sweating over thoughts of my family reaping the Dark Lord’s punishment because of my failures.

It was too much. I tried to put Potter out of my head, but he would cling to my brain, like some sticky, mind-altering curse. I hated him for it. Or something like hate.

“He’s so fucking carefree,” I told Myrtle. “He just follows me around...takes what he wants...and disappears until the next time he feels like showing up...which really hasn’t been in a long time....”

“Who? Who’s doing this to you?”

“It’s not like I like him. But it’s not fair. I can hardly even enjoy myself when we do it—but he can! —because I’m always thinking about that stupid Cabinet. I can’t work it out! I just can’t work it out....”

The tears began streaming. I watched them fall into the soapy residue in the sink.

“Don’t,” Myrtle crooned. “Don’t...tell me what’s wrong...I can help you....”

“No one can help me,” I said, convulsing with sorrow. “I can’t do it...I can’t...it won’t work...and unless I do it soon...he says he’ll kill me....”

I looked at my blotchy, pathetic face in the mirror. That was when I saw Potter.

Had he heard anything about the Dark Lord? The Vanishing Cabinet? Had I revealed any of my embarrassing feelings?

I let instinct take over. I drew my wand on him. Curses flew, water pipes burst, Myrtle shrieked, and there was the heart-stilling moment when I thought I’d breathed my last breath.

“SECTUMSEMPRA!” Potter bellowed.

It was a curse I’d never heard before. My blood felt like it would burst from its skin, and it did. My chest split open in long, deep slashes. I saw regret fill Potter’s eyes, heard him splash over as I fell, but I have no memory after that.

***

A woman was stroking my head. Annoyed at Myrtle, I shot up. I clutched my chest. It was difficult to breath.

“Darling, calm down. I’m here.” It was my mother. We were in the Hogwarts infirmary. She eased me back.

“Is Potter all right?” I asked without thinking. Crucio echoed in my head.
“Potter?” she said coldly. “He wouldn’t be if I had my way with him. Dumbledore would not let me see him, however.”

Then I remembered the strange spell. I reached for Mum’s purse, and she seemed to understand, handing me a tiny mirror. Sectumsempra had left a faint, silvery line on my neck, tapering off my collar bone. Several more gashed down my chest.

“I’m sure they will fade,” she said. Her chin began to tremble. “I have been so worried about you.”

“Mum, not again. I’m fine.”

“I wish you would just—” She lowered her voice, grabbed my hand. “—just let me take care of this for you. I could find a way.”

“That’s not good enough. It has to be me.”

“You’re my son! You have to let me protect you.”

“No,” I hissed. “It’s my task to complete. And, for once, trust me to protect you. I will come through for our family.”

She shook her head despairingly, but let it go.

“How are you at home?” I asked. “Are you lonely with just house-elves for company?”

She put a hand to her chest. “Just house-elves? Oh...no, of course not. I always manage.”

I found her tone strange, but was unable to question it, since Madam Pomfrey appeared and began to apply ointment to my chest. She checked my temperature.

“You’ve developed a fever. I’m afraid I’ll have to keep you until it subsides.”

“I’m sure I’m fine,” I said, thinking about the Cupboard. Yaxley had owled me just yesterday, wanting a time and a date for the invasion. “I’ll just check out now.”

My mother seemed to read my mind. “You will do as Madam Pomfrey says.”

Not wanting to embarrass her with impudence, and secretly grateful for the excuse to relax for a night, I sank into the pillows. Goyle, Pansy, and Zabini visited that evening.

Pansy took my hand, saying, “I can’t believe Potter’s only getting detention over this. He should be expelled or arrested. Isn’t your mother going to press charges?”

“We have other things to worry about,” I said distantly.

They all exchanged looks. Goyle was kind. “I’ll crush his glasses into his face, if you like.”

“Don’t bother.” As much as I was trying to be furious with Potter, my most prevalent memory from yesterday was the way his face twisted in regret.

“It’s Potter’s lucky week, then,” Zabini said, looking mischievous. “He curses you, gets off easy, wins the Quidditch Championship, and scores with Ginny Weasley.”

That changed everything. “He what? With who?”

“Yeah, it’s all over school,” Blaise said, leaning casually on the bed. “And so are they—snogging,
that is.”

My face was growing hot, and not from the fever.

Pansy noticed, beginning to look pitiful. “Do you like her or something?”

“What? A Weasley? Don’t make me sick.”

I turned away, feigning tiredness, and Pansy and Goyle took their leave. Zabini continued to lean on the bed, though it was more like laying across my legs at this point.

“I didn’t think it was true,” he said with that wide smile. “When Crabbe told me what he saw you doing, I couldn’t believe it. I’m shocked, Draco.”

“Excuse me?”

“It’s Potter you’re upset about, not Weasley.”

It felt like I’d been hit in the stomach with a sack of stones. I stared at him, at those unblinking, almond-shaped eyes, until I was able to sputter, “What—rubbish—is this?”

“No need to deny it,” he said, trailing circles on my leg with his finger. “Don’t worry, he only told me. And I know how detrimental it would be if the information got out.”

“It’s a lie! Whatever he said—it’s a fucking lie!”

“What’s a lie? What is it you think he said if you’re so sure it’s not true?”

I could not answer.

“That’s what I thought. But I’ll be blunt. If you want to fuck the Chosen One, that’s your business. But you should be more careful, at least lock doors. You rather put us all in danger with this one. If the Dark Lord calls us, too...finds out we’re keeping a secret like this...it’ll be impossible not to tell.”

“Blaise,” I said tremulously. “You wouldn’t—”

“Hush, hush. I’m not going to run out and blab. Neither will Crabbe.”

“Then what are you saying?”

“I’m just saying,” Zabini said, trailing that finger up to my cheek, “that the thought of you with him made me a bit...nostalgic.”

“Is nostalgic a synonym for jealous?”

“Call it what you will.”

“Your timing couldn’t be worse. I’m very distracted.”

“You’re not busy here.” His thumb went over my mouth. As much as I had wanted this in fourth year, in fifth year, I wondered if I’d finally outgrown Blaise Zabini. When he kissed me, though, I smelled the spicy, shaving cream scent of him, and remembered. He pulled back and said in a low voice, “I’m going to sneak into the infirmary tonight. And then I’m going to climb into bed with you and fuck you better than Potter ever did.”

Zabini’s ego hadn’t changed either.
When he was on me that night, I couldn’t help myself. I let my eyes fall shut. I could see myself beneath Potter, feel him opening me up. There was no Ginny Weasley. There was no Blaise. Only the two of us. I was a normal boy, with no Dark Lord, and Potter was my boyfriend. I opened my mouth, and before I knew it, the words were falling out: “Harry...oh God, Harry....”

At least Zabini only mocked me with his smile.

***

Even if I had wanted to see Potter after that, he was as scarce as a lethifold on a summer’s day. In fact, the only times I saw him out of class were across the Great Hall, as he laughed loudly with Ginny Weasley, or (like today) when I crossed paths with them in the corridor holding hands. He didn’t even have the decency to make eye contact as I glowered at his stupid messy head, simply plowing through me as if I were invisible.

“Watch it, Potter,” I barked, whipping out my wand.

“Oh, sorry,” he said absently. He tried to steer Weasley away, but she rooted herself, cow-like, and stared boldly at me.

“You’re looking better, Malfoy,” she said, with a tone that suggested she’d rather have seen my entire body split in half.

“And you’re looking thrifty, as usual,” I responded. “The dust on the Weasley hand-me-downs really brings out the muddiness of your eyes.”

“You’d better put that wand away and watch your mouth or I’ll—”

“Come on, it’s not worth it,” Potter said, grabbing her hand.

“Harry, you can’t just let him—”

But he was more forceful, and they disappeared into a flock of passing Ravenclaws.

I shoved my wand back into my pocket, seething. That’s when I found it: a tiny strip of parchment, leathery and limp, as if it’d been riding around in someone’s pocket for days.

Meet me in the classroom across from Transfigurations at 10 PM on the day you get this.

—H

I was so close to decoding the Vanishing Cabinet, just a syllable away in my incantation, that I almost didn’t pry myself away. I justified it by telling myself, If you clear your head, you’ll work better. I hurdled into the classroom at quarter-past.

Potter was sitting on the professor’s desk in the middle of a mostly empty classroom. Most of the student desks were chopped up and arranged in the shape of a giant wooden hand making a lewd gesture. Perhaps Peeves had been here.

Potter was staring at me.

“Well?” I snapped, too winded to say much else.

He hopped off the desk, approaching me with his hands in his pockets. I veered around him, towards
the hand, pretending to observe it. I didn’t want to be close to him, to smell him, to pick out the colors in his eyes.

“Eventful day?” he asked.

“Sod off. What do you want?”

“Well.” He cleared his throat. “I wanted to tell you I’m sorry.”

I snorted. “Sorry? Whatever. You can have her.”

“Er—” He didn’t speak after that. I had to turn and look. His eyebrows were knitted together. At last, he clarified, “I’m sorry for nearly killing you.”

My eyes went round. I probably looked like a character in a comic book. “Ah. Yes, as you should be. Now, don’t ever put your hand in my pocket again.” I went for the door, but stopped when his hand met my arm. “Let go,” I said, eyes closed.

“Look at me.”

“Let. Me. Go.”

“Draco,” he said, and no word from his mouth had ever sounded stranger.

I looked. His eyes were filled with concern to rival my mother’s. And something else, something uneasy.

“Are you all right?” he asked.

I swallowed deeply, growing self-conscious of my appearance. What must he have seen? Not someone handsome like he was. He must have seen how much weight I’d lost, how sullen and sunken my eyes were, how long my hair had become from neglect, and how my hands were always slightly trembling.

“Whatsoever it is,” he continued, “I know it’s not good. And I can tell you don’t want to be doing it. But you’ve got allies if you want them.”

“Keep your pity to yourself,” I said quietly. “I am loyal.”

“That’s been clear since I met you. But what did you find clear about me when we met?”

“That you were an arrogant prick scraping the bottom of the barrell?”

He gave a patient smile. “That I’m a good judge of character. I saw that you were a prat then, and that certainly hasn’t changed.” I tried to pull away, but his grip tightened, and his eyes bored into mine. “But you’re also good-hearted. I can see that now. I saw you in the hospital wing with your mother. I snuck in with my Invisibility Cloak to see you. And even though she was scared for you, trying to comfort you, all you did was act stoic for her well being—despite the fact that every other day, you’re in obvious pain. I don’t see a bad person doing that.”

Gently, firmly, he pushed up the sleeve of my robe to reveal the Dark Mark.

“That’s what I thought,” he said regretfully.

He was still staring at it as I croaked, “You visited me in the hospital wing?”
“That’s all you got from that?” Potter laughed humorlessly and let my sleeve fall down. “Yes, I did.”

“Why?”

“I seem to care for you.” He took a breath, and made funny face, like he was trying to decide whether to take a bite out of a lemon. “Do you... do you feel the same?”

I pressed my lips into a line. If I opened my mouth, the truth would emerge. I shook my head, no.

“That’s what I thought you’d say,” he said, stepping closer. “But I’m going to use my good judgement again... and assume that you’re lying to me.”

And that was the story of my first kiss with Harry Potter.

I knew it was wrong when he took my mouth, but I opened it beneath his. I knew it was wrong when he threw down his cloak and took my hand, and kissed me until I was writhing on the floor. I knew it was wrong when he entered me and I did not slap him or punch him or urge him to be brutal. I knew it was wrong because soon this would be a sweet memory I could never relive. Soon there would be war, and only one of us would see the other side.

“Tell me what it is,” he said afterwards. We were laying nude our sides, facing each other, but not touching. “What is your task?”

“It’s something horrible,” was all I would say.

“Don’t do it. I’ll protect you. And your mum.”

I jumped up. It was just like him to think he was the answer to everything. When he grabbed my hand, I jerked away, gathering my clothes.

“No more of this,” I snapped. “I’ve got a part to play in all this, and you can’t help me out of it. Don’t get in my way and I won’t get in yours. Let’s leave it at that.”

We did leave it at that. Because a couple days later, I fixed the Vanishing Cabinet and made contact with the Death Eaters—and thank Merlin you already know the details of that night on the Astronomy Tower, because I shudder to relive it.

I would not see Harry Potter again for almost a year. But I would think about him. I would think about him everyday, after falling ill with nausea, growing bloated and tender, and then taking a singularly life-altering pregnancy test.
When I gave birth early one Spring morning, it became abundantly clear whose baby it was not.

“What beautiful eyes,” my mother said, stroking the newborn’s cheek. “He looks just like you did, darling.”

It was true. The baby in my arms was identical to the baby in my old photos, from the pale pink skin, to the round ears, to the eyes as gray as stone, to the translucent hair.

My father leaned over her shoulder. He hadn’t touched my son yet, but there was a barely perceptible glow of pride in his eyes. “I’m pleased we won’t be needing to write to the Zabini clan.”

“You prefer the Montagues?” Mum asked. They were as pure as the Malfoys, but I could tell she was perturbed by their economic status.

“I certainly do. The Zabini family is—” He stopped, chewing over his words. I thought he was going to say black, which would not be upsetting by itself, but a black bastard child would be rather attention-grabbing on our genealogy tree. In the end, he settled on, “scandalous. They’re scandalous.”

Mum nodded vigorously. “They are scandalous. That mother of his has had more marriages and affairs than the Daily Prophet can keep track of. And,” she whispered, not thinking I could hear, “a bastard or two of her own. Best my grandchild stays out of that.”

“Best we all do,” my father muttered, looking away.

She shot him a look, and I decided I did not wish to hear anymore about that.

“I’m very tired,” I said, stifling a yawn. My son took after me already, yawning himself.

My mother placed him in the bassinet next to my bed. “I’m going to invite the Montagues to supper tomorrow,” she said quietly. “There is much to discuss.”

“Like what?”

“I’m sure you know how many arrangements have to be made. Of course, you’ll have to finish at Hogwarts first, but then where will you and Montague live? The manor? Or will you wait until you’re married and then—?”

“Hold on, married?” I sat up, eyes imploring. “Where will we live? As in, together? Mum, I don’t know if I want to—”

“What you want,” my father interjected, “has no bearing on what is proper. You should have thought of that before you brought this child into the world—who, by the way, deserves to have a name at some point.”

“But, Dad! Graham Montague is a decent person, but I can’t possibly—”
“Draco,” he said firmly, “you’ve already embarrassed me with this accident. I will not be embarrassed to watch my grandchild grow up a bastard, as well. If you don’t want to discuss marriage, then I won’t be responsible for your welfare or the child’s.”

I widened my eyes at my mother, but she refused to comfort me. She was not very nice sometimes! My parents retreated, and I gazed over the edge of the baby’s bassinet—the long-faced, pale-skinned, sleepy little bugger. Hmph. He didn’t really look like Montague or Potter.

***

I bet you think you’re so smart. You think you know whose baby it was. Have you stopped to think that I f**ked three different men the month of conception? Maybe Zabini had been right to call me a slut. Now, obviously the baby wasn’t Zabini’s, but I thought Montague was the most likely candidate. I mean, we f**ked a lot. Onward to my affair with him.

The night of the Astronomy Tower incident, Snape steered me up the road to the manor like cattle. There were broom-riders gliding along the distant hedge, but I didn’t register this at the time, my vision blurred with tears, my voice high as I shouted my fury.

“You’ve ruined everything! What’s our Lord going to do to me now? He’ll f**k me...he’ll f**k my father...my mother...and it’ll be because of you!”

He tossed me into the entrance hall, which was lit only by moonlight from the tall windows, and I kept myself upright by grabbing onto the tassels of a tapestry of Paul Frey the Polygamist, the last Malfoy to keep more than one wife. He and Snape seemed to gather over me like storm clouds.

“Because of me your family will be spared. You weren’t going to f**k Dumbledore, and you know it.”

I withered. It was true.

“Don’t move from this spot,” he said, and met eyes with Paul Frey, who was shaking his fat head imperiously. “In fact—” Snape grabbed me and hauled me towards the staircase. I caught a glimpse of light pouring out of the drawing room. My heart leapt, thinking of my mother, but Snape pointed me up to my bedroom with no words other than “Stay up there,” “No questions,” and “Go!” when I questioned him, anyway. I felt like a child sent to bed without supper. But (despite my failures) I was a man now (if the Mark on my arm had anything to do with it), so I forwent sulking in favor of making myself useful. I took a random Dark Arts book off my shelf, *Magical Methods for Managing Muggles*, and settled in.

*Plonk!*

I snapped awake. There was a book on my face. I peeled the pages off my cheek, finding that it was morning and I’d only read the introduction. Fine, whatever, half the introduction. *Plonk!* When I wrenched open the balcony doors, I found Graham Montague in the gardens, winding up his arm with another rock.

“What the devil! Montague? What are you doing here?”

“Oh, Merlin, so it is your room.” He hopped onto a broom. Suddenly, he was hovering a foot away. “Flint said this was your window, said he’d played here as a child, but I was worried he was taking the piss out of me.”

“*Flint* is here? And why are you here? And my mum, where is she?”
"Snape didn’t tell you? The Dark Lord is here. Flint and I are filling in for his usual guard. Most of
them left for the Hogwarts mission—and for something else. Something they won’t tell us about."

That was so much to process at once, and I hadn’t gotten over seeing Montague’s handsome face in
front of mine. “Hold on, He’s at my house? Surely...you’re mistaken....”

“Well, I haven’t seen Him, but why else would we be warding the perimeter so heavily?” He looked
anxiously toward the greater lawns. “Snape made us redo them, though. Said my wards might be
impressive against an onslaught of kittens. Arsehole. Anyway, the others will be back soon. I’ll be
relieved not to be Head Guard anymore.”

I folded my arms. “If He’s really here in my house, then you’re stupid for throwing rocks at my
window. What if it’d been Him in this room?”

“It wouldn’t have been,” he said, reaching out. I stepped back. “He doesn’t go in rooms with
windows, they say.”


“It’s Graham.” He pushed his broom forward and grabbed my hands. Apparently, I’d been gesturing
wildly. “And I didn’t know you cared.”

I did care. If the Dark Lord was here, with cohorts and a full guard, things were getting serious. And
I hadn’t seen my mother yet. Was she hurt? And what would become of my father in Azkaban?
Graham was possibly my only friend in the world.

“We don’t have much time,” he told me, finally planting his feet on the balcony. “My watch is over,
but I’m supposed to find old Rosier for training soon.”

“Time for what?”

Graham shot me a crooked smile. I became acutely aware of my heartbeat. I remembered the way he
made me feel last summer, before everything went to Hell. He took me to bed, and there was no Hell
for while, only his overwhelming touch.

***

“You are not spooning me, Graham. It’s just too intimate.”

He was so red with laughter, I thought he was going to burst. “More intimate than me being inside of
you? Come on. I won’t tell anyone.”

“If I gave it all up now, you’d have no reason to floo me in the morning.” I pushed him away,
smiling.

There was a pounding sound. Boots up the staircase. Our eyes met. Graham scrambled off the bed
and into the wardrobe just as the door burst open.

Standing there in tattered robes, nearly as gaunt and white as Voldemort himself, was my father. I
hurdled off the bed and into his arms, nearly knocking him over with my force. He gave a weak cry,
crutching my head to his chest. He held me back by the shoulders.

“You’re still one piece?” he asked, both devastated and happy. I couldn’t manage anything but a
nod. "Have you seen your mother yet?" This time I shook my head, no. I had feared this day would
never come, and I didn’t want to stop looking at him. "You will see her at breakfast. Come down to
the servants’ dining hall, at once. There is much to discuss."

I nodded, beginning to feel very childish. My father seemed to understand. He put a large, warm hand on the back of my head, seeming to note how my hair fell past my shoulders now. He looked down.

"Have you always slept in the nude?"

"Er—" Oh, shit. I waved my hands. "I dunno. I’ll get dressed and be right down."

When the door closed, Graham popped out of the wardrobe already in riding attire. "Guess that second mission was retrieving the Azkaban prisoners. If Rosier came back with them, I’m already late for training. I don’t know when I’ll be able to see you again."

"Just throw another rock at my window,” I said, letting him kiss me goodbye.

As he flew away, I wondered if things would finally be all right.

***

Like I said, we fucked a lot, especially that first month. I don’t think we were discreet.

“And what have you been up to, Nephew?”

My Aunt Bellatrix was sitting with us for breakfast, as she often did, and by sitting I mean looming like a black cloud. I wouldn’t have noticed her speaking to me, as I was bubbling with nausea and trying to concentrate on pushing my yoghurt back down, but I had been startled out of my trance when she mentioned the Battle of the Seven Potters.

“What?” I asked.

Her eyes narrowed. “Our Lord and his men have been hard at work, risking their lives to bring down Potter, to bring justice to the wizarding world, and you’ve been doing...?”

“How dare you,” my mother said cooly. I was grateful, because I’d simply opened my mouth, and nothing threatened to come out but food.

“He’s a fully grown boy. He should be nobler than to waste himself here, doing Merlin-only-knows-what in his bedroom all day.” Her eyes glittered at me, reminding me of that night in Montague’s cottage when she caught us in the throes of passion. Had she seen Graham coming in and out of my bedroom window?

My father spoke without looking up from his paper. “He is busy with me this summer.”

“Reading newspapers and drinking brandy all day?” Bellatrix scoffed.

He flipped down the corner, still pale and tired from his prison stay, looking at her from beneath his brow like one might look at a slow child. “Research. War tactics, Dark Arts, and the like. My son is very knowledgeable in such matters, since you took the time to tutor him last summer.”

Good man, Dad.

“I did, didn’t I?” Bellatrix stuffed a piece of toast in her mouth, smirking to herself.

The table went silent. I couldn’t eat, so I took solace in that place in my head where only Graham and I existed in the safety of my bedroom. He plonked! my window at least once a week, and I
would throw aside my research and throw open the balcony doors, and he would take me wildly over the edge of my bed, or sometimes with a hand over my mouth on the floor, or even once in the bath, where I went down on him gingerly in the water, and he marveled at how my bottom just broke the surface, bobbing as I pleasured him. Yeah, it was hot. Sometimes I would think of Potter. You got me—loads of times I would think of Potter. If I closed my eyes and told Graham to shut the fuck up, his hands turned into Potter’s hands, his breath turned into Potter’s breath, and sometimes if the wind blew in just the right scent from the garden, I could swear Potter’s musty, slightly cedar-smelling hair was tickling my nose.

“Did you miss me?” Graham had whispered the first time he made love to me. “Did you imagine us doing this?”

“Yes,” I said, and it wasn’t a lie.

He groaned and picked up his pace. The hazel of his eyes seemed to glow with ferocity. “Did you save yourself for me?”

I didn’t have time to answer. His eyes closed, a flush overcame him, and then he was coming in me, leaving the indents of his nails in my thighs. He rested a while, kissing my neck, before he spoke again.

“Did you?”

And, Merlin, with a reaction like that, the truth didn’t much matter, did it? I nodded. I felt Graham smile. But I thought of Potter as he fell asleep on top of me.

My mother’s voice brought me back to breakfast. “Draco? Are you well? You’re not eating.”

I shrugged. “I’ve been under the weather.”

“Is it—?” My father’s eyes flicked to my forearm.

“N-no, just a bit of nausea. Don’t worry about it.”

“If it’s the burning of the Muggle corpses, I can have them move the pile farther from the house,” Bellatrix said, like we were deciding where to place lawn ornaments.

“Corpses? That’s what that smell is? Ugh, no thanks, I only notice that when I go outside.” I tossed my napkin on the table. “Excuse me, I’ve got some reading to do.”

***

I’ll be honest. Typically, my reading contained more pictures than I’m sure Aunt Bellatrix would have preferred.

I was sitting with my father in his study, my shoes up on his desk, while he rifled through his library and while I rifled through Elle Witch, which I had stuffed inside a copy of Spells for the Modern Day Hex Enthusiast. When Dad slipped behind me, I pulled my reading to my chest and waited for him to cross the room before resuming my study of Betsey Johnson’s hideous new “reds collection”—a smattering of blood red dots on white robes, designed to mimic the sexiness of the Dark Lord’s gaze or something. Pfft.

“Don’t see why Severus can’t come pick out the damned books himself,” my father was complaining. “How should I know what the Carrows want to teach in the fall?”
“Are they really going to be my professors? I can deal with Snape, but the Carrows are—” I was trying to think of a more dignified word for “creepy.”

“They are their own brand of charming,” he finished. Damn, he was good at that. “But you will have them for your professors and you will respect them.” He glowered at me from over a leather-bound tome. “Why don’t you put down the fashion magazine and pick up a Dark Arts book like you’re supposed to?”

_Huh?_

My reaction must have showed, because my father snorted. “One would think I didn’t know my own son.”

I shrugged, tossing the decoy onto the desk. “No use hiding it now that it’s out.”

I braced myself for the logical retort, something I could hear Pansy or Blaise saying: _You’ve been out your whole life_, or something akin. When father simply returned to his reading, I returned to mine.

One article made me laugh: “Does Your Coven Have a Bun in the Oven?” It gave insight on common signs of pregnancy, like breast tenderness, loss of menstruation, and morning sickness. I mean, shouldn’t those things be obvious? Some witches were no sharper than their wands! After getting into the symptoms of _male_ pregnancy, a subject that made me wrinkle my nose and cross my legs, I grew bored of the article.

“You’re right, Dad,” I said, hopping up and stretching so audibly that he gave me the _Really, Draco_ face. “I should get on with the proper reading. What do you suggest?”

“Go with your strengths,” he said, tossing me a tome of ancient Dark potions.

I deflated. I rather hated thinking about potions, since my relationship with Snape had degraded last year. But, seeing how anxious my father was for me to contribute (and knowing that pasty psychopath would kill me if I didn’t), I did as I was told.

***

Graham moved his nose down the slope of my ribs, inhaling, looking up at me. “Has the Dark Lord called you yet?”

“Not yet. Except to make me torture Thorfinn Rowle, that fellow who missed catching Potter.” My mouth fell open, and I could see Potter’s eyes shining up at me as Graham opened his mouth, leaving a wet kiss on my navel. “It was dreadful. I swear...he only made me do it so I could get a taste of what I’m in for. Oh, fuck.”

“Don’t talk like that,” Graham whispered, his mouth moving lower.

“What? It’s true. He’ll probably torture me just the same.”

“No,” he said, and slapped my outer thigh. “Don’t curse. I don’t want to hear that out of your mouth right now.”

“But Montague—”

He slapped my thigh again, this time quite close to my cock. He grabbed my wrists when I protested. “Don’t fight. Be sweet.”
“I’m far from s-sweet,” I said, as he blew on the red mark blossoming on my skin.

“You’re not sweet? Funny, this is very sweet.” I watched his face disappear behind my balls, and then—good Lord—he put his lips on my arsehole and slowly, slowly sucked. I could not see Potter doing that.

“Graham,” I moaned. He pulled me open. He started working in his tongue. “Oh, oh, fuck—”

He smacked my thigh again.

“You don’t want me to curse?” I said, grabbing his thick, dark hair. “You don’t know me very well, do you? Oh! God, don’t stop.”

But Graham pulled back, eyes alight, and pressed a hand over my mouth. It was large, and moist, and smelled of broom varnish. “Well, I know you well enough to do this.” His head dipped, and he consumed my cock and sucked powerfully. I might not have saved myself for Graham, but he was certainly the first to do that. I’m not too proud to tell you that I screamed into his hand for all of thirty seconds before finishing.

Afterwards, I shivered in his arms. “No one’s ever done that for me.”

“Of course, they haven’t. You haven’t been with anyone else.” He bit his lip, and glanced down my body in concern. “Your balls are different.”

“Different than what?”

“Different than a month ago. They’re rather drawn up, aren’t they? Like your body’s taking them in. And, I don’t mean to insult you, but you were having trouble staying hard.”

I scowled. It was like he didn’t want me to get him off, too. “What are you saying?”

“Nothing. Just wondering if you’re all right.”

“I’m fine.” I flounced onto my side, facing away from him, and grumbled, “Why on Earth do you care so much?”

“Why do I care about you?”

“Yes! You’re so protective. Why?”

“Dunno.” He said this into my hair. His arms encircled me, large and firm.

“I’m not weak, you know.” Though, Dumbledore’s face flashed in my head...my wand hand shaking...Snape charging out in front of me, finishing the job....

“No, you’re not weak. But you’ve been so agitated, and you seemed to like it last year. Me, caring for you.”

“Well, stop! Because I don’t.”

That was a lie. I found it flattering. But how unseemly to say so.

“Fine. I can tone it down. Maybe.” He pulled me close. It was a gentle movement, intended to draw me in for a kiss on the neck, but all I felt was pain in the flesh of my chest. When I hissed, he let go.

“What’s wrong?” he exclaimed.
“Nothing, nothing.”

“How can you tell me you don’t need protecting, and yet my very affections bruise you?”

I tossed a couple fingers over my shoulder, and then submitted to his kiss. He ran two fingers over my nipple. I moaned, passing it off as pleasure—but, really, it hurt. And it worried me. I was beginning to feel like my body was shutting down. The nausea, the soreness, the fatigue, and, yes, I had noticed the changes in my genitals. That was becoming more pronounced every day. Don’t tell me I’m about as sharp as my wand, because I’m a man, and this pregnancy shit doesn’t happen to men without them knowing. Which is why it took this long for my stomach to twist in fear. My eyes wandered to my desk, where I’d tossed that copy of Elle Witch with all my other subscriptions.

“Montague,” I said, pushing him away. “You’re right. I don’t feel well. Why don’t you leave me alone for a while?”

***

I won’t go much into it, but Severus Snape’s house is gross.

When he came to my father’s study to retrieve the books for the Carrows, I stood in the corner as they wrestled a book with a green, grasping claw coming out of it. The creature inside howled demonically, catching one of Snape’s sleeves.

“Lucius! Hold it—while I—” He wrenched out his wand, swished it, and the book snapped shut. The monster’s claw broke off and disintegrated on the floor.

Snape looked up at me, breathing heavily. “Splendid effort, Mr. Malfoy.”

I grimaced. I’d been distracted. Fucking babies and shit, you know. It wasn’t until Snape grabbed his satchel to make his leave that I rushed forward.

“Professor Snape, I was hoping—”

“Headmaster.”

“Oh. Right. Er, I was was hoping you could provide me a place to brew a potion.”

He looked down his nose at me, at the book I was clutching to my chest, and drawled, “You have not shown this level of interest in your studies for a long time.”

“Well, the potion is for the war effort. I think it’ll come in handy. I’m really pleased about the prospect of contributing.” My father looked pleased, too, nodding at me from across the study.

Snape snapped his fingers. “What is it, then? Hand it over.”

“Oh—” I’d thought this question might come up. I flipped to an illustration I’d bookmarked, a depiction of a squatting woman with her innards melting out through her unmentionables (same tools, similar ingredients as my own potion), and thrust it at Snape.

His lip curled. “Charming.”


The nausea from Apparition nearly ended me on the way home, so I made a nice toilet out of some
bushes and retched. When I slogged out, I found I was in the backmost flower gardens, near the edge of the wards. I made for the manor, clutching the contents of my pocket protectively. Everything felt intact. Now, if I could just make it up to my bedroom without bringing attention to myself; Rosier was outside, teaching the Death Eater children tripping jinxes, and he was always trying to rope me in to mentor.

“Oy, Malfoy!” Flint had descended from his broomstick to fall into my stride.

“Keep your voice down,” I hissed, beelining behind a wall of rose bushes when Rosier looked up.

Flint followed. “You seen Montague anywhere? The bugger hasn’t been around in a few days.”

“What does it matter? I thought you worked opposite shifts.”

“It don’t matter to me, ‘cept that if he’s ignoring his duties Rosier will have his hide, or worse—report him to You Know Who.”

The thought irked me, but I trudged on. No time to worry.

“So, you seen him?” Flint pressed.

“No, why are you asking me? I never even leave the house to have seen him.”

“Just thought you two was close is all.”

“Close?” I stopped and searched Flint’s pale, blue eyes. “What do you mean, close?”

“Christ, nothing,” he said, waving me off and throwing a leg over his broomstick. “Just thought you two was mates, is all, he’s always on about you....”

That was irksome, too.

“Look, I don’t know where he is.” I watched Flint rise over a thorny hedge. “Hold on. Could you give me a ride up to my balcony?”

As I clung to Flint, I could feel the potions jars swinging in my pocket, simultaneously pressing on my mind. Everything will be all right, I thought. There’s no way...there’s no way. We landed, and Flint yelped. I had stepped on his foot, clamoring to get into my bedroom.

“Christ, what’s the rush?” he called after me.

“Er, have to piss!”

The lav door slammed behind me. I placed two jars on the countertop. They contained the same viscous, clear liquid, one for now and one to spare. Better not need the spare. I peed into the first.

While I waited, I pulled a folded page out of my pocket, something I’d ripped out of the potions book and gone over a hundred times. I knew it by heart, but I had to be sure.

“Blue for baby. Red for nought. You’d better not turn purple on me....”

I put my nose to the potion. Still clear. Well, a bit yellow now that I’d pissed. The book hadn’t mentioned how long it would take to change color.

“Turn red,” I urged it. “Red, red, red....”

“Christ, you’re a spoiled brat,” I heard from the bedroom.
I popped my head out the door. Flint was strolling around with his hands in his pockets. He bent over, examining the glass box where I stored my enchanted cufflinks. They had minor glamors embedded in them. You know, for the spiffing-up sort of occasion: Anti-Acne, Pore-Reducing, Summer Glow, Tight and Toned. Not that I needed such novelties, being naturally fetching.

“Why are you still here?” I asked, resisting the urge to stamp my foot.

“Just having a look. And look at this,” he said, smirking. He grabbed a copy of *Witchcraft Couture* off the desk. It had been bookmarked to a revealing undergarments spread, starring the Italian model. “There were rumors about you in school being poncy, but you never did let it show like this. Might have to warn Montague about you.”

“Shut up, I just like the clothes.”

“This chap ain’t even wearing any.”

I returned to the lav. The potion was still piss colored! Maybe if I shook it. Well, we’ll never know, because as soon as I reached out, there was a searing pain in my arm. I clutched my Dark Mark as the burn spread into my muscles.

“Flint, something big must be happening,” I said, stumbling out of the bathroom. The very words made me think of Potter. That fear was deeper than the pain. “It’s never burned this badly....”

But Flint was standing idly, still flipping through the magazine. He sucked on his crooked teeth as he slowly came to the realization. “Mine’s not burning.”

Fuck. Without a thought for the pregnancy potion, I touched my Mark with my wand.

***

I was in our main drawing room, judging by the hangings, but there was no crackling fire, nor sleek tables, nor a crowd of Death Eaters, like the last time I’d visited, during the murder of Charity Burbage. There was only darkness, a large space, and the outline of a lone figure in a chair. I dared not move.

“Draco.”

I jumped. I had thought the lone figure was the Dark Lord, but his voice came from behind me. “You are looking well rested,” he said, sliding a bony hand onto my shoulder. He came around to face me. A floating ball of blue light followed him, turning his white skin the same color.

Trembling, I asked, “Is there something I might assist you with, my Lord?”

“Always...always...” he said distantly. “Are you happy serving me, Draco?”

“Nothing pleases me more.”

The Dark Lord’s mouth curled in an eerie smile. He turned his attention to the figure in the chair. “I imagine there is at least one thing that pleases you more.” He stepped towards the silent figure. When the blue light followed, it illuminated the whole picture: this person was bound by some invisible force, slumping forward with a canvas bag over his head. “I had thought that after failing your task,” the Dark Lord went on, “you would be interested in proving useful to me.”

“I am, my Lord. I’ve been—”
He held up a hand. “I know all about your Dark Arts research, your potions, and so forth. It is clever of you to masquerade your cowardice as a war effort. I see much of your father in you. But even though you have spent your summer lounging in his study—the healthy, wand-ready young man that you are—your focus has still been elsewhere. Has it not?”

I swallowed. “My Lord?”

He made a swishing gesture. The canvas bag flew off the figure’s head. Graham Montague sat there, his chest heaving as if he’d been struggling to breathe under that muffle for days. From Flint’s words earlier, that might have been the case. My hand twitched towards him, but I caught myself.

“Your focus has been on more hedonistic endeavors, has it not? Mr. Montague admitted to me that you both neglect your duties in order to indulge. It did not improve my opinion of either of you.”

“My Lord,” I said quickly, forcing myself to look him in the eye. “I would be happy to research for the entire day. I will employ others to help me. And I will no longer allow Montague to neglect his duties just to—”

He silenced me with the mere tilt of his head. “This is not about your time expenditures. Nor about guarding the perimeter of your manor. Nor is it about how many tactile potions you’ve created or curses you’ve come up with.” He curled his fingers on the back of Graham’s neck. “It is about what you are willing to do to prove your interest in our cause.”

The correct answer was “anything,” and looking at Graham’s helpless, lolling form, I had a feeling what “anything” would entail.

The Dark Lord sensed my distress. “It is very lucky for you that Severus stepped in when he did. If Dumbledore were not dead today, your punishment would be far worse than this.”

He waved his hand. Graham’s bonds disappeared and he fell to his knees, heaving as if an invisible gag had also come free. The Dark Lord tossed a wand onto the floor.

“Mercifully, Draco, I will let you decide who casts Cruciatus on whom.”

I gasped quietly, thinking of my father, how he would return from meetings with the Dark Lord weak from the exertion of Cruciatus pain. I desperately wanted never to empathize. Perhaps Graham was so out of sorts that he wouldn’t even know his torturer had been me. I raised my wand.

The Dark Lord touched his chin, fascinated.

Then, just like with Dumbledore, I choked.

“Oh, God,” I moaned, surprised I could find my voice. “Graham, I can’t. You have to do it.”

He lifted his head. It looked like he was fighting the weight of a lead necklace.

“No,” he whispered.

“This isn’t your punishment, it’s mine. You don’t deserve it.”

“I’m already weak.” He dropped his head again. “Go on, I’ve felt it already.”

“Then you might not take much more.” My eyes darted to the Dark Lord. He was looming in the corner. With his black robes, he blended in with the darkness, no more than floating white hands and an amused face. “Please,” I told Graham, bending down and wedging his wand into his hand.
“I refuse to hurt you.”

When the Dark Lord began to laugh, I realized this was the torture more than the Cruciatus itself. “If you do not decide, I will simply punish you both,” he said.

“Draco,” Graham said. “I won’t do it. If you wait, you’ll get it, too...for no reason.”

He was right. There was nothing to be done. I closed my eyes and pointed my wand.

***

When I heaved Graham upstairs, I was surprised to find Flint still in my bedroom, laying across my bed.

“I might have to get a subscription to this,” he was saying, holding Witchcraft Couture sideways. “The witches in these runway shows, mate—the things I would do to them.”

“Help me,” I gritted out.

Flint hopped up, made an apologetic noise, and took Graham’s arm from around my shoulders. Graham opened a bleary eye as we settled him on the bed.

“I’m sorry,” he said, so tired his lips barely moved. “I’m sorry I told him...what we’ve been doing....”

“You’re apologizing to me?” I grabbed his hand and kissed it desperately. “Fuck. This is all my fault.”

Flint looked between us, alarmed, and then made for the bathroom, saying, “Let me get a cold towel.”

“I told you not to protect me,” I barked. “God, I can’t get your screaming out of my head.”

“I couldn’t let you get hurt...when I was there to take it for you....”

“Why do you have to be like this? You came here on behalf of your father, and now you do this for me? Why? What’s wrong with you?”

“It’s what I have to give. We all have our strengths. Mine is...defending the people I love.”

“It’s more like a weakness for you,” I said, ignoring the obvious declaration.

“Oy, Malfoy!” Flint shouted from the bathroom. “What’s this blue potion here?”

My stomach flipped over. “Don’t you mean red, Flint?”

“I can tell my colors, thanks. I did graduate from Hogwarts.”

“Only a year behind.” There was not much gusto behind the joke, for Flint had emerged from the bathroom. In one hand, he held a damp towel and in the other he waved a bright blue potion, as if to make sure I understood the extent of his capabilities.

Red for nought. Blue for....

Graham noticed my distress. “You okay?”

“Just worried.” I took the towel and pressed it against his head. He seemed to melt under the
“Everything will be fine,” he murmured.

I nodded, knowing everything would not.

***

Later that summer, I would inform my parents. You know that part of the story. What you don’t know are the trials I went through hiding the pregnancy from the world at large and who I had to confide in to make that happen. I Apparated to Spinner’s End in mid-August, praying Snape hadn’t left for Hogwarts yet. The door swung open, and he appeared, looking accusingly down his nose.

“Here to cook up an abortion elixir?”

I must have looked like a fish, the way my mouth popped open. 

Snape gave me a withering look. “You were transparent,” he said, striding back inside. I followed. “There are only two potions that use a sheep’s womb liner for cooking, and you sneaked all the ingredients for one.”

“I’m sorry?” I tried.

“Your father paid me for the materials. I have no other care.” He went to his tiny kitchen-laboratory, which was nothing more than a sticky table, an ever-boiling cauldron, and a pantheon of ingredients shrunk into a small chest, and banished the lot. “Make it quick. And tell no one of my involvement. I will not be accused of contributing to the genocide of pureblood infants just because you cannot keep your trousers up.”

“Um,” I said, put off by Snape referring to anything within my trousers, “I hadn’t decided on an abortion. I’m not certain. I’m here about trying to hide the pregnancy.”

“Well, what does the witch in question want?”

“Witch?” I said, and promptly became a fish again.

It’s worth noting that most people seemed to find my sexual preferences obvious. I couldn’t say why. (Shut up.) I was shocked that Snape, the most observant person I knew, had come up so markedly wrong.

He folded his arms. “Well? Who is it? And why are you taking it upon yourself to solve the trollop’s problem?”

“Nevermind that. I just need your help brushing up on Occlumency. I need to hide this matter. Specifically—from Him.”

For the first time, Snape’s impassive face twitched with emotion, though I could not make out which emotion. He said, “From Him.”

“Yes.”

“Why? Don’t tell me you knocked up a Muggle-born. Or worse, an actual Muggle.”

“No! God, no. I just can’t tell you, all right?”

Snape turned back to his kitchen. He waved his wand, and the cauldron returned, bubbling like it
had never left. “I’m afraid I can’t help you unless I know the details.”

My fists clenched. I pointed my wand, and his cauldron vanished again.

He turned around, hair whipping. “How dare you come into my home, interrupt me, and make such demands?”

“Professor Snape, please!” I grabbed him by his shoulders, and I didn’t know grease had a stench until that moment. “You don’t understand! My life is in danger. I have to block Him out. If I tell you why, you might be in danger, too.”

Snape’s outrage drained into something neutral. He plucked my hands off his shoulders. “Mr. Malfoy, I swore an Unbreakable Vow to your mother to protect you from yourself. And, while the parameters of that vow have been met and the spell is now void, the reasons why I swore to begin with are still there. I will protect your life so long as I have my own. Tell me what is wrong.”

I tightened my lips, shaking my head, having half a mind to shut my eyes, but not wanting to look like more of a child than I already did.

“All right.” He took out his wand. “I’ll retrieve the information myself.”

“No!” I scrambled back into the wall, cursing myself for coming to his manipulative old bat. “Fine! You win! But I warned you it was bad, and now you’ll have the burden of it, too. I’m the one pregnant. That’s right! I’m gay! As if it weren’t obvious. And I’m fucking pregnant. I don’t know who the father is, but it might be—” I shook my head at the insanity of it all. “—it might be Harry Potter.”

Snape may have smiled. It was hard to tell with him. His nostrils began flaring, huffing out air, and, yeah, that was Snape’s version of a laugh. He was looking past my shoulder, probably hoping very much the child was Potter’s, as much as they hated one another. I ought to have hexed him for taking joy in my misfortune. He grabbed me by the nape of the neck and steered me into his musty basement office.

“And I thought Potter was the most foolish boy I’d ever known. We will begin at once.”

***

The Occlumency worked for a while. I managed to get to Hogwarts without arousing the Dark Lord’s suspicion, at any rate. But that presented another problem: people can tell when you’re pregnant.

My father didn’t know about the Potter Problem, but Snape convinced him that it would set a poor example to the other students if they saw me in such a state. Dad dug up an enchantment, probably intended for young unmarried girls, that would shield my growing belly from anyone unaware of my condition. I wished he had found one that would shield my belly altogether, since he now had a habit of looking out the window every time I entered the room; and, once I went to Hogwarts, Snape would eyeball me in the corridors, as if I would mess all over the floor with child at any moment.

Over the term, I avoided Zabini’s advances on several occasions, unsure if the illusion would break with an intimate touch (and annoyed at his ability to turn his attraction to me on and off at whim).

“Come on, Malfoy,” he would say. “Bulstrode won’t give it up, and you’re looking rather pretty these days.”

“Go fuck your mother. She’s pretty.”
Graham’s advances also troubled me. I knew I should be warning him about his potential fatherhood, but I dearly wanted to wait until February to at least get a look at the child.

_Draco_, he would write. _I miss you. If you think it’s just the sex, it’s not. I miss being with you. Write me back._ —Graham

Pansy, the nosy wench, leaned over her breakfast. “Whose owl is that? It comes almost every day.”

“No one’s. Don’t worry about it. Shit!” I grabbed my stomach. Five months in, and the baby was starting to make itself known.

“Merlin, you’ve been having a lot of indigestion, haven’t you?”

“Like you wouldn’t believe.”

During the Christmas holidays, I was invited to witness the induction of a new wave of young Death Eaters. I walked carefully into Malfoy Manor’s drawing room, lest anyone notice how my stride had become a waddle, and stopped short, seeing Graham by the fire with Flint. Though the room was dim and crowded with students in hoods, I could tell it was him from his expansive back and his decisive hand gestures; he was clearly telling Flint the mechanics of some work-out. He turned, and invited me over with a smile.

“Don’t know why you, me, and Flint have to come to these things, do you?”

“My father told me the Dark Lord thinks we set an example for the others.”

“A good example, I hope,” Flint said, looking between us awkwardly. “Well, better go say hello to Crabbe and Goyle before we start....”

Graham didn’t take his eyes off me. “Can I see you after this?”

“No, I have...homework.”

“Why are you avoiding me?”

“At ease, Montague. I’m just under a load of stress. There are N.E.W.T.s this year.”

Before he could call me on my bullshit, a hush came over the room. The Dark Lord had entered, flanked by the Carrow siblings.

“These are my brightest Muggle Studies students,” Alecto simpered, clasping her fat hands together. “Given their appreciation for the laws of natural hierarchy, I thought they would serve you well, my Lord.”

The Dark Lord scanned the faces of my variously frightened, anxious, and eager classmates. “I am sure they will make us proud,” he said, taking out his wand. “Future Death Eaters, stand in the center of the circle and reap your reward for your devotion to your blood principals.”

Crabbe, Goyle, Nott, Zabini, Pansy, and Millicent were inducted, as well as several sixth year Slytherins. I was a touch disturbed by the pleasure that washed over some of their faces as they received the Dark Mark, a mark which I worked very hard to conceal from the moment it was etched—for I knew that if this movement failed, this proof of my involvement would ultimately condemn me. The new Death Eaters joined us in the circle, and the Dark Lord began to interrogate us on our war contributions. When he stopped in front of me, I was terrified I would receive admonishment for the half-arsed research I had been doing.
“Severus has told me about your secret, Draco.”

For a second, my focus slipped. I thought of the child, vulnerable inside me. It didn’t help that it chose that moment to kick me in the bladder. I blackened my mind again.

“Secret, my Lord?”

“The potion you’ve been working on to identify the degree of purity in a wizard,” he said, his red eyes dropping slowly, deliberately from my face to my stomach.

“Ah,” I said mournfully. “Yes. I’m very pleased with it. The potion.”

“You were hiding this from me, Draco?” He reached out, as if touch my belly, but let his hand hover there, ominous and white.

So, it was true. My stomach had distended before his eyes. I tried desperately to void my head of images of Harry Potter as I croaked, “I was not hiding it from you, my Lord. Nor from anyone specific. It was simply hidden.”

The others traded looks, confounded as to what we were discussing.

“You are lying to me,” he said simply. “You are hiding it from someone specific. Someone in this room. I do not need to read your thoughts to know who.”

The Dark Lord cast a glance at Graham, who was standing next to me. I could sense Graham’s confusion.

“My Lord,” I pleaded, “I don’t want you to think this is distracting me from my duties, because—”

“No,” he said softly. “You misunderstand my reaction. I am deeply pleased at your contribution to our cause.” His cold hand touched mine. He placed it on top of Graham’s. “After all. It is a pureblood’s responsibility to create new pureblood lives, no matter his sexual preferences.”

Graham’s hand stiffened in mine. From the corner of my eye, I saw his head turn, and knew my belly was showing for him, too.

“Clearly you made the decision independently, out of a sense of duty,” the Dark Lord went on, “given how ignorant Mr. Montague seems to have been about your pregnancy. Perhaps I was mistaken about your loyalties, Draco, if your drive to promote purity goes so very deep.”

One by one, my stomach became obvious to my classmates, to the Carrows, and they let out audible gasps. I’ve never been so mortified, I tell you. At seven months along, despite my concealing black robes, I felt like I filled up the entire room with my hideous form. As my classmates murmured in astonishment, I made my second biggest mistake of the night: I looked into the yellowing face of Blaise Zabini.

The Dark Lord noticed. From the way his eyes flickered with suspicion, I knew he would look into my mind at any moment, and I had to employ Snape’s last-resort advice: letting memories of Blaise Zabini and Graham Montague fill my head completely. If I was distracted by these thoughts, I couldn’t possibly think of other more incriminating ones.

“Ah!” the Dark Lord said, his tone laced with amusement. “Now, I see why you were hiding it. But this should not be a source of shame, dear Draco. Perhaps your infidelities have left you with a bastard child of unknown paternity, but that shame is nothing in the face of the glory of bearing a son or daughter of purity. We shall all thank you for your gift to our race. Won’t we, Mr. Zabini?”
The whole room turned to Zabini, aghast.

“Indeed, my Lord,” he said quietly.

I had to end this before I fucked up anything else. I said, “You are right, my Lord. Of course, you are right. I was afraid of being ridiculed for not knowing who fathered my child. But I have nothing to be ashamed of. My child will be pure, and that is all that matters.”

In a gesture of unnerving charm, the Dark Lord nodded once, passed a hand onto my stomach, as if in blessing, and then continued down the lineup.

When my classmates dispersed—some in a panic to escape the Dark Lord and some in a flutter of gossip about my news—Graham trudged out of the drawing room without looking at me.

“Wait, Graham!” I said, waddling after him, careless that Crabbe and Nott were standing in the doorframe, laughing at me. My feet were throbbing. It was impossible to catch up to Graham’s long stride. He didn’t even glance over his shoulder, as he said, “I’ve got guard duty,” and disappeared out the garden doors.

I leaned against the banister, catching my breath. That was when I felt a hand on my shoulder. I turned to find Zabini staring at me with unblinking eyes.

“It’s not mine,” he said, getting very close to my face. “I don’t care if the bastard is a spitting image. It’s not mine. Got it?”

Normally, I would bite something back. Like I would leap for joy to give birth to your child! But, still struck by Graham’s departure, struck by the entire evening, I simply nodded. He backed away, pointedly took Millicent Bulstrode around her fleshy hip, and escaped out the front doors.

***

At least Zabini was avoiding *me* now.

Besides some funny looks from classmates and Graham’s letters ceasing, my school year went unchanged. By the time I went home for the Easter holidays, I was a swollen, throbbing mess, and painfully overdue. “Male pregnancies often run long,” Doctor Wayman told me. “It might have something to do with the birth canal forming fully. Even though your male genitals are not visible right now, your body is still hard at work, packing them away. Your baby will be born by the tenth month at the latest. Rest assured, if it takes a day longer, we’ll perform a cesarean.” He was a lunatic if he thought I could “rest assured,” hearing that.

More restful was the news that the Dark Lord was occupied with some important task, and was largely absent from the manor now. My father was stronger; my mother, less worrisome; and I was looking forward to finishing the pregnancy in a familiar, tranquil environment.

Tranquil! Ha!

Dad and I were in the main drawing room arguing over baby names when they burst in: my mother, followed by Fenrir Greyback and his cronies, followed by a bound-up, bloodied trio of teenagers. I recognized Weasley and Granger immediately. The third person took some scrutinizing. The child inside me may have known who it was before I did. It began flailing in the tightness of my womb, kicking with might I’d never felt. I pressed a subtle hand to my stomach, which appeared flat to everyone in the room except for Mum, Dad, and Bellatrix, and that was when it came to me. Despite the prisoner’s swollen, pink face, I knew that skinny body, those broad hands, the slope of that chest. Even his gait was familiar to me, despite him being wrenched around by the Greyback.
Memories that had been dulled by time rushed back: Potter’s concerned face when his lovemaking became rough...his eyes in the moonlight that trickled into the abandoned classroom...our first tender kiss...his assurances. I will protect you. And your mum.

I couldn’t breathe, much less speak.

My father stepped close to Potter, excited that our favor with the Dark Lord was about to return.

“Well, Draco?” he urged me. “Is it? Is it Harry Potter?”

Nine months ago, Potter had leaned close to me, told me he cared for me, and asked me if I felt the same. I had shaken my head, no, resolute in my loyalties to my family. But I had lied. I cared for Harry Potter. I cared very much. And now these Death Eaters wanted me to sign the certificate to his doom.

“I can’t be sure,” I said, and walked away. The baby’s kicking had not stopped. I kept my back to the room, so they couldn’t see my alarm. All the while, the cogs in my my head were turning. How can I get Potter out of here without revealing my intentions? And why is my normally calm child choosing now to make a fuss?

They moved Potter and Weasley to the cellar.

It was not as easy to feign ignorance of Granger. Her face was unmarred. I wanted to close my eyes and pretend she wasn’t there, but Bellatrix’s hysterics about her stolen sword left little possibility for that. When Crucio was cast, Granger’s body tightened like a rope being pulled from both ends and her eyes rolled back into her head. I’d seen this before, with Thorfinn Rowle, with Graham Montague, and I knew the pain was so constricting that Granger couldn’t draw breath. She did so only when Bellatrix relaxed her wand, letting out the most blood-curdling scream I’d ever heard.

“HERMIONE!” came a muffled voice from the cellar. I couldn’t tell who it was, but I imagined Potter beating on the walls, frightened for his friend. “HERMIONE, HERMIONE!”

“Aunt Bellatrix,” I cut in. “I told you. I can’t say for sure this is Granger.”

“I know it is. I’ve seen the mudblood bitch before.”

“Well, I’ve known Granger for six years, and she’s got buckteeth and is really quite hefty. I can’t say —” My stomach panged, but it wasn’t the baby kicking this time. It was a cramp so strong that I nearly doubled over.

Bellatrix pushed me towards my mother with her wand. “Step aside, Nephew. Your condition has got you confused. Crucio!”

My mother turned to me. “What’s wrong? Is it—?”

“Yes,” I said over the screaming. “I think I’m having contractions.”

“Then let’s get you up to—”

“Draco!” my father cried from Bellatrix’s side. “Fetch the goblin, he can tell us whether the sword is real or not!”

My mother nodded shortly. “Make it quick. As soon as this is done, I’ll contact Doctor Wayman.”

And it was quick. It just didn’t feel that way. I was wracked with contractions while I fetched
Griphook the Goblin, businesslike with Potter and Weasley in the cellar, and too distracted to be of use when they burst into the drawing room moments later, shouting about Dobby the house-elf trying to help them escape. There was one moment of clarity for me. Before the chandelier fell, spattering me with glass, Potter’s eyes met mine. They were fierce, pitying, and beautiful. That very moment, the baby started flailing again, and I was less sure than ever that Graham Montague was the father. Then Potter wrestled three wands from my fist, and I leaned heavily onto Mum as he and his friends Disapparated.

***

I gave birth. It was fucked up. If you want to know what it was like, then go get pregnant.

When I opened my eyes, I was aware of a weight on my bed. A cool breeze entered from the open balcony doors. I turned over to find Graham there, holding the baby to his chest and a bottle to its mouth.

I cleared my throat. “Hi.”

“I heard him wailing while I was doing my rounds,” he said, not looking at me. “Found the bottle on your bedside table. It was already warm, so I thought I’d just...you know.”

“That’s fine.” It occurred to me Graham had better instincts than I did. I hadn’t even considered feeding the baby until a house-elf had shown up with a breast pump.

“I did some reading,” he went on. “They say breastmilk is better in the long run than formula.”

“That’s breast milk, there. But I was hoping to get him on formula, anyway. The doctor told me that if I pump every day, I’ll be stuck with little tits for the next year.”

“Guess we wouldn’t want that.” Graham let out a short laugh, and then our eyes met. His mouth drew up in a slow, worried smile. “So, he’s not Zabini’s kid.”

“No, he’s not,” I could honestly say.

He turned his smile on the baby. “My boy,” he whispered.

Whether that was the case, I’d yet to conclude. After all, the baby looked more like a shaved gerbil than anything, and Harry Potter and Graham Montague were so alike in coloring that I doubted I could venture a guess once he got older.

“What’s his name?” Graham asked.

“He doesn’t have one. My father has made his share of suggestions, but they’re all so old fashioned.”

“What’s a Malfoy if not old fashioned?”

“True.” I cast a glance at the Malfoy Family History book my father had left on the bedside table. “I’ll probably just close my eyes and point to something in there.”

“I’ll settle on anything you like. We’re not married, after all. I’m sure you’ll want him to take your surname, too.”

There was that word again. Marriage. Even if I wanted to get married, I had to confirm the paternity first.

“Look, Graham...”
“It’s fine, really. He’s your child. You chose to have him.”

“That’s not what I was going to—” I stopped, distracted by that notion. “I didn’t choose to have him. People keep assuming I did this on purpose, but I was floored when I found out.”

“You didn’t take a potion?”

“No! In fact, part of me wondered if you had done something to me, after my father suggested foul play.”

Graham looked thoughtful as he settled the baby into the bassinet. “You think I would do a thing like that?”

“Fuck if I know. You were getting rather...possessive of me for a bit.”

“I really thought you liked it,” he said deeply, making my stomach flutter. I didn’t want to invite his passions, as torn up as I was down there, so I lowered my gaze. I admitted, “Maybe a little.”

Graham joined me on the bed, very close, but did not move to touch me. “I may have those feelings for you. But I would never have done something like this on purpose. Well. Unless you wanted me to.”

I was somehow relieved, even if this didn’t shed any light on paternity. Graham relaxed, as well, touching my cheek and stroking it with his thumb. My long hair fell over his hand as I leaned into him.

I closed my eyes. “I didn’t want children for a very long time. And, even then, the idea of bearing them myself...well, that’s less than ideal, isn’t it?”

“Well, he’s here now. The first new branch on the Montague-Malfoy tree.” My eyes snapped open. Graham quickly backpedaled. “I didn’t mean it like—” At the same moment, I burst out, “I don’t want to get married! You don’t have to feel responsible to stick around.”

“I don’t feel responsible,” Graham said, his eyes becoming stormy. It may have been the first time I’d seen a look on his face that wasn’t happy or neutral. “I told you, he’s your child. But I’ll be here whenever you want me around.” He launched off the bed and grabbed his broom.

“Hold on! It’s just. There’s something I need to tell you.”

“No, no, I’ll get out of your hair,” he said, already out the glass doors. “Besides, I think you’ve told me what I needed to know.”

***

I wouldn’t see Graham again until May, when Harry Potter and the Death Eaters stormed Hogwarts. Waves of fear flooded the castle when the Dark Lord commanded its inhabitants to turn over Potter. I remember Pansy’s cry in the Great Hall (“Potter’s there! Someone grab him!”) and I remember how badly I had wanted to go when McGonagall evacuated Slytherin House from the grounds. But I could not. I had duties.

I snuck with Crabbe and Goyle to a chamber with a clear view of the grounds; we could not yet make out our families in the sea of swirling black robes.

“We’ll have to join them soon,” I said dejectedly, taking my mother’s wand out of my robes. I had been using it since Potter took mine, and it performed only half my incantations properly.
“We’ll look after you, Draco,” Goyle said, clapping me on the shoulder. “Sorry about your bum wand.”

Crabbe left the window in a huff. “Why should we go out there when all the glory’s to be ‘ad right here?”

I scowled. “What are you on about?”

“Potter, that’s what. They say he’s in the castle, lookin’ for something. If we capture ‘im, we’ll be heroes! My dad’ll be so proud.”

“Yeah...mine, too.” I looked at my shoes. Wasn’t it enough that I had my family to worry about, not to mention the baby back at home, but now I had to worry about protecting Potter from Crabbe?

“What’s wrong, Draco?” Goyle asked me. “This is all you’ve been talking about since first year. Don’t you want to get Potter?”

“Well. Obviously, Goyle.”

“Oh, I see,” he said, nodding wisely. “It’s Montague. You’re worried for him out there. He’s a strong lad, don’t you worry.”

I was taken aback. Crabbe and Goyle had not mentioned Graham since the Dark Lord outed our relationship, and the only time either of them had mentioned the baby was when his birth was announced in the *Daily Prophet* a couple months ago.

“Armand Malfoy,” Goyle had read over breakfast, “born March the Seventeenth...at Malfoy Manor...Wiltshire.” He looked up, mouth open. “Draco, did your mum have a baby?”

“No,” I said, boggled. “I did! And you said it wrong. It’s Ar-mand.”

Presently, I gave Goyle a nod. “That must be it. I’m worried about Graham outside. There are already so many dead bodies....”

“Don’ make me laugh,” Crabbe said. We turned to find him settled on the edge of a desk, smirking as he twirled his wand. “It’s not Montague he’s worried about. It’s Potter.”

“Excuse me?” I spat.

“Come off it, you know I saw you two in that empty classroom back in sixth year. And I ’eard how you wasn’t sure if it was ‘im when Greyback brought ‘im to your manor. Whatever, Malfoy. You know his face as well as I do. You don’t want to fight because you got feelings for Potter!”

Except for the muffled shouts and explosions outside, there was silence.

Crabbe pushed himself off the desk. “For all we know, your kid ain’t even Montague’s.”

“Don’t you speak of my son,” I hissed into his face.

“No need to get defensive if you got nothing to ‘ide, Malfoy. Or maybe I’ll just catch ‘im myself, and tell the Dark Lord what a traitor you are.”

“No!” I said, drawing myself up. I tried to look strong, though my knees felt like jelly. “I’ll take care of Potter. You two back me up.”

We found Potter, Weasley, and Granger in the Room of Hidden Things, and I managed a steely
facade until the stakes were too high, when Crabbe’s Fiendfyre consumed the place and I forgot the
task at hand in favor of sheer terror. It wasn’t until Potter was heaving me onto his broomstick, with
the fire demons licking our heels, that I felt the first wisps of regret: perhaps if I had been honest with
Crabbe and said, **Yes, I do have feelings for Potter, and I’m not going to try and capture him and
neither are you, you dumb fuck**, then he would not have burned that day; perhaps if I had been
honest with Potter a year ago, I would be fighting alongside him, rather than pretending to want his
head on a stake. Perhaps it didn’t matter, anymore. I was just a pathetic boy laying in a corridor, one
friend down and at loss for how to right my wrongs.

The broomstick lay in shreds around us. Potter crawled towards me, whispering, **“Malfoy...you
okay?”**

I wasn’t. All I could managed was, **“C-Crabbe...C-Crabbe....”**

**“He’s dead,”** Weasley said harshly.

Those words really hit me. As fickle as Crabbe had been with his loyalties to me, he had been a part
of my life for as long as I could remember. Potter may have touched my shoulder. I was too wrapped
up in grief to tell. The trio ran off, leaving me forgotten. Leaving Crabbe forgotten. **But I won’t
forget, I** thought, pushing myself off the ground. **Nor will I let this happen to anyone else I care
about.** I started to run, and promptly tripped over Goyle.

**“Wha’s ‘appened?”** he mumbled, coming out of his stupor. **“Didjoo ge’ us out?”**

**“Yeah, I guess. Stay here!”**

I hurried after Potter, Weasley, and Granger. Wherever they were going, surely my parents, and
Graham, and the other Death Eaters would be there, too. I did not make it far. The world shook, and
my right ear went silent, only to be filled with a deafening ring. An entire stone wall had been blasted
down, not far from the entrance hall. The spray of stone and dust made me lose sight of the trio.

I pointed my mother’s wand as I stepped out of the corridor into the bare, bright outdoors, unsure of
what I would find. There was nothing but a hand sticking out of the wreckage and, nearby, a
bloodied Death Eater, gasping for life. The person’s face was so mangled, I could not make out who
it was, but the matted blond hair made my breath catch in my throat. I stumbled over stone and
ripped insulation and overturned earth until I was close enough to see brown eyes and full lips, not at
all like my mother’s or father’s. I sighed, relieved.

There was a rasping voice behind me.

**“Drop your wand, traitor.”**

I turned slowly, and found myself looking at a pudgy face, with sunken eyes, and wiry dark hair:
Vincent Crabbe’s father.

**“Mr. Crabbe, what are you—?”** He smacked me across the face. I fell over the dying person’s body,
and cowered under Crabbe’s hulking form. My wand had fallen out of reach. **“Mr. Crabbe, it’s me,
Draco!”**

**“I know ‘oo you are,”** he growled. **“An’ I know you let my son die!”**

He kicked me in the gut. I folded from the pain.

**“I didn’t let him die,”** I said thinly. **“I wouldn’t...do that...on purpose.”**
“Then why did Goyle tell me you got everyone out of that burning room but ‘im?”

“Goyle was unconscious! He was mistaken!”

“I don’t think so. Vincent told me how you been distracted for a long time, letting your duties fall by the wayside. Just like your good-for-nothing father. And now you’ve let my son fall by the wayside!”

“I didn’t cast the fire curse! Vince was the one who—”

“My boy looked up to you! And you go saving Potter over ‘im? I ought to kill you for this!” Crabbe thrust his wand directly between my eyes.

“D-don’t,” I said, putting my hands up willingly. This may have been the moment I realized I loved my son. Armand’s eyes, and his hands, and his feet danced before my eyes. “Please, please, don’t kill me.”

“No,” Crabbe said, a smile spreading onto his fat face. “Can’t kill you first. Crucio!”

Childbirth had been nothing like this. My entire body tightened. My ribs prickled against my lungs. If I took a breath, it was like being stabbed with needles. I felt like a steel hand was pinching my head and like my teeth would pop out from the pressure of it. My limbs felt on fire, and in my mind’s eye I could see how I spasmed uncontrollably, trying to shake out the flames. Cruciatus was far worse than the Killing Curse. It made you long for the Killing Curse.

It stopped. I was aware that I was laying on the ground, sweating, gulping sweet air.

Distantly, I heard Crabbe shouting. “Mind your own business, boy!”

“He is my business!”

I opened an eye. It was Graham. He was circling Crabbe, blocking his curses with swift forcefields. My vigour renewed, I heaved myself onto my feet, snatching up my mother’s wand.

Graham saw me and yelled, “Stay there, you’re too weak! Protego!” He sent Crabbe’s hex flying.

“I can’t just sit here while you—”

“For once, don’t argue with me, Draco!”

Crabbe took advantage of Graham’s distraction, thrusting his wand out and opening his mouth to shout an angry spell. I don’t know what came over me: instead of casting a deflecting spell, I picked up my heels and charged the man.

“Hirudo supremo!” A dozen huge leeches shot out of Crabbe’s wand.

I barrelled into him, sending his arm skyward and leeches into the air to cling slimily to the walls of the castle, where they buried themselves into the stone, sucking powerfully.

“Traitor! Murderer!” Crabbe shouted, rolling on top of me. I closed my eyes as he pointed his wand.

“Avada—”

“—Kedavra!”

Crabbe stiffened and fell dead on my chest. Graham appeared above us. He pushed Crabbe away and pulled me into a forceful embrace. I moaned. I didn’t know how much I’d missed him.
“I’ve got to find my parents,” I said, pulling Graham by the hand. “Come with me.”

“Hold on, I need to sit down a moment.” He steadied himself on a half-crumpled wall.

“Are you—?”

His hand pulled away from his gut with sticky, red strings. Then, like a cork from a bottle, a big black leech popped out of his body, followed by a gush of blood. I scrambled towards him as he slid down the wall.

“Episkey,” I said, waving my wand over the wound. Nothing happened. “Fuck all, I can’t heal you like this. I recognized that spell from my research. It was very Dark.” For a haunting moment, I wondered if I had discovered the spell for Crabbe.

“Calm down, it’ll be fine,” Graham said, as if he knew what I was thinking.

At that moment, another blast shook the castle. I heard screaming and running, but I couldn’t see what was going on. “Get out of there!” someone shouted far away. “Get out! They’re destroying the hospital wing!” With a sinking feeling, I realized I had no idea where the Death Eaters had set up a makeshift infirmary, if they’d bothered at all.

I turned to Graham, hot with anger. “You treat me like I’m fucking breakable, and look where it gets you—broken. You reckless idiot!”

He laughed, choking and heaving at the end. “I don’t think you’re breakable. I don’t even think you’re weak, though you seem to think I do.”

“Then why have you developed a habit of protecting me at your own expense?”

“I like protecting you because...because you’re so strong.”

“All right, you’re delirious. Time to shut up.”

I dragged my wand along the edge of my cloak, shredding off a piece of fabric, which I pressed against Graham’s wound. I looked over my shoulder, searching the grounds for someone skilled at healing spells. It was all a blur of black robes and colorful curses.

“I’m not delirious,” Graham said hoarsely. “You’re so clever. And talented. And you keep your family’s welfare on your shoulders. I like all those things about you, and I like making life easier for you while you thrive.”

I blinked at him. All I could think to say was, “I haven’t done much thriving lately.”

“You have. You’re just hard on yourself.”

He heaved again, doubling over in pain. I pushed him back and peeled the fabric off his abdomen. Still gushing strong.

I shook my head. “Shit, I can’t even Apparate with you like this. I’ll kill you for sure. Just hold tight. I have to run for help.”

“Wait, please stay.”

“But you’re bleeding out, I have to—”

“Do me a favor. Tell Armand I love him when he’s old enough to understand.”
My mouth fell open. “Don’t be melodramatic! You’ll tell him yourself. I’ll be right back with help.”

“No, Draco,” he said, and it seemed to take all his might. “I’m done. I can feel it. If you leave, I’ll be dead before you get back.”

If it were anyone else lying there, I would have seen it immediately: the translucence of his skin, void of blood, the way his eyes went into focus and out again, the quaking of his hands and lips. But this was Graham, and Graham, I realized, had become dear to me.

I slid down beside him. He finally succumbed to his weakness, slumping with his head and shoulders in my lap.

“Can you breathe?” I asked.

“Not well. I won’t be able to work out today.”

“Good one,” I said, and put my hand into his hair. Fresh sweat. It reminded me of those summer days in his gardens, when I would peek around my magazine and watch him do pull-ups on a tree branch and he would fall against me, prodding me to join him.

“You know...I was wrong about you,” Graham said, looking out at the grounds. There were many small battles going on, but I don’t think he was focused on any one of them. “I told you that you were a slender little thing...who couldn’t take care of himself. But look at you today. Fresh out of the maternity bed...and out here, strong as an ox, kicking arse.”

“I don’t think they call it a maternity bed when it’s a man giving birth, but thanks.”

Graham lifted his hand, grasping for something in the air. I reached out, took it, and he squeezed.

“I’m sorry,” I said shakily. “For lying. About you being my first. I wish I hadn’t slept with Zabini.”

“Is that what you’re thinking about right now? Don’t worry about it...you wanted to please me. Can’t fault you for that, can I?”

“I’m still sorry.”

“May have been angrier...about the baby...than the lying. I wanted him from the moment I heard.”

“You did?”

“Certainly wasn’t ready for it...but I wanted him. With you. Guess I was lucky, in the end. Now I have a son to leave behind.”

The statement was like a knife to my heart.

“Graham...” I whispered. “I should tell you....”

But his eyes were growing heavy, his voice soft and somber. “Just tell my boy that I love him...take him to visit my mum and dad...they’ll need it.”

*Always the protector, even on your deathbed.* I found myself nodding, though I knew Graham couldn’t see it. I brushed through his hair with my fingers and planted a kiss on his head.

“Graham,” I said suddenly, remembering how my last lie to him had made him so very happy. “I just realized—you *are* my first, after all.”
“Hm?”

“I’ve never been in love before you.”

Graham’s chest expanded with air, and as he pressed out a long, tapering breath, I saw him smile that quirky smile one last time.
Dear Mr. Malfoy,

This notice is to inform you that, due to an anonymous witness testimony, the charges against you for previously specified war crimes have been dropped. There is no need to attend your scheduled Wizengamot hearings. Any evidence confiscated from you by Ministry personnel will be returned without delay.

If you have any further questions or concerns, do not hesitate to write me.

_Muriel Boot_
Department of Magical Law Enforcement  
Ministry of Magic

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To Whom It May Concern:

Congratulations! Your application to enroll in Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry’s Eighth Year N.E.W.T. Revision Program has been accepted. We are sure you will be pleased with what this program has to offer, including extra tutoring, career counseling, and other helpful services, all in our newly renovated castle (provided by Warlock’s Building Blocks™).

As a reminder, in light of new Ministry policies, the following courses are compulsory for all Hogwarts students:

- Defense Against the Dark Arts
- Muggle Studies

A list of required texts and supplies is enclosed, along with those for your chosen elective courses.

PLEASE NOTE: Although all “eighth year” students will be legally of age upon attendance, they will be subject to the same restrictions of any normal student, including same-sex dormitories, nightly curfews, and once-per-month Hogsmeade privileges. Any student caught violating these rules will be subject to discipline and possible expulsion.

We look forward to seeing you September 1st!

Sincerely,

_Filius Flitwick_
Deputy Headmaster  
Head of Ravenclaw House

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Mr. Malfoy,

The circumstance you owled me about was unsurprising. Severus Snape informed the staff of your condition last term, in case it presented an emergency.

I see no reason why your having a child should stand in the way of your education, nor a reason why your education should stand in the way of you maintaining a relationship with your child. While Hogwarts offers no form of childcare, in the past Headmasters have allowed student parents to make more frequent trips to Hogsmeade to visit their children and spouses.

Please make an appointment with me at the start of term, and we will determine what is best for your situation.

—Minerva McGonagall

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Well, the war had been a lovely holiday, but now it was time to get back to the grind.

“You’re sure this is wise, Draco?” my mother asked. “The Malfoys in France have offered to have us at their chateau while we ride out this little spell.”

If you’d been on Platform 9 ¾ that day, you would understand what she meant. It seemed we weren’t the only ones shocked by our Ministry pardons: people gawked, sneered, and shook their heads as we pushed through.

I looked at the baby in her arms, and nodded. “I’m sure. I need to revise for my N.E.W.T.s. And if I want to avoid making a living hocking family heirlooms, I’ll need to score higher than any of these buggers.”

“Language,” she said, cupping Armand’s head.

We stopped near a clan of Weasleys. Just my luck. The father gave me a stiff nod, but I looked away like I hadn’t noticed. “At any rate, the Ministry is looting our property so fast, there won’t be anything left to hock. I can’t believe they’re using Dad’s imprisonment to keep harassing us. A year in Azkaban! It’s bollocks.”

“Hush, now. This is not public conversation. You should know better. All right, Armand—” She held out the baby. “Do hold him before you go, darling. He’s already making a fuss.”

At six months old, Armand was a chubby worm of loudness, drool, and balled fists of excitement. He reached for me, the fists bursting into short, fat fingers that always ended up gnarled in my hair. I shook my head, shouldering my leather messenger bag. “I can’t hold you, I have to go.” I kissed my mother, ignored her admonishing face, and then I was off. My heart twisted as Armand began to wail behind me.

Understand, I loved that boy. And it wasn’t like my fatherhood was a secret. But the fact that I’d given birth to Armand seemed to give the most politically correct people the wrong impression: that I really was out to make pureblood babies at any cost. The notion put me on edge. No one understood that Armand was an accident, and I didn’t want to feed their assumptions by making a spectacle.

I strode through the train cars, ignoring the not-so-subtle whispers, though it was impossible not to pick out phrases like “Dark Mark” and “probably paid the Ministry off” and “him—a dad?” It took walking into three unfriendly compartments to find one in which I was not met with scowls or wand-
points, and I was not really pleased to see these faces, either: Ginny Weasley, Granger, and Longbottom sat, staring at me in surprise. Didn’t they know Death Eaters took N.E.W.T.s, too? No one spoke until the train hooted and began to trundle down the tracks.

“Er,” Longbottom said, “did you want to sit down? OY!”

Weasley had elbowed him in the ribs. “This one’s full.”

“But there’s only three of us—”

She silenced him with a look, and then turned to Granger for backup. Granger was frowning at me in that troubled way she sometimes did at house-elves or hippogriffs chained up too tight. When she opened her mouth, I held up a hand.

“Spare me your philanthropies, Granger. Just point me to any Slytherins you may have seen.”

I made down the corridor in the direction of her finger, realizing just then that Harry Potter should have been with them. Not that it mattered. Not that I fantasized about him every time his face popped up in the news, in my magazines, on the radio, and in every third conversation happening in Europe the whole damn summer. No, sir.

Pansy, Zabini, and Goyle were in the very last compartment. When I opened the door, their eyes widened, and Pansy looked haughtily down the side of my body. “Nice purse,” she said.

I narrowed my eyes. “Thanks, I bought it in Milan. Where’d you get yours—a Weasley family jumble sale?”

We held eyes, and then began to laugh. She jumped up and hugged me, and informed me she really did like my messenger bag, to which I replied, “No shit, it’s Gucci.”

Zabini snorted, prodding Goyle with his finger. “Girls, right?”

Goyle said, “Er—wha’?” and looked around the compartment, and then returned to whatever it was he was reading. Comics in the *Daily Prophet*, it seemed.

Pansy settled in close to me, saying, “Come off it, Zabini. I was at the induction ceremony when the Dark Lord outed you. You make fun of Draco for being gay when you’ve slept with him yourself? We’re all still waiting for you to come out.”

“Come out? There’s nothing to come out about,” Zabini said casually, crossing his ankles on the seat across from him, which was right next to me. “Anyway, take a look at Malfoy: over-groomed, melodramatic, too many hand gestures—he’s basically a girl himself.”

Goyle never looked up from his comic (really, the way he was sniggering already, I don’t know if he realized he’d said it), but I felt immensely grateful for his friendship in that moment. Zabini sighed, made a pained face, and nudged me with his foot. I accepted it as an apology for everything.

We traded gossip. Goyle shared a rumor that the ghost of Snape was going to be our Head of House, to which Pansy replied, “If Snape were a ghost, he’d be the child-eating kind, not the child-minding kind.” I bored them with anecdotes about Armand: his ability to bounce when I held him upright, his
fascination with the salt water on our holiday in the French Riviera, the way his hair was starting to curl on the ends, and so forth. They informed me of their mutual hardships with the Ministry.

“Of course, I didn’t have it as bad as you three,” Pansy told me. “A Dark Mark alone wasn’t enough to convict. I didn’t fight.”

“Did you fight at the Battle?” I asked Zabini, and he shrugged yes.

“Nobody bothered to speak against me,” Goyle said, looking up from the newspaper, “not even Potter.” When his eyes glazed over, I could tell he was thinking about those moments with Crabbe in the Room of Hidden Things.

“I suppose Potter served as witness for your Wizengamot hearing,” Zabini said, eyeing me head-to-toe.

I glowered at him, wondering if he’d ever let go of his knowledge of Potter and me. “Not that I know of. He did for my mum, but I had an anonymous witness.”

“Really? Well, he spoke at mine.” Zabini cocked his head, finally letting out the smirk I knew was in there somewhere. “Why do you suppose he would have openly witnessed for me and your mum, and not you?”

“I couldn’t say.” Really, I couldn’t. And I found something deeply troubling about the idea. I narrowed my eyes in realization. “Why would he witness for you at all?”

He leaned forward with his elbows on his knees. “Wouldn’t you like to know?”

My mind reeled with images of Zabini cornering Potter like he cornered me in the hospital wing, making allusions about blabbing sensitive information, extorting him for good favor, extorting him for other types of favors....

My fears were cut short when Pansy snorted. “His mummy gave the Order money in the end. Must have made a deal with Potter.”

Zabini rolled his eyes, and looked at me. “Your dad came by, suggested it to Mum. How’s he doing, anyway?”

“As well as can be expected,” I muttered.

“So, speaking of Potty!” Pansy said, snatching the Prophet from Goyle (“Oy, don’t rip the puzzle section!”). “Look how stupid he looks. And, ugh, they’re touting him as the greatest Auror who ever lived, even before he has the job.”

The article in question, “Potter the Protector,” was a two page editorial, detailing how Harry Potter selflessly jumped from being a war hero to being a minder of the social good, throwing aside his education to become an Auror, all before his 18th birthday last July. What a crock. I’m sure you’d agree. For instance, there was a photo of Potter saving a little girl from a swarm of dementors with his robes billowing behind him like a superhero’s cape. Upon closer inspection, one could see that the girl was a hologram and the dementors were made of chicken wire and black sheets. I imagined I should write to Dad’s financial manager about making a donation to the Auror Department, unless we wanted the next wave of the wizarding world’s finest to be adept only at beating piñatas with their wands.

“Don’t he have to be a good Auror?” Goyle asked. “Ain’t they letting him train without even taking his N.E.W.T.s?”
“Please,” Pansy scoffed, “they’ll give Potter anything he wants, and he’s eating it up. I heard that last week he complained to Ron Weasley that there wasn’t any ice cream for sale at the Ministry cafeteria, and the next day, they offered twelve different flavors. Oh, oh, this is priceless!” She leaned over the paper with glee. “The reporter is asking Potter what his favorite part of Auror training has been so far, and Potter says—” She deepened her voice. “—eeeerm, fighting the monsters?”

We all burst into laughter. After several more quotes, all in Potter’s deep, hesitant inflections, we were laughing so loud that the trolley witch came to check that we weren’t dying.

Fine, I admit it. I was disappointed to find out that Potter wouldn’t be returning to Hogwarts. But with my friends there with me and the lightness of a war-free environment finally restored, that rather made up for it.

Slytherin table was sparse that year (and, at the Head of it, Goyle was disappointed not to find a greasy ghost, but Horace Slughorn). We all clustered at one end, not filling half of it. There were more first years Sorted than ever before, since the Muggle-borns and half-bloods who didn’t get Hogwarts letters last year were making up for lost time. Out of the ninety-five new students, only eleven came to Slytherin House, fewer and fewer being called throughout the ceremony, as each new Slytherin was met with open jeering. When it was over, McGonagall stood, squashing the noise with her hands and clearing her throat for the Welcoming speech.

That was when I heard the rumble.

I could only describe it as an obnoxious car engine. It sounded as though it were coming from the ceiling at first, but then the vibrations picked up, louder still, just outside the Great Hall doors. The students murmured. Professors stood, confused. Then the main doors opened slowly, hesitantly—and the Great Hall exploded with applause.

Harry Potter had stepped in.

He seemed to realize he’d spoiled his quiet entrance, so he stood erect and strode towards Gryffindor table, as if the clapping and hollering were in his imagination.

I couldn’t help leaning forward. Holy shit, Potter put my favorite Italian model to shame: he was not skinny anymore. The robes in his Daily Prophet photo must have hidden it. His narrow waist was now a base for a chest and back that flared out into shoulders as wide as they looked strong. His thighs filled out his jeans, leading up to his arse—and, let me tell you, I had spent a fair amount of time with a young man obsessed with working out, and that right there was a deliberately sculpted, pert and perfect arse. He wore a green Weird Sisters shirt, fitted jeans, brown lace-up boots, and a designer leather jacket I knew I would have noticed if he’d worn it before. Good Lord, Auror training had beaten the awkward out of Potter and left him a bloody heap of hot. When he grinned at no one in particular, I nearly tossed pride to the wind and swooned.

Ginny Weasley beat me to it. She ran towards Potter, throwing her arms around his neck, and exclaimed, “You came on the motorcycle? That’s so cool!”

“Mr. Potter,” McGonagall said over the excitement. She was standing at the Head Table, her eyes stern. “As pleased as I am to see you, did you not think you would have to apply to the Eighth Year Program, just like your peers? I cannot simply accommodate you at the last moment.”

Potter nodded, embarrassed. “I understand, Professor. And I’m sorry for interrupting. It was a last minute decision.”

McGonagall frowned for a long moment, causing Pansy to hiss, “She’s actually going to deny him
special treatment. This is fantastic!"

At last, McGonagall looked to the nighttime ceiling, as if she were trying to summon some celestial energy, and said, “You could have at least come on the Hogwarts Express, Potter. Take your seat and see me after the feast.” Potter grinned, shuffling the Weasley girl over to Gryffindor table, where he was met with hugging and hair-ruffling. McGonagall added, “You, too, Mr. Weasley!” and then Ron Weasley emerged from the entrance hall, beet red, and took a seat next to a elated-looking Granger.

“I don’t believe this,” I deadpanned.

“I know,” Zabini agreed. “Everyone is going apeshit just to share his oxygen. Look at the those Hufflepuffs trying to touch the back of his jacket.”

“Amazing jacket, though,” Pansy said resentfully.

I was not referring to oxygen or jackets, but to the way Potter was leaning into the Weasley girl, whispering something that made her creamy skin blend in with her hair. I hadn’t felt this sick since the first months of my pregnancy, for Potter was facing Slytherin table, but had not looked at me once. He only had eyes for Weasley.

Halfway through dinner, Goyle asked me with his mouth full of chicken, “Are we done giving Potter a hard time, Draco?”

As for my chicken, I was stabbing it to bits. “Yes, Goyle. We are well and truly done with him.”

***

After dinner, I slammed into the dormitory so hard that a book fell off someone’s shelf and landed with a thud. My dorm mates goggled at me as I swept by and flung open my trunk.

Don’t ask me why I was upset. Fine, ask. It was Potter! And not even the Ginny Weasley thing. The platonic stuff was infuriating on its own. You’d think after all this time, he would have—I don’t know—waved hello? Stopped me after dinner and thanked me for saving his life at the manor? Asked me if that kid of mine had any resemblance to him? If that idea had even occurred to him, the dolt. Maybe he didn’t read the Society section of the Daily Prophet, but it was indubitable he’d heard through the grapevine that I’d birthed a child. Indubitable!

Unpacking my new clothes brought a measure of peace. My mother and I had lived in the boutiques of Monte Carlo during our holiday. Armand had proven useful on those summer outings, his pram loaded with bags from up and down L’Avenue des Beaux-Arts. We would stop in the cafes and feed him, and laugh as he dribbled milk, and I hardly thought about my father in prison or the Battle of Hogwarts at all. That had probably been Mum’s plan. Now I had a trunkful of finery to show for it, but the novelty had worn off, replaced by the bitter irony of having riches to offer my son but no father. Well...second father.

Something at the bottom of my trunk caught my eye—a piece of parchment, stuck beneath one of the side panels. I reached for it, recognizing my mother’s tight, flowery script.

Draco,

The Easter holidays were a lovely interlude, but Mother is already lonely without you. I’m sure Armand feels the same.

He is a darling child. I still think I am looking at you when I hold him. Not that I often have the
opportunity. When Montague hears Armand crying from afar, he flies into the nursery and tends to his every need. Why do we even keep house-elves?

Since Armand’s parentage is now clear and the Montagues have made no unsavory demands of us, your father no longer suspects foul play as a reason for your pregnancy. He chalks it up to your enormously magical heritage. “Malfoy potency,” he calls it in jest. I think the Blacks deserve as much credit, but I have not told him so. Whatever the reason, I am glad to see him relaxed enough to hold his grandson now. Between him and Montague passing Armand back and forth, you’re going to have a spoiled child on your hands by summer, but I think

I tore my eyes away, having read this letter long ago. It would go on to tell me how lucky I was to have such an attentive father to my child and that surely said attentiveness would carry over in marriage, which she urged me to keep considering, as my father was unlikely to take back his promise to let me flounder if I left the child a bastard.

Funny...my cheeks were wet. I wiped my face on my sleeve, but could not wipe away the image of Graham holding Armand close, feeding him, rocking him. Leave it to Graham to be so helpful that it hurt.

Of course, who knew if he’d been caring for his own child’s or Potter’s? Armand’s hair was going from white blond to tawny blond, his cheeks rounding out, and his skin going olive, but what did that prove? Nothing, except that the boy was obviously not conceived wholly of Malfoy blood. But after tonight, I knew it was best to let the world think Graham was the father, even if he wasn’t. Better to have a doting, fallen war hero for a dad than a pompous, attention-whoring one, who wouldn’t give me the time of day.

***

I was late to the eighth year orientation brunch.

First, Zabini had been nagging me for fashion advice.

“Malfoy, vest and tie or dress robes?”

“Are you kidding me? Vest and tie. Only old people wear dress robes to brunch.”

Then I had spent all morning in the mirror, finally pleased with my appearance. After spending sixth year emaciated and seventh year chubby (or swollen with child, depending on who was looking), I was finally back to my normal, lean stature. There were a couple pink lines on either side of my navel, but I didn’t mind, as Doctor Wayman had banished the bulk of them. My middle was narrow, my arse full, and my shoulders square and poised. As my face filled out with the etches of manhood, I noticed the hollows of my cheeks becoming more prominent, as my father’s strong jaw and my mother’s high cheek bones played together. My hair was cropped shorter now, a protective measure against Armand’s grabby fingers, but still long enough to tuck behind my ears when I wore it loose. Today, I did not. I combed it back in waves, which shined golden-white when the light caught them.

Damn, I looked good.

Potter could suck it.

When I arrived in the Great Hall, I was bothered to find the eighth years and faculty still dining, having wanted to avoid all the sausages, quiches, and crepes with berry sauce; food seemed to stick to me easier now that I wasn’t pumping breastmilk. There were only two small, rectangular tables set side-by-side in the cavernous space, and I noticed with annoyance that Pansy and Zabini were
backed up to the Gryffindors. I had to walk so close to Potter that my hand brushed his shoulder. Fuck you, it was an accident. Once again, he didn’t spare a glance.

“—don’t know what possessed you to do that, Harry,” Granger was saying, as I sank next to Pansy. Weasley cut in. “Oy, everyone keeps thinking Harry was driving, but I was the one driving! Who do you think was parking the damn thing while he strutted in?”

“I did not strut.”

Potter’s firm voice had an immediate effect on my heart rate. I focused on my bran muffin, so as not to do something classically Draco, like throw something at his head. Though, the bran muffin would have made lovely fodder.

Granger huffed. “I don’t care who was driving or strutting. It was irresponsible to make such a scene. And the rules say you have to come on the Hogwarts Express.”

“One’d fink you’d be over the rules at this point,” Weasley said with his mouth full.

“Like I told McGonagall, I wasn’t trying to interrupt,” Potter said. “I was just...in the Ministry building, thinking of everyone at Hogwarts...and I realized this was where I belonged. So, I had a word with Auror Robards, grabbed Sirius’s bike, and followed the train tracks here.”

Weasley made a strained sound, as if he had swallowed too much toast at once. “Yeah, not before kidnapping me! ‘Where’re we going?’ I ask. ‘Short adventure,’ he says. Eight hours later, I can’t feel my arse and somehow I go from wearing Auror robes to wearing Hogwarts robes. What bird goes for a bloke in Hogwarts robes?” There was a moment of silence, and then he added, “Not that birds matter or anything. You matter. That’s not what I meant. You’re a bird, too. No—a woman!”

Frostily, Granger asked, “And they’re really going to let you go to Hogwarts and take Auror training at the same time?”

“Yeah, Kingsley helped me sort it out,” Potter admitted. I could imagine him rubbing his neck, sheepish about this fact. “They’ll just stretch out mine and Ron’s training for sixteen months, instead of twelve, and we’ll be done by next Christmas—as long as we show up to work every other weekend and during the holidays.”

“Well,” Granger said with flourish. “Looks like that’s all packaged up nicely. Guess you’ll get to wear those Auror robes for someone, Ron. I know I don’t care to look at them.”

As Weasley choked on his juice, I felt a tap on my shoulder.

“You hear all that?” Pansy whispered. “It’s never-ending. Even Potter’s friends get special privileges by extension.”

I shrugged. “That’s not really news, is it?”

Zabini leaned around Pansy, looking rather dapper in the blue vest I chose. “I don’t happen to mind his favor with the Ministry, as long as I’m on the receiving end.” He frowned at our smiles. “That wasn’t sexual innuendo.”

“Anyway,” I said to Pansy. “It’s annoying, but not doing us any harm. And he did save our arses, loathe as I am to admit.” Zabini, Pansy, and Goyle looked oddly at me. I didn’t even know Goyle was across from me, the quiet prat. “What?” I asked.
Pansy’s nose looked more upturned than usual. “Saved us from what?”

“Come on, don’t make me say His name.”

“We was just...under the impression...” Goyle started, looking at his eggs.

Zabini finished for him, whispering, “that this defection talk of your family's was a big sham.”

“Yes, you were rather His pet, weren't you?” Pansy asked, eating a blueberry daintily, as if we were in the middle of gossiping about soap operas.

“No!”

“Well, it seemed so, the way He went on about you. After you got up the duff, it was like you were Merlin’s gift to the wizarding race.” She gave me a sidelong look. “And he did live with your family for a year. We just assumed...” Her voice was so quiet I had to read her lips. “...that your loyalties to the Cause still ran deep.”

For once, I wasn’t sure what was in my best interest: protecting my reputation among the purebloods or protecting my family's greater public image. I didn’t have to make a decision. McGonagall was standing at the end of the table, tossing down her napkin impatiently.

“It’s half-past,” she announced, “we’ll just start without him.”


Pansy didn’t answer, so Goyle did. “The Defense professor’s late from his first class.”

McGonagall indicated the man to her right. “I would like to introduce Mr. Reginald Lightbaum, the Ministry liaison for the Eighth Year N.E.W.T. Revision Program.” There was light applause, during which Lightbaum, a man with a boyish face and receding hair, accidently began to clap for himself. McGonagall continued, “The program is not just a continuation of your sixth or seventh year studies, but a tool designed to help navigate you over the hurdles the war created for most of you. Mr. Lightbaum will explain the details.”

Lightbaum ran his hands down the front of his suit and gave a practiced smile. “I’m pleased to see each and every one of you here to usher in a new era of—”

His face lost color.

Every head turned in the direction of his gaze.

Severus Snape was gliding into the hall, transparent and placid.

Goyle pulled on Pansy’s sleeve, saying, “I told you! I told you!”

You wouldn’t have believed it. I didn’t at first. But it was Snape. He was there in all his somber, hook-nosed, billowing glory. And, really, this incarnation had only improved the billowing.

“It’s a week for surprise entrances, then,” McGonagall said flatly. “Professor Snape, you missed the Welcoming Feast and today’s brunch.”

“I cannot eat. Why should I dine?” He floated along the Slytherin-Ravenclaw table (our mouths hanging open the whole while), and stopped, bobbing next to her.

“You hardly ate before, and yet you still—” McGonagall gathered herself, apparently still flustered
by Snape’s presence herself. “Nevermind. Ladies and Gentlemen, as some of you already know, Professor Snape will be returning to his post as Defense Against the Dark Arts professor, on the condition we avoid acknowledging his obvious change in...embodiment. Please continue, Mr. Lightbaum. My apologies for the delay.”

We shut our mouths, and got on with learning a gamut of frankly boring things: that Lightbaum would be available for career counseling (I imagined him handing me a hammer, and shuffling me off to be a plumber or whatever); that Professor Snape would serve as head of the N.E.W.T. tutoring committee (I imagined all the Gryffindors would fail on principle, in that event); that Professor Sprout would lead weekly grief counseling groups, which would switch off House pairings (blah, blah, unity, blah) and there we could discuss our feelings about the war (it stunk, the end).

When McGonagall dismissed us, I was so antsy to escape that I sprang from my seat and plowed right into a sturdy form.

“Ooof,” Potter said, catching me under the arms.

The world seemed to slow. The closest students grew tense, as if I might pull out my wand and stab Potter in the eye from this proximity. Granger and Weasley traded a worried look. Zabini leaned forward, rapt. Pansy pursed her lips. Goyle? He was eating a sandwich. None of those things mattered. Potter’s eyes were there, dark green with flecks of gold, huge without his glasses, which had fallen in the scuffle. I had only seen him twice without glasses: once before I punched him in the cushioned Room of Requirement and once as we lay on the floor staring at each other after our lovemaking, just before the Astronomy Tower battle. Now I knew why Potter refused to look me in the eye. He was hopeless at hiding his emotions. In the split second he held me, his pupils dilated and his eyebrows worried together, and I felt the way I felt when he asked me if I cared about him so long ago: frightened, confused, and desperate to say “yes.”

There would be no “yes” now. Not as long as he was seeing Ginny Weasley.

I let go of his arms and said, “Watch it,” before walking away.

“Malfoy, wait.”

I did. I turned on my heel, as the students trickled past me, and found Potter reaching into his robes, still looking at me with that pitiful air about him.

“This is yours.”

He produced a ten inch, hawthorn wand. My wand.

I took it, avoiding his fingers, and left without a word.

***

The library was packed. No surprise, since both seventh and eighth years were taking N.E.W.T.s this time around. With that number of matriculators, it would also mean I’d have to buckle down if I wanted any chance of being competitive for employment. Not likely, considering my family’s reputation, not to mention jobs in the Potions industry were scarce to begin with, but I had to try...for Armand’s sake. All I wanted was to go home, work in a reputable lab, and lead a quiet life with him.

A shadow overtook my Veritaserum essay, and I smelled a clean, feminine scent. I rolled my eyes.

“Pansy, if you want to sit, you don’t have to be weird about it.”

“Well, all right, but I’m not Pansy.”
Granger tossed her enormous bag on my table and made herself comfortable. “Why would Pansy be weird about sitting next to you?”

*Because she’s worried I’m a blood-traitor, I thought.* What I said was, “What. The fuck. Are you doing?”

“Studying.”

“With me?”

“All the tables are full.”

“No, they’re not. They’re taken, but they’re not full. Go on with—”

I flung a hand towards Finch-Fletchley, who had been trying to glare me to shreds for an hour, and then the other hand towards the Patil twins, who hadn’t been studying as much as bowing over a star-chart and attempting to predict my demise.

“None of them are in Potions,” she said, as if that settled everything. “Besides, wouldn’t it be helpful to bounce ideas off one another? We *are* the top two students in Slughorn’s class.”

I threw up my hands and looked around the room, like it was about to crumble around me. Perhaps this was a prank. Potter and Weasley would pop out with some horrid Wheeze in a moment. Or else Granger was trying to provoke me into hexing her, and all these students would serve as witness, and I would be banished from proper wizarding society. Well, fuck them! Fuck them to Hades!

Granger’s lips were twitching.

Maybe I was overreacting. I slowly lowered my hands to the table, remembering Zabini’s too-much-gesturing comment.

“Look, Malfoy,” she said, and deliberately set out her Potions text, a crisp roll of parchment, and a self-inking quill. “I’ll be forward. You owe me.”

“I *owe* you,” I said in three distinct but equally as dumbfounded syllables. “I *owe* you for what”—said with a moue to the lips and a breath on the “what,” because what had this fuzzy girl been drinking?

“For getting you to Hogwarts to study Potions to begin with.” She placed her hands challengingly on the table, close to mine. “Who do you think testified to the Wizengamot on your behalf?”

My fingers curled in, scratching back towards me, both to escape hers and to convey my shock. “No, you did not.”

“I’m quite certain I did.”

“All right. Why?”

“Because—” This was the first time her confidence wavered. “I heard what you were trying to do when Bellatrix was....”

My defenses fell as the memory rushed back. I’d been such a bleeding-heart that night in the drawing room, watching Granger twitch on the floor. I’d tried to trick Bellatrix off her, but had been too frightened to push the issue.

I flicked the memory away with a hand (damn it!). “I mean, really. That makes us *even*, if anything.”
“I succeeded in saving you from your fate, Malfoy,” she said dryly. “Look, I’m not trying to exploit you. If you don’t want to study with me, fine—we’re even. But I think we could both benefit. I’ve seen how people have been treating you, and I’m sorry for what Ginny did on the train. I know you’re not a bad person.”

Why did Gryffindors keep saying that to me?

“If you help me with my N.E.W.T. level Potions,” she went on, “you’ll be helping yourself, too. People won’t think as poorly of you if they see us working together.”

*Only your people,* I thought, rolling my eyes. “Fine! Just don’t try and hold my hand again.”

Granger flipped open her book. “Like I think you’d ever like *me.*”

“Yeah, Muggle-borns aren’t my thing.”

She smiled without looking at me. “Yes, because blood status is what I meant.” We read in silence for a moment, until she said, “Thank you, by the way.”

I heaved a sigh. “Don’t get sappy, we’re just studying.”

She lifted a thick brown eyebrow. Even while trying to look sarcastic, Granger’s eyes were unnervingly warm, rather like my mother’s on a day when she felt good about her hair and make-up. “Not for this,” she said. “The other thing.”

“Mmph,” I said. And then, “Yeah. I suppose...you, too.”

***

“How did you grow so much in a month?” I didn’t have to reach out. Armand heaved his body out of my mother’s arms and was wriggling on my chest so fast that I nearly dropped him. “You devil.” When he started to babble, I plopped into a chair and grinned at my mother. “His words are forming. He’ll be inventing jinxes in no time.”

She leaned towards Mr. Montague, who had just led me into his cottage in Hogsmeade. “Draco’s first words were jinxes, and he used to cast them on his father’s ankles as he walked by. I imagined he liked the big thumping sound Lucius made when he fell.”

“Good lad, good lad,” Montague laughed. He grew distant. Just as fast, he shot off the sofa like a dart. “Here she is, our lovely hostess.”

Mrs. Montague frowned fondly as she padded into the room. “Stop,” she said, and enfolded me in a fleshy, vanilla-scented embrace. “I should hope we’ll be seeing more of you than this, Draco.”

“I took my time settling in, but now McGonagall’s given me leave to come two weekends a month, plus Hogsmeade days.”

“Dear, how splendid. It’s fortunate we live so close to the school. We’ve missed you—and you, darling!” She said this pulling on Armand’s cheek.

We settled in for tea. Armand would not suffer his baby chair nor his bouncy contraption, so I feigned reluctance, and settled him on my left knee with my tea saucer. In truth, I never wanted to let him go again. I had been so burdened with longing for the boy that I could hardly keep up with Granger during our last study session.
“Draco,” Mr. Montague said, placing not three, not four, but five cubes of sugar in his tea. “Tell us about your studies, lad.”

An hour later, we were breathless, laughing about Snape and how he hadn’t batted an eyelash when his lecture on combatting the undead had veered into spirit management.

“Regarding the everyday household pest,” I said in my most nasal voice, “the ghoul is a crazed, rogue unembodiment, while the ghost is a human soul but no less cumbersome.”

Mrs. Montague had to place her tea aside as she tittered, so as not to spill. She dabbed her eyes. “What a character, that man....”

“IT is unfortunate, the way it went for Severus,” my mother said. “But I am pleased you won’t be going without your mentor. Have you spoken to him about a letter of recommendation yet?”

“Oh, Mum, I would like to let him rest in peace for a while before I hassle him about something so mundane.”

“I thought the point of being a ghost was that he’d never rested in peace, at all.” Mr. Montague swiped his mustache with his napkin, and winked at me.

“Graham did tell us stories about him,” his wife said, eyes glazing over. “He was always so good in school, but Potions wasn’t his subject. Snape let him know it, too.” The room grew silent. After moment, Mrs. Montague bounced towards me on the sofa. “The baby’s getting my family's eyes, you know.”

Grateful for the distraction, I exclaimed, “Is he? Sit up straight, let me get a look at you.” I said this imperiously, but Armand only smiled a wet smile at me.

It was true. His eyes were going from gray to green, almost like the pale green of Mrs. Montague and her kin. I thought he had taken after me in that regard, but perhaps his gray eyes had been a long-standing bout of newborn color. I kissed Armand on the head, feeling guilty I was thinking about Potter and not Graham in that moment.

***

I promised my mother I would take advantage of Snape’s presence. “He could resolve his Earthly issues at any moment, and turn into the wind,” she had told me. A little aghast that her concern was my future marketability, rather than the tortured soul of her old friend, I said, “Yes, Mum, though I’ll blame you if he decides to haunt me for my impropriety.”

I knocked on his office door that week. I don’t know what I had been expecting—certainly not for him to pop out of the wood, nearly floating through me, only to hover several inches higher off the ground than he had stood alive. It really enhanced that looking-down-his-nose effect.

“Can I help you?” Snape said flatly.

“Yes, hello,” I said, startled. “I wanted to talk to you about...Potions.”

“See Professor Slughorn.” He began to fade into the wood.

“No, wait! He and I are not on as good terms as you and me.” Snape stared blankly, and I was left wondering if I had gravely misinterpreted our relationship. “Anyway, I’m strongly considering the Potions industry after Hogwarts. Maybe even university level Potions, I don’t know. Would you consider offering me a letter of recommendation?”
Snape sighed for a long time. I wondered if he could go on forever, having no real reason to breathe. “Five minutes. I’m with a student.” He disappeared.

When the door opened, it was not Snape who came out. It was Potter. He was sniffing into his sleeve when he noticed me, and quickly dropped his arm. His eyes were pink. “He asked me to send you in,” he said quietly.

I nodded, reaching for the doorknob. We switched places. At the last moment, Potter said, “Hey! Er, how’s your wand working for you?”


“Good. I was worried it wouldn’t revert it’s loyalty to you.”

I shrugged, turning for the door.

“Hey,” Potter said, stepping towards me. I looked at his shoulder, not his face, because surely I would do something rash otherwise. “I wanted to thank you. For what you did at your house. You probably saved my life.”

“No need. I really didn’t know it was you.”

“Yes, you did.” I could hear the smile in his voice. Stubbornly, I focused on his shoulder. It was bigger and taller than the last time we’d had a conversation. And it needed a lint brush. Potter’s voice grew full but gentle. “Look at me.”

“No.”

He shifted his weight, foot to foot. “Please.”

I did. And I thought I was looking into Armand’s eyes. I made a small noise in my throat, but before Potter could speak there was a voice down the corridor.

“Oy, are we doing this, or what!”

Ginny Weasley was holding out Potter’s leather jacket. She was bundled in her own (albeit cheaper-looking) version.

Potter’s wistful expression faded. He backed away, saying, “You know how people like a flying motorbike....”

As I watched them retreat, I heard their voices echo in the dungeon corridor.

“Was he harassing you, Harry?”

“Course not. He’s not bad like you think.”

“If you say so.”

“I do,” Potter said, looking over his shoulder.

***

You must think I longed after that. You must think I stared out the window, fantasizing as Granger and I studied, looking towards Gryffindor Tower, wondering if Potter was there fantasizing, too. You’d be wrong. But you also know...sometimes I lie.
Slughorn had assigned us a partnered project, brewing “professional caliber potions.” Naturally, neither Granger or I wanted to lower ourselves to the level of the rest of the class (though, Granger would never say this aloud, since the rest of the class was only Potter, Weasley, and two seventh years I didn’t know), so we had partnered up. I had my feet up on the library table, as I stared out at the Quidditch pitch. Perhaps I was imagining Potter playing, swooping, reaching for the Snitch with a smile on his face. I don’t know, it was a long time ago. Granger was reciting our project options.

“Okay, we can do super-concentrated Pepper-Ups...of course, then we have to make four of them in various percent-magic concentrations. I don’t mind! In fact—”

“I mind.”

She looked out from under her hair. “All right. There’s Skelegrow. Well, not the namebrand kind, but something with the same active ingredients.”

“Doesn’t that require a lot of temperature control? Not that I can’t do it, but it is attention-needy.”

“Malfrey, how do you expect to be hired by one of those fancy potions corporations you’re always talking about if you don’t put the effort into brewing?”

“I was hoping to work in research,” I said, spreading out my hands as if it were obvious. My face brightened. “Or management. Look at how well I’m managing you.”

Granger pinched the bridge of her nose, and continued reciting. When she got to the Gender Reassignment Drought, a potion usually prescribed to men trying to achieve pregnancy, she stopped. I turned my attention to the pitch again, as I felt her eyes slide up to my face.

“Malfrey, can I ask you something?”

“Perhaps,” I said stiffly.

“It’s altogether for my curiosity. You don’t have to answer if you don’t want to.” I sighed, and rolled my head towards her. She was fluffing her hair awkwardly, and I marveled that it could grow even more voluminous. “You see, there’s been a rumor....”

“Just a guess. You heard that I gave birth to my son.”

She nodded. “I don’t hear you denying it.”

“That’s because I’m not a liar.” She quirked a cheek, and I added, “Certainly not about my ancestry. Though, I suppose he’s my descendant, but you know what I mean.”

“What’s his name?”

“Armand.”

“After the Norman invader, Armand Malfoy?”

“You just never take your nose out of anyone’s business, do you?”

“What? It’s not as if it’s hard to keep track of every pureblood’s lineage. You all seem to grow off the same tree.”

I hummed my indifference, looking around the library. Finch-Fletchley was back to sending mental daggers at my head. Perhaps he was concerned for Granger’s safety. I turned back to her. “Why do you care, anyway?”
"No reason, except that it’s fascinating. Obviously, Muggle men don’t ever have children. And the mechanics of the potions and charms are so intricate, not mention how remarkably——” She chewed her lip. “—well-adjusted you are about it all. As if it’s normal.”

“It’s normal for us.”

“I’m sorry, that’s not what I meant. Only that it’s interesting that it’s viewed as natural—even though it can only happen with magical intervention——”

“Magic is natural. For us. It’s born unto us. By extension, the ends we achieve using the magic are born unto us. Therefore, they are also natural.”

Granger nodded apologetically. “You’re right. I amend my statement.” A tiny smile, and she returned to her notes.

I swung my feet off the table, and looked at her closely. “That’s it? You just...concede?”

“You made a valid point,” she said, holding her parchment up and squinting at it. “Would you have me argue for the sake of it?”

“I’m a Slytherin. We don’t tend to care about the truth as much as the being-right part.”

She laughed humorlessly, like she often did. “Well, I care about the truth. Now, what counts as truth is another conversation, but you did give a valid argument.”

“Yes, yes, I did.” I sniffed. “Besides, there was no magical intervention with me. I just turned up pregnant. So, not even a Muggle could call that unnatural.”

Granger’s parchment slipped out of her hand and floated towards the floor. “Excuse me? That’s impossible.”

“You sound like my father.” I eyed the parchment, where it landed near my shoe. No...I didn’t feel like picking it up.

“You must have Veela ancestry, then.”

“Certainly not—my father and I searched high and low for it. I really did just get pregnant.”

“You had a partner, though, right?”

“Of course, I did,” I snapped, ducking under the table, grabbing the parchment, and taking the moment to roll my eyes. When I resurfaced, I slapped it down. “What am I, the Virgin Malfoy?”

“Either way—you had to have had an intervention. Your body doesn’t work like that.”

“There was no potion and no charm. Just...Malfoy potency!”

“Right,” Granger said, nodding. Her eyes narrowed in what I would come to know as her shit’s-about-to-go-down face. “It’s just that there’s no such thing.” She snapped her book shut, and stood up.

“What, no, wait,” I said, feeling very needy. She had been picking up my slack for weeks, and I didn’t feel like studying on my own anymore. “What about the project? Which potion shall we do?”

“The Pepper-Ups, I think. Since you clearly have no need for the Gender Reassignment Drought.” She shot me a look, heaved up her giant bag, and marched away.
That was when I learned never to pique Hermione Granger’s curiosity.

***

The next weekend, a tiny cotton ball of an owl flew into the dungeons and commenced in pecking on the door to my dormitory like it was trying to drill a hole. I plucked the note off it’s leg, snorted, and made for the library, where I found Granger pacing on front of a table piled with books.

I folded my arms. “Make it quick. I have plans today.”

“Oh? Spending the Hogsmeade day with someone special?”

“Yes. My son. Well, come on. What was so important I had to slog all the way up here?”

She got a fire under her skirt again. She rounded the table, turned a large book towards me, and pointed triumphantly.

“Well done,” I said, peering into the ancient tome. “It’s a painting of a couple old men.”

“It’s Harpalion. He invented the first potion to enable male pregnancy. And that one holding the potion was his apprentice, Agosto.”

“I told you, I didn’t take a potion.” Was the whole world deaf or just mental?

Granger gave me a stern look. “Please, hold your comments until the end. And your applause, because this is about to get good.”

I crossed my arms, amused and perturbed to be hearing my voice come out of her.

“Now then. The original pregnancy potion was just a fluke of a sex-altering potion—old men wanting a makeshift woman, no doubt. And the potions didn’t work very well. If you stopped taking them while you were pregnant, you would revert back to your male form and spontaneously abort, if you didn’t die. Agosto saw that there were men taking Harpalion’s potions deliberately to get pregnant, and wanted to create a safer alternative. He succeeded, and the recipe was bought from him by the biggest wizarding vendor in Europe at the time, which—wouldn’t you know it?—correlated with the very beginnings of—”

“Muggle witch hunts,” I drawled.

“Yes,” she said, fanning through the book to find an image of a burning witch. “There were fewer witches to go around in the 900s through the 1500s, whether from execution or hiding, and for the wizard eaten up with blood status, this presented a problem. Not wanting to mate with Muggles, many of them started buying pregnancy potions by the fistful.”

“I remember most of this from History of Magic. What do you think it has to do with me?”

Her eyes lit up. “This next bit’s not taught in class. You see, the vendor may have bought the recipe from Agosto, but he wasn’t a practiced alchemist. His manufacturers were brewing cauldrons and cauldrons of the stuff, but, being unskilled, what they didn’t take into consideration were—” Granger smiled expectantly. When she received no response, she added, “It’s the focus of our Potions project? The Pepper-Ups are a series of...?”

I lifted an eyebrow.

She threw her hands up. “Percent-magic concentrations, Malfoy! I’m beginning to think you’re just
pretending to study while you let me do all the work.”

Ah, she was finally catching on. I made a note to redouble my efforts to look involved.

“Anyway, many of these potions were saturated with far too much magic. In the end, some men retained the ability to conceive even after they were done taking potions.”

“If you’re trying to imply I dabbled in pregnancy potions in my childhood, then you’re bonkers.”

“Hush now, and listen. This is where my history ends and my theory begins. Let’s take our magic fundamentals and apply them to this situation. We know that magic absorption in high concentrations has the potential to manifest in a person’s DNA. We know that you come from a long line of pureblood-only witches and wizards. What if this men-carrying-babies trait is a recessive trait that’s popping back up in you hundreds of years later? Or what if it’s a dominant trait? But none of your male ancestors have engaged in the right type of sexual activity for it to have mattered until now?”

“You’ve gone off the deep end,” I said, touching my chin. “But I am intrigued.”

“So, yes! I’ve solved it. I told you I could.” A look of ecstasy overcame her, and I wondered if she and Weasley sat up at night solving riddles as foreplay.

“How can a man go eight days without sleep?” Weasley would ask.

Granger would roll her eyes. “He only sleeps at night, Ron!”

“Well, baby, you’re not going to be sleeping tonight.”

“Oh my!”

I was snickering to myself. Granger was staring in confusion. I gathered myself and said, “You didn’t solve anything, Granger. You made a hypothesis. Next time you talk to me about valid arguments, don’t use this as an example. It’s a good bit of speculation you have, but where’s your proof?”

“You’re my proof.”

“I’m one man. It doesn’t follow that if I get pregnant, I’m automatically a product of this history. I’ll need some sort of evidence before I go into the record books as a genetic oddity.”

She put her hands on her hips. “What do you want me to do, go to a lab at a Muggle university and isolate the gene?”

“I don’t want you to do anything. This is your quest, not mine. I’m happy assuming all Malfoys are exceptionally powerful wizards and leaving it at that. Malfoy potency.” I moved my hand through the air like I was drawing out a banner. “Has a regal sort of ring to it, don’t you think? We are truly remarkable.”

Her mouth opened in such a way that it was clear she did not find that regal or remarkable. “I’ll find something!”

“And how?” I asked, leaning towards her challengingly.

“The proper way.” She gathered herself up, tall and proud. “With books.”

“There, there, Granger. Keep it in the bedroom.” She looked confused again, so I added quickly, “Now, if you’ll excuse me I’ve got to—”
“Hermione!” someone hissed. Ah, lover boy himself had appeared. Weasley looked neither surprised nor pleased to see me. “There you are. I thought you were coming to Hogsmeade with us. We’ve been waiting for ages.”

“We just finished,” she said, gathering her book bag, which she shrunk into a manageable wrist purse. “Oh, Malfoy, you said you were on your way to Hogsmeade. Why don’t you walk with us?”

Weasley got visibly uncomfortable. I liked that.

“I suppose there’s no way around it,” I chirped.

But I should have predicted that Potter would be joining us, and I did not like that. It was just too uncomfortable. My mischievous spark burned out when I saw him on the castle steps with Longbottom and Dean Thomas, and I resigned to walking slightly behind the five of them, kicking through the autumn leaves starting to cover the ground.

“Where’s Ginny?” Granger was asking.

“Quidditch practice again,” Potter said, looking a touch bothered.

“Yeah, it’s bollocks,” Weasley declared. “Eighth years aren’t any different than seventh years. Why can’t we play on the teams?”

Granger and Longbottom shared an amused look. “Because it’s not fair, obviously,” she said. “Pitting eighteen and nineteen years olds against students as young as twelve? They wouldn’t stand a chance. Besides, there won’t be an eighth year program next year, so I’m sure it wasn’t worth McGonagall’s effort to worry about.”

“Still, a man likes to burn off some steam at the end of a hard day’s work.” It sounded like Weasley had been waiting a long time to say those words out loud.

“You should have thought of that before you decided to go to Hogwarts and work for the Ministry.”

“It was Harry’s bloody—”

“Here’s an idea,” said Longbottom, looking over his shoulder. I was caught off guard by the benevolence in his eyes. “Malfoy, what do you think the Slytherins would say to sort of an intramural league? We could get all the eighth years from each house together.”

“You’re interested in Quidditch, Nev?” Weasley asked, trying to steer the attention away from me.

“No, but it would probably help with all the negative feelings if we got everyone together. Lightbaum was going on about how our generation should be the first to take blood politics by the nuts and toss it aside.”

“Neville!” Granger admonished, grinning.

He blushed. “Well, that was the jist of it. And I think we should include everyone in the effort—everyone who wants to be included. Don’t you agree?”

We had stopped on the road. Granger and Dean Thomas seemed to be having a silent conversation. The rest were staring at me, making me feel oddly exposed. I wrapped my cloak tighter around myself.

Potter broke the silence. “Good man, Neville,” he said, squeezing Longbottom’s shoulder. He turned
to me. “What do you say? Quidditch league?”

Really, I didn’t want to. I was busy enough with N.E.W.T.s and Armand, and I feared Pansy might actually never speak to me again if I took up with this crowd. But Potter was giving me a funny little half-smile, and, Good Lord, he was pretty. Imagine that new body of his fitted with riding gear.

I nodded slowly. “We might be amenable to that.”

Potter hung back, while the others walked a few paces ahead of us already picking captains and arguing over whether townspeople and faculty should be included. He looked at me sideways, the half-smile still softening his face. “It’ll be fun, don’t you think?”

“Maybe. I haven’t played in quite a long time—quit halfway through sixth year.” I regretted saying that. The reason why I quit hung unspoken in the air.

“Well,” he said, eyes crinkling like he had a secret, “you’ll pick it up. You’re a great flyer.”

“Don’t start complimenting me, Potter. I can’t handle all this at once. First Granger accosts me, and then you both thank me, and now all this Quidditch talk. I’m growing dizzy from the surrealness of it all.”

“Don’t faint,” he laughed, pretending to steady my elbow. We traded a heavy look, and he pulled back immediately. “Sorry. Oh, I met your son, by the way. Cute kid.”

“You what?” I stopped in my tracks, dirt billowing around me.

Potter adjusted his glasses. “Erm, yeah. He was there with your mum when I went to visit my godson. They’re the same age, Armand and Teddy, and they seem like best mates already. Anyway, my godson stays with your mum’s sister, and your mum was there when I popped in for tea. Bit awkward, but—” He made a whatever face, and continued down the road.

I had to concentrate on putting one foot in front of the other. “And when was this?”

“Last weekend when I was in London for work.”

“I see.”

“Yeah, and he rather likes me. Sorry about that. I know Malfoys aren’t supposed to.” He winked.

I ignored the way my stomach flipped. “Nonsense! Armand hates everyone but his father.”

“I suppose he just crawls after everyone he hates, then.”

“He crawls now?” I put both hands in my hair, despairing. I didn’t know what part of this was upsetting me most—missing even more of Armand’s progress or the fact that Potter, of all people, got to witness it instead. “I didn’t even know you knew I had a baby.”

“Yeah, there had been rumors. And I was...shocked, if I’m honest. I didn’t even know wizards could do that, which I never should have told Hermione, because then she yelled at me for not paying attention in a History of Magic.” He looked at me thoughtfully, almost sadly, and added, “I suppose magic knows no bounds, right?”

“Right,” I said softly, staring at the side of his head. Surely he was going to ask the obvious questions: How old is Armand—exactly? Do you think his eyes look like mine? Why does he crawl after me if he’s supposed to hate everyone but his father? But Potter just stared ahead, all handsome-
like. “Don’t you have anything else to say to me?” I demanded.

He sighed. “Just that Montague was a good choice for you. Slytherin, but a stand up Slytherin. I’m sorry about what happened to him.” He touched my elbow again, but this time it was a comforting gesture. “Come on, the others are way ahead, and I think they may be trying to keep me from being a Quidditch captain.”

“Couldn’t have that, could we?” I remarked, enjoying the way his eyes hardened with determination.

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Potter was right. Armand was crawling. In fact, he crawled straight from my mother’s arms, past me, to take a chocolate biscuit from Mr. Montague’s unsuspecting hand. My heart about melted out of my chest. By the time I kissed him goodbye, as he opened and closed his longing little fist, I felt less sure than ever that the child in Mrs. Montague’s arms belonged to her son. She and Armand both had green eyes, yes. But Armand’s were different, more brilliant, both in color and in spirit.

I walked amongst the shops of Hogsmeade under a gentle rain, realizing that even if I wanted to know the truth, I didn’t know how to go about finding it. Laughter was floating out of the Three Broomsticks. Through the dingy glass, I could see Pansy, Zabini, and Goyle sharing a table covered in empty glasses and spent chip platters. Perhaps they could lift my spirits. With some spirits.

“Well, well.” Pansy said, gesturing at me with her wine glass, “you tore yourself away from the Mudblood long enough to see your friends.”

I stopped at the edge of the table, unsure if I was welcome.

“Don’t worry about her,” Zabini said, peeling Pansy’s fingers off the stem of her glass. “She’s on her fourth chardonnay of the evening.”

“No, I’m fine.” She pulled the glass to her chest. “We were just talking about you, Draco—weren’t we Goyle? Why’re you always in the library with her? It’s getting to be offensive.”

“I’m not always in the library. Just a couple times a week. She’s just...useful when it comes to Potions, all right? And it’s been helpful socially. No one really mutters about me being a You-Know-What anymore. You know as well as I do, we need every leg up we can get in this touchy-feely climate.”

Pansy studied me. Her eyes were hooded with suspicion and far too much make-up, and I worried for a moment blue shadow was returning to vogue. “All right,” she said, pulling out a chair. “I was just worried you were making friends with a Muggle-born. Silly me.”

I stole her chardonnay, and said, “Damn right, silly you.” She laughed.

“OY! MALFOY!”

I looked up, mid-sip. Ron Weasley was waving at me from across the pub, sloshing lager onto an unamused Granger’s head.

“YOU GONNA PLAY QUIDDITCH OR WHAT?”

Pansy’s face was pinching up so tight I thought it would bruise. Zabini was taking the chardonnay from my hand and knocking it back. Goyle was eating a meat pie.

“So, here’s the situation,” I said delicately to my friends. “It would...promote the idea of unity...”
Saying the word made my teeth hurt. “...if we were to look as though we liked them enough to play Quiditch with them. It would improve our social standing. Make it easier for us to get jobs in the future. Same argument as before.”

“Plus, Quidditch is fun,” Goyle said.

I pointed at him. “Yes! Yes, it is.”

Zabini had the devil’s grin on his face. He looked at Potter, then back at me. “I’m in.”

Pansy rounded on him. “How could you say that? They’re blood-traitors and Gryffindors and annoying.”

“She’s in, too,” Zabini said, taking her by the wrist. “Let’s go.”

So, we did. How very strange it was. Zabini wouldn’t stop smirking at Potter. Weasley wouldn’t stop laughing uncomfortably. And I couldn’t look anyone in the eye but Goyle, not that he looked back; he was watching Thomas draw cartoons on a napkin. After the awkwardness was stripped away with another round of drinks, we decided to pick teams after the Christmas holidays. There weren’t enough Slytherins for a full House team, plus Longbottom was of the opinion that House separations would only tempt hostility. For this observation, he earned a kiss from the barmaid, Hannah Abbott, and all the Gryffindors whooped. Pansy was on her best behavior for Pansy, only embarrassing me once. “Shall we get some Muggles in on it, too?” she asked from Zabini’s lap (this development was news to me). “Perhaps they can referee.” With alcohol lubricating the mood, her comment went largely unnoticed. It wasn’t until a sober Ginny Weasley showed up with a broomstick slung over her shoulder that things got tense.

“What’s all this, then?” she asked, eyeing my group suspiciously. I felt my hackles go up as she slid into Potter’s lap, as well. Potter’s eyes flicked towards me, but he grabbed her around the waist, just the same, and launched into a drunken retelling of the news.

“Brilliant, I’m in!” she exclaimed.

Weasley jumped to his feet. “Nope, you can’t, you’re a seventh year. HA!”

“But I want to promote unity, too,” she said, eyeing me as if she wanted to promote uniting her broomstick to the back of my head.

Potter took a long drink of lager, and shrugged. “Exclusion isn’t the point, Ron. Go on, let her play. I’ll even let you have her on your team.”

“How generous of you to loan me out,” Ginny said, giving Potter a slow kiss.

“Fine,” Weasley said, sinking into his chair. “But it’s not competitive, Gin. It’s all in good fun.” He snatched his goblet and glowered. “Now, get off his lap, before I clobber you both.”

For the first time ever, I rather liked this Weasley fellow.

***

“You’re going to be thrilled,” Granger told me one snowy January afternoon.

“Is that really an emotion you associate with me?”
“Malfoy, the first time you wore your Gucci boots, you literally squealed and spun in a circle.”

I did not have to dignify that with response. Instead, I watched her throw her bag onto the library table and dig in its depths. “If it’s the Pepper-Up Potions assignment, I already happen to know we got full marks,” I reminded her.

She made a high noise in her throat. “No thanks to you.”

“Bollocks, I watched it boil for hours.”

Finch-Fletchley shushed us. He had stopped making evil eyes and moved on to treating both Granger and me like we were very annoying. Which I supposed we were, spending more time musing about my pregnancy than studying.

“Over the holiday, I went to a Muggle university after all,” she whispered, “but not to isolate a gene. I spent days in the library at Cambridge—it was so wonderful!”

“Isn’t that an all-Muggle institution?”

“Yes,” she said cheekily, taking out a binder full of bright white parchment (“photocopies,” she later informed me). The page she revealed contained the biography of a man with whom I was somewhat familiar.

“William the Conqueror?” I asked.

“Your father may have researched your family history, but he missed some important details.”

I pushed it away. “I don’t know what you’re getting at, but you fail already. I’m not related to this Muggle.”

“You’re not. But some of your ancestors are.” She placed an open copy of the Malfoy Family History book in front of me, and I found myself looking at the official portrait of Armand Malfoy the First. He was decked in his finest armor, a crimson cloak, and sat brooding in his frame.

“What are you talking about? They were friends, not relations. Armand helped William conquer Britain with magic, and William thanked Armand by gifting him the Malfoy family lands.”

“Or did he put Armand on those lands, so he’d have a place to give birth to their children in privacy?”

Armand in the picture looked around frantically, trying to find the source of this scandalous statement.

“Granger, that’s preposterous!” (Armand nodded, and returned to brooding.)

She flipped to a bookmarked section of her binder. “These are letters from William the Conqueror's wife to her sister in Flanders. She was quite the unsavory gossip for someone so posh, and that’s lucky, because she provided some key information in my research.”

These photocopies seemed to come from originals riddled with watermarks and holes; their scrawling French was in a dialect I could barely comprehend.

“They were difficult to decipher,” Granger explained, “but once I did, I found her mentioning William’s nighttime meetings with ‘a war general with yellow hair’ who was seen to carry ‘a shining branch of yew in his waistbelt.’”
My mouth was hanging open. “These records are incredible. How did you—?”

“They were hiding in the Cambridge library’s special collections.”

“And they just let you walk in and make copies?”

“Of course not. Honestly. But I’m a witch. I manage.”

Granger had already translated several passages.

...The general is demanding more land in England. I don’t know why William succumbs to his wishes with such relish...

...The general was here for a fortnight, though the the battles in England have been finished for some time, and I sense no uprising on the horizon. Sister, I fear for my husband’s soul if my suspicions for the general’s visits are true...

...He is terribly ugly. His figure fluctuates like no other man’s and the belly that currently precedes him could rival any woman’s filled with child...

“Filled with child,” I whispered, looking at Granger. She was smirking.

“I couldn’t find any relevant birth records in either man’s genealogy. But there are records of three new births in the Malfoy household around the time these letters were written. They were attributed to the hired help and sent to an orphanage. But records indicate that the Malfoys were using house-elves a hundred years before this. There were simply no other people at the manor, as Armand wasn’t married yet. I think you know where I’m going with this.”

I looked at the painting of Armand, aghast. “Is this true? Did you bear those children?” He shrugged an armored shoulder, and looked away. “And you put them out instead of being a gentleman about it?”

Armand pretended not to hear me.

If you asked me to pinpoint my outrage towards my ancestor, I could have spat many adjectives about him: home-wrecking, dishonorable, low-life, Muggle-loving. But to him I simply spat, “I named my son after you,” and closed the book on his snooty face.

Granger was leaning on her fist. “There’s no reason to be upset. You’re not a descendant of Armand’s children. Your blood is as pure as it was yesterday.”

“Sarcasm does not suit you,” I said, noting how pleased she was to have ruffled my feathers. “Anyway, if it were about blood I’d be more worried about my child than me.”

Her eyes sharpened.

Fuck. Did I just say what I think I said?

“I thought the Montagues were pureblood,” she said hastily.

“Never you mind. Many thanks for your assistance. Well, have a nice day.”

Before I could stand, she was leaning forward, quite intense. “Isn’t Graham Montague your baby’s father?”

“I’m not sure how to answer that question, Granger.” Which was true.
“Is there someone else? Someone secret?” Her voice had risen so high that Finch-Fletchley had snapped his quill in frustration.

“Keep—it—down,” I hissed, looking at her like I would baby Armand if he had mashed peas into my Armani jacket. “And what’s with you and secrets? That’s enough, all right? You’ve solved the mystery. Huzzah, my arse is fertile because an ancient merchant never took arithmetic. The end!”

Not for Granger. I could see in those beseeching eyes that her mystery had just begun.

"God, you must be bored," I moaned. “I don’t think you wanted my help with N.E.W.T.s this year. I think you were just looking for stimulation that clearly Weasley isn't capable of providing."

"And who has been stimulating you?"

"Granger!" I exclaimed, putting a hand to my chest. Had I made her so catty? Was this the product of my hard work? Looking back, I’m proud, but at the time, I was right bothered. “Look, not that it's remotely your business, but you've got me—I don’t really know who Armand's father is. It’s one of two men, one of whom is dead. The other is occupied with someone else at the moment.”

“And even if he weren’t, you wouldn’t tell him, because you wouldn’t want anyone to know your son might not be a pureblood.”

More like: my father would disown me and then hunt me for sport if he knew I’d been fucking his boss’s arch nemesis under his nose. But she didn’t have to know that.

“Yes.”

“Are you out of your mind, Malfoy? We live in a world where practically every wizarding family is grieving a lost loved one, and Graham Montague’s parents are probably clinging to your son as the last piece of their own, and you’re keeping a secret like this? It would probably make this other man very happy to learn he has a child.”

“If it’s his.”

“If it’s his. You should find out for everyone’s sake.”

“Cut the nobility act. You’re just nosy.”

“I can be nosy and concerned.”

“It’s not your place to be either! And even if it were, there’s no way to figure this out. Graham is dead. And I’m certainly not going to walk up to the other bloke, twirl my hair, and ask him to escort me to the mediwizard for no apparent reason.”

She looked at me like I was stupid. How dare she?

“If you don’t want him to know beforehand,” she explained, “there are other ways. Muggle ways.”

“Muggle ways,” I scoffed, and pointedly looked out the window. I looked back. “I mean. Like what?”

“Simple DNA tests you can do with samples from Armand and the Montagues. I could probably order one by owl.”

The idea was appealing—receiving the answer to a near two-year-old question without having to reveal my dilemma to anyone.
“But then...what if it’s not Graham?” I muttered, more to myself than Granger. “I don’t know what my parents would do. *His* parents might go off the deep end. And the other fellow...he seems...I don’t know...quite taken with that girl...."

I was startled when Granger leaned over her books and placed a gentle hand on my arm. “Wouldn’t you like to know for your own peace of mind? And what are you going to do when your son is older, keep up the lie?”

“It’s not a lie. I never actually told anyone Graham was the father. I just let them assume.”

“Regardless, it’s the ethical thing to do.”

“No,” I snapped, brushing her away. “The ethical thing to protect my son’s interests. He has a large family that loves him now. If the wrong answer comes back—there’s no telling what will happen.”

“But Malf—”

“I said *NO*, Granger.”

Her mouth stopped working, but not her mind. Not that meddlesome girl’s mind.

***

The eighth year Quidditch opener marked the first day of Spring. There were only a handful of chilly but well-sunned spectators in the stands, since it was Sunday morning and the proper Quidditch match had taken place the day before. (Gryffindor had ruined Slytherin 310-30, and I promptly wrote to Dad’s financial manager about making a racing broom donation to our House. Perhaps next term we could sweep up our pride). Longbottom released the Quaffle, and fourteen brooms made for the sky. My team may have included students from each House, but we all had a common goal: to win the best of seven games and force the losers to buy us drinks in Hogsmeade.

“Stay up high and watch her,” Potter shouted over the wind, tossing his head towards Ginny Weasley. “She likes to zip around, make you think she sees something—you know, get you flustered.”

I nodded, though finding the Snitch was far from my mind, thinking back to the other day.

***

I was out of breath, shivering, and sore all over, but pleased to be part of a team again, as I walked back to the castle with Goyle, Zabini, Susan Bones, Terry Boot, Dean Thomas, and Potter, after our practice.

“Hey,” Potter said, holding me apart from the group. The soft, shy way he was looking at me, I expected something from his mouth other than, “What do you think about playing Seeker?”

I rumpled my hair, confused. “I’ve been practicing Chaser for weeks.”

“Yeah, and you’re fast. Faster than me now. You’ve really improved.”

“As much as I’d like to take credit, Potter, I’m not faster. You’re just slower.”

“Really,” he said, pretending to be offended.

“Really. That new muscle isn’t good for everything,” I said, nudging him on the arm. Can you believe my forwardness? It must have been the adrenaline of sport.
“So, you’ve noticed, then.” Potter looked deeply pleased with himself. When I hummed indifference, he went on. “Well, you have a point. I am slower. I’m thinking of switching to Beater, putting Zabini on Chaser, and you to Seeker. The talent will make up for the lost practice.”

“Don’t flatter yourself.”

“You know I meant you,” he said, eyes shining.

***

I had been daydreaming for so long, I didn’t notice the Snitch hovering next to my ear.

“Malfoy, get your hands out of your pants and focus!” Thomas cried.

I gasped. The Snitch was startled away. I turned my broom for it, but Weasley was already zipping past me, red hair streaking behind her. She plummeted towards the grass, hand stretched towards the glittering ball just out of reach. I angled my broom down, increasing my speed perilously, wanting to show Potter he hadn’t made a mistake, and when I fell in line with Weasley I could see her eyes smiling behind her goggles; a split second later, she jabbed me with her elbow, sending me careening to the left, and then she shot back up into the sky.

That bitch!

I flipped around, toes dragging through the grass, and launched after her.

“I thought Gryffindors played by the rules!” I shouted.

“Only excessive elbowing is against the rules!”

It must have been her smug little face that made my adrenaline-fueled forwardness spike again.

“You know what else is excessive? The amount of tongue Potter uses when he kisses. My God, it’s like a full-facial massage.”

“What are you—?” Her broom swerved, but she caught herself. “Shut up, you’re disgusting!”

“Pretty hot, though, don’t you think? He just loses himself when he’s passionate, and starts pawing at you like an animal. Gryffindor lion, indeed!”

Weasley went bright pink, and I began to laugh. She grabbed my broom handle, trying to push me away. I heard Neville’s whistle blowing like mad, but she did not relent, so I continued to prod.

“And he gets his motor running so fast, wouldn’t you say? What is he? A full eight—eight and a half inches?”

“YOU FUCKING PERVERT—”

The Snitch was teasing me behind her head. It dropped out of sight. I hurdled under Weasley, sending her off balance with a squeal, and dove for it. I could hear the rush of wind, smell the sweetness of victory, imagine Potter hugging me in our triumph—and then I couldn’t breath.

I met the ground with a thud.

There was cheering. There was the scream of Longbottom’s whistle. All of it was hazy. I was mostly
focused on the acute panging in my ribs.

“OY, RON!” someone shouted quite close. “Get your Beaters in line!”

I opened my eyes. Potter was crouching over me. “You didn’t fall far, but it looked like it hurt,” he said, heaving me up.

I moaned, leaning on his shoulder. “Where’s my broom?” I asked, determined to get back into the sky.

“Don’t worry about it.” He looked up. Both Weasleys were hugging on their brooms, with Ginny clutching the Snitch.

I growled, both in anger and pain. “How’d she knock me down from so far away?’

The players were beginning to gather around. Pansy pushed through the crowd and barked, “It wasn’t Weasley.” She looked at a blond boy with curly hair. “It was Finch-Fletchley.”

Finch-Fletchley shrugged. “Thought that was my job.”

“You know there’s no hands-on contact like that,” she said, pushing into his space. “You plowed right into him, you bastard!”

“He was attacking Ginny,” Finch-Fletchley said, looking past Pansy to scowl at me.

The Weasleys were on the ground now. Ginny was flushed, pleased with her catch, but still glaring at me. “He wasn’t attacking me. He was just being an arsehole, trying to spin me up—”

Pansy charged up to her. “You were grabbing his broom, Weasley!”

“Ginny, really?” Granger said, breathless. She had just run down from the stands.

“You don’t know what he was saying! Some really—horrid stuff about Harry—”

Potter heaved a sigh, and took his arm off me to clap his hands hard. The arguing stopped. “It doesn’t matter what was said. There’s no broomstick grabbing.” He said this pointing to Ginny, and then rounded on Finch-Fletchley. “And no excessive contact. If anyone else is violent, they’re out.”

“Nah,” Finch-Fletchley said, tossing his broom on the ground. “I’m out right now. I don’t want to play with You-Know-Who’s favorite Death Eater.”

“I can’t say I feel differently,” Ginny said, crossing her arms.

Harry gave her a dark look. “Don’t you lower yourself like that,” he said roughly. He took me by the waist. “Come on, let’s go to the hospital wing.”

“No,” I said, jerking away. Even though no one else had openly agreed with Finch-Fletchley and Ginny, I could feel their judgement in the air. Longbottom was scuffing the ground with his shoe. Thomas was hovering protectively near Ginny. The others were trading worried looks. Cowards, all of them. “I don’t want to be where I’m not wanted,” I said.

“Draco—”

“Just leave it, Potter.”

Pansy, Zabini, and Goyle followed me silently.
Granger found me hiding in a different section of the library. “Haven’t seen you outside class in a while.”

I didn’t look up from my Potions book. “I’ve been in the dungeons, where I belong.” She didn’t hear the unspoken, *Now, go away.* I looked up to find her chewing her lip and clutching a tiny parcel. “That better not be what I think it is,” I said wearily.

“Come on, Malfoy. I thought it might cheer you up...you know, take some uncertainty out of your life. So, I took the liberty of—well, here.”

She thrust it at me. The parcel read *Dawdling Daddies DNA Services.*

I looked at her from under my fringe, annoyed. She blathered like she couldn’t tell. “Obviously we’re not, well, *friends*, you and me. But we are something that could pass for it. Aren’t we? And I’ve known you long enough to see how important your family is to you. Maybe you’re fine now, but when Armand gets older, you’re going to want to tell him about his other half.”

“Merlin, I’ve never met anyone like you,” I sighed, pushing aside my book. The words had been swimming on the page, anyway. "Why are you so interested in me? Except for one hiccup, I’ve always treated you like dirt. And don’t tell me it’s Potions, because you’ve been doing my homework all year.”

She put her hand in her hair, fluffing it up in her way. “I don’t know. I think it might be Harry.”

Well, you know *that* honed my interest. “Come again?”

She sat quickly. “Harry...he’s really taken to these buzzwords floating around—unity, trust, reform—except Harry’s not like those politicians who just *say* the words. He wants to *act* them, but he can’t do it all on his own. He gave me the idea to testify for you, after he did your mother and Zabini. He was sad because he didn’t want to overstep his bounds, testifying for half the Death Eaters, so I told him I would. And he was really grateful. He seems to think highly of you. You’re kind of his poster boy for this stuff, but don’t tell him I told you so.”

"I see,” I said, wrinkling my nose to hide the feelings overtaking me. *He thinks of me. He looks out for me. He likes me.*

“Anyway, it started out as just a favor to him, and then I—" Granger rolled her eyes bashfully. "—well, I took a liking to your smarmy arse. Pardon my language. And I thought if I kept on you, you’d come out of your slump and then all of us could benefit. It was working pretty well until the other day on the pitch.” She was giving me a most pitiful face, which I would come to know as her Let-Me-Help-or-I'll-Annoy-You-To-Death face.

Heaving a sigh, I placed the DNA kit between us. “You’ve got to stop mother henning me after this. I’ve already got Pansy for that, though she’s more like a mother tarantula.”

She started bouncing in her seat. “So, you’ll do it?”

“Merlin’s hat, why not?”

“Brilliant! All right, this will be tricky if you don’t want Montague’s family to know what’s going on. You’ll need to get a DNA sample from one of his parents, as well as Armand.”
“Shouldn’t be hard. I see them two or three times a month.”

“But it’s not like Polyjuice, where you can just steal a hair off their pillow. It needs to be freshly acquired DNA—a cotton swab to the mouth, ideally. I was thinking—”

I snapped my fingers. “I’ve got it.”

“Do you?”

“Of course. I may not care for homework, but I’m just as clever as you.”

"Malfoy," she said, smiling, “was that a compliment?"

I turned back to my Potions book, nose up. "Don’t get used to it."

***

I opened the colorful box in front of Mr. Montague’s moustache, and said, “Candy Brushes! You can paint the inside of your mouth with them, and you’ll taste sweets for hours. I think these are marshmallow flavor. I saw them in Honeydukes while I was looking for a treat for Armand, and thought of your sweet tooth.”

“Oh! That was too kind of you, lad,” he said, plucking out a cotton swab. He sucked on it for a moment, and then gave me a disturbed look. “Why, these don’t taste of anything.”

“No? Right, I’ll just chuck the lot. Honeydukes isn’t a terribly reputable establishment, anyway....”

I retrieved Armand’s sample in privacy when he needed a nappy change.

“Draco, don’t you want to let a house-elf do that?” my mother chided.

“No, no, I see him so little that even the smelliest moments are charming moments.”

I took the sample, changed the nappy, and informed my mother that she had been right—some things should not be observed with decent eyes. Or noses, for that matter.

A week later, there was the April Hogsmeade trip, and I spotted Granger in the window of Weasley’s Wizard Wheezes. I made excuses to my friends, and rushed inside to loom over her shoulder.

“It’s been a whole week!”

Granger jumped. She whirled around wearing spectacles that made your eyes glitter with rainbow colors. “What?”

“A week, I say! How long does it take Muggles to complete a simple task? I paid good money for that test.”

“What test?” asked some Weasley with only one good ear, popping out from behind a shelf with a fresh box of merchandise.

Why were all Gryffindors so nosy? I pointed at him and said, “A test to see if you’re really that ugly or if your mother dropped you on your face, now bugger off!”
“OY, this is my store, and you can bugger off and out of it, you pointy little—”

“Sorry, George,” Granger said, giving me a dirty look. She pulled me outside, amongst skipping students and street vendors, and put her hands on her hips. “Malfoy, calm down. It’s not as if I’ve ever had to do this before, so I don’t know how long it’ll take. You’ll just have to be patient.”

“But it’s hard.”

“You didn’t even want to do this last week. What’s changed?”

“Nothing, except I keep seeing Armand’s maybe-father around every corner, and it’s driving me up the wall! I swear they have the same eyes.”

“What! Do you mean to tell me goes to Hogwa—?” She left her mouth open, looking over my shoulder. I turned in time for my eagle owl to drop a thick envelope unceremoniously onto my head.

“You—blighter!” But I wasn’t angry. I was suddenly frightened out of my mind. The answer was in my hand, and my world, Armand’s world, might be about to change forever. “What now?” I asked stupidly.

“Honestly, Draco.” She plucked the envelope from my fingers. I was so nervous I hardly noticed the over-familiarity. “Do you want me to open it?”

I nodded.

She ripped it open and scanned the contents, but I couldn’t read her expression. *Maybe I shouldn’t try. Maybe I should just run away.*

She frowned. “Do you want to know?”

I nodded.

“It’s not Montague,” she said gently.

“Are you...sure...?”

“I’m sure. They weren’t his genes.”

“Who’s jeans?”

I jumped when someone clapped me on the shoulder. Potter.

*Potter!*

I clutched my gut and looked away. In the window of Honeydukes, they were displaying the real Candy Brushes. I looked away again, which left me staring at the letter crumpled in Granger’s hand.

“Oh, er—Giorgio Armani’s jeans,” Granger said quickly. “We were speculating that Blaise Zabini might have been wearing knock-offs the other day.”

That did the trick. Potter zoned out immediately and turned to Ron Weasley, who had rushed up beside him with a bagful of Wizard Wheeze samples, and they set about trying to decide which of their Auror comrades they should boobytrap.

“Knock-off jeans? How dare you?”
“Oh my God,” it was Pansy. She pushed up on my other side with Zabini in tow, her black eyes flashing like a stormy sky.

“I would never date someone wearing knock-off jeans,” she said. “Your boyfriend, on the other hand, would do better to dress in burlap. And you, Granger, wear pantyhose.” She paused for effect. “In the summer!” When Granger simply gaped at me, Pansy followed her eyes. “I thought you weren’t hanging around this lot anymore.”

Weasley folded his long arms over his chest. “Leave him alone, Parkinson, he can see who he pleases.”

Zabini’s chest puffed out. “You’ll want to take a respectful tone when you’re talking to my girl, Weasel.”

“Big man, Zabini, stepping up to make sure everyone knows you have a girlfriend? We get it, you’re straight!”

“I ought to hex those blemishes right off your face!”

Granger was worrying her lip, looking between Weasley and my friends and then back at me, while I couldn’t focus on anything but the humming in my shoulder, where Potter’s hand still rested, his pinky finger just grazing my neck. I dared not look at him. But I could sense him, watching the conflict with a mixture of pity and amusement.

At last, Weasley waved Zabini away like a mosquito. “I don’t want to waste my day off on this rubbish. Come on ‘Mione, we’re all meeting up at the Three Broomsticks.”

“And we’ll be at Hogwarts. In Slytherin.” Pansy said Slytherin, but I knew what she really meant was not-Gryffindor.

I don’t think I exhaled until they dispersed. Potter walked away, quirking his cheek, tilting his head at me in a come-with gesture. Granger looked over her shoulder, clearly worried she was responsible for my impending suicide. I shook my head. They both looked disappointed, but I supposed for different reasons. I sank onto the steps of Weasley’s Wizard Wheezes, heedless of the teenagers tramping up and down past me, thinking one thought, over and over, until it began to seem unreal.

I have a baby with Harry Potter.

Merlin, I’d been a fool to take that test. It would never work out. Potter had a girlfriend. And a life in London. And he’d made his notoriety destroying my kind. And what about the Montagues? They’d be crushed. Their son had died protecting me, thinking I’d bore his child. And Armand was their only link to him. And if all that wasn’t enough, perhaps this could top it off nicely: my father was going to kill me. Maybe it was fortunate he hadn’t been pardoned from Azkaban.

The sun set. I pulled my legs to my chest and drew up my hood, trying to hide from the cruelty of it all.

***

A couple hours later, I saw a row of broomsticks outside the pub, and knew instantly that the eighth years had come to celebrate (and concede) a Quidditch victory. I didn’t want a bunch of loud company, but I didn’t want to be alone either; and certainly Pansy would be no comfort, since she thought I had abandoned her for this lot. I walked in, ordered two shots of Ogden’s brand vodka, and knocked them back before succumbing to Granger’s worried gaze.
The only empty seat was on a bench between her and Potter. Such was my luck, you know. I lowered myself gently, so as not to draw Potter’s attention—thankfully both Weasleys were in the middle of a story about a spectacular play they had performed—and ended up edging so far away from him that I was practically in Granger’s lap.

“How are you doing?” she whispered.

I was still eyeballing Potter, hyper-aware of his hand near my thigh. Was he doing that on purpose? “You didn’t tell him anything, did you?” I asked absently.

“No, of course not.” Granger paused. “Wait. Harry? Why would I tell Harry?” Her eyes went round like saucers. She slapped one hand over her mouth to conceal a squeal. When that didn’t work, she slapped the other hand on top of it.

Only then did I realize my transparency. Damn fucking Ogden’s.

“Granger, shut it!” I barked.


Granger kept her mouth covered, nodding, layers of frizz flopping. Then she stood up stiff as a post, and announced, “Malfoy and I are going on a walk!”

Weasley stopped his story, dejected. “But you already hung out with him today.”

“Yes, well, we both need the air, you see. Always in the library, and all that.” And she yanked me outside, like the bossy wench she was. We were in the dark alleyway between the Three Broomsticks and Catapult Cafe before she rounded on me. “How could you keep this a secret?”

“Well, it’s news to me, too! And nothing you need to be upset about. Merlin!”

“But it’s Harry. Our Harry! Why didn’t I see this sooner? I mean, I knew he liked you—but this much? Oh my goodness.” Her hands flew to her mouth again.

“Am I really that repulsive?”

“That’s not what I mean. You know your history with him. At least, what I thought was your history. And we all know you’re gay, but Harry—?”

“You all know I’m—? Why is that so obvious to everyone?” Yes, my voice was rising! Yes, my hands were waving! Who are you to judge? I’d had a very upsetting day!

Granger was paying me no mind. Her eyes were flicking every direction, catching the lamplight. “I guess he has been oddly sympathetic to you this year. And he was downright obsessed in sixth year.

He was glued to that map of his the whole—”

“Wait, map? That sneaky—”

“Good Lord, Harry has a baby,” she exclaimed. “With you! I can’t get over it. Oh! Is that why you refused to identify him when they were holding us captive at your manor? Because you...had feelings for him?”

“No.” I crossed my arms, looking at the cobblestone, the streetlamp, anywhere but her fuzzy, always-right head. When Granger stood back and put her hands on her hips, my shoulders drooped in defeat. “Fine, yes. Whatever. Damn it all, this changes everything, Granger. I was perfectly happy
thinking Armand’s father was dead. Now I have to lie to him his whole life.”

“Why?” she asked, taken aback.

“It’s Potter. He already has the Weasley girl, and if I tell him he has a son with me, he’ll want to take half the responsibility for him. Then what’ll I have? Half a son and still no Har—” My voice cracked.

Granger put a hand to her chest, looking at me for what seemed like the very first time. Her eyes were warm and sympathetic, and I couldn’t decide if I wanted to hug or kill her.

“Besides,” I said softly, “he knows when we slept together. If he cared, he would have asked me about Armand’s paternity when he found out I’d had him.”

She touched my shoulder. “Don’t give me that. You know Harry is smart, but he’s really dense when it comes to things like this.”

“Things like what? Mathematics? He can count the months backwards, can’t he?”

“Malfoy,” she said, looking down the alley at the passersby. Some were glancing at us, and I dearly hoped we hadn’t spilled any details too loudly. “You have to understand. Harry didn’t even know wizards could have babies until rumors about you started popping up. He doesn’t pay attention to that kind of thing. He doesn’t pay attention to anything common sense, actually, like how to style his hair or how dress himself. Ginny and I showed him that last summer. In fact—” She lowered her voice conspiratorially. “He came to me about being intimate with Ginny for the first time—”

My stomach lurched. “Please, spare me.”

“Goodness, I’m sorry,” she said quickly. “That was stupid of me. It’s just...I imagine when you and he—you know—he probably wasn’t the taking the initiative, was he?”

I thought back to that awkward afternoon in the abandoned classroom: Potter, clutching his pants, staring at my naked lower half, wondering, “Er, now what?”

“That’s true,” I said.

“You see. Harry knows a lot about fighting evil and being a naturally charming person. But he’s really quite dense about life stuff. If you want him to know that the baby is his, you’re going to have to spell it out for him.”

“Right, good to know.” I looked through the window at the eighth years. Potter, Weasley, and Ginny were huddled together, snickering, as if one of them had just told a joke too impolite for public.

“That’s settled, then. He’ll never have to know.”

“Excuse me?”

“Come off it, Granger. Potter wants that.” I pointed. Potter’s arm was drawing up the back of Ginny’s chair, not quite touching her shoulder. “He wants in with their clan. What would he do with Malfoy baby?”

Granger’s eyes were beginning to shine angrily. “Harry wants a family, Draco. He’d be happy to have Armand. He’d love him more than anything. You can’t let him find out years from now he has a child he’s never met. He’d be crushed!”

“He doesn’t have to find out ever, Granger. I’ll be fine on my own.”
“IT’S NOT ALL ABOUT YOU!”

Her voice had rattled the window. Weasley’s chair scraped back as he jumped up and peered out at us. Granger held up a hand. Stay put.

“It’s not all about you,” she repeated, backing down the alleyway until she was nothing more than a halo of hair and a sad voice. “It’s about your son and Harry, too. But I won’t meddle, anymore. And I won’t bother you about it again.”

***

“And what are you being so strong and silent about?”

My eyes flicked up. Ginny Weasley was flirting with Potter, as they walked towards Hogwarts ahead of me.

“He’s just angry he has to write a speech for the Battle of Hogwarts Anniversary,” the other Weasley called out in front. He had his arm around Granger. She hadn’t spoken to me for the rest of the night.

“Shouldn’t be that hard,” Ginny sang, looping her arm into Potter’s. “Just take a few shots of Ogden’s and thank everyone you can still remember.”

“Not everything is about booze, Gin,” said Dean Thomas. He ducked as she tried to swipe the back of his head. She tripped, but he and Terry Boot caught her by either arm.

Clearly tonight was about booze. I’d had a couple more shots myself after returning from the alleyway. But I didn’t feel drunk as much as numb.

“Thanks, you two,” Potter said flatly, as they carried Ginny away. She seemed to have fallen asleep instantly on Thomas’s shoulder.

Potter and I were alone at the rear, with him a few paces ahead. I stuffed my hands into my pockets, at loss. I had thought this would be easier if I got pissed enough (maybe Ginny and I did have something in common), but words still escaped me.

“Lumos,” Potter said. His face lit up. He turned his wand to me. “Come on, then, you don’t want to get lost.”

I snorted. “Thank you, Savior.”

“Don’t start, Malfoy. I’m already sweating this speech for the Anniversary. I’m tired of people calling me shit like that.”

“Then why train to be an Auror?”

“Unfortunately, it’s what I’m good at.”

I was trying to think of a way to slip the news fluidly into the conversation. You know what you’re also good at? Making babies! With me!

“So, you didn’t win the tournament,” I said pointlessly.

“Nope. And it’s all your fault for leaving.”

“It was for the best. I wasn’t wanted.”
“I wanted you,” Potter said roughly. He cleared his throat. “I mean. We all did. Really. Neville’s always going on about how decent you are to him in Herbology. And Ron’s okay with you as long as there’s Quidditch involved. And then there’s Hermione....”

What if I jumped in here? So, speaking of Hermione...

“So, people do want you around,” he finished. “It’s just awkward right now.”

You know what else is awkward? How you’re related to Lucius Malfoy.

“Potter.” I stopped in my tracks. “I have to talk to you.”

“Oh. Yeah?” he breathed. His eyes were large behind his glasses.

“There’s just—” I bit my nail, looking around on the road to Hogwarts lit only by the lights of dozens of wands. “There’s just so many people here.”

“Yeah, there are. Erm—” He glanced at the treeline of the Forbidden Forest. “Let’s lose them.”

He grabbed my wrist, and we walked a few paces into the forest. We could still see students shuffling back to the castle, but were far enough away to have privacy.

Potter teetered on his heels. “So. What is it, then?”

Well, this was it. What you’ve been waiting for. My moment of truth. The big hoorah. Yes, I’m stalling. I opened my mouth, prepared to let the truth spill out however it saw fit, but Potter cut me off, saying, “Nevermind. Don’t tell me.” He dropped his wand with a thunk, and then—thank God for Gryffindors—he kissed me.

It was so good. He grabbed me, wrapping an arm around my waist, the other around my shoulders. He pushed me into a tree, settling against me, warm and firm. The heady taste of his tongue filled my mouth, enchanting me, bringing me back to the beginning. Had I really not tasted him for two whole years? My arms were trapped between our bodies. I drew my hands up his chest, touching his face, utterly pinned against him. The sturdiness of his body reminded me of Graham’s, but not—for where Graham had been insistent, Potter was tender; where Graham had been desperate, Potter was determined.

Potter, I realized, was my man.

“Harry,” I moaned, turning my head. “Harry, we can’t.”

He shook his head, eyes closed. “I’ll break up with her.”

He kissed me again. I wanted to lean into it, but there were matters too pressing, and it was all so very confusing. I put my hands on his chest, whispering, “Stop...stop....”

“I said I’d break up with her. Draco, please. I want you. It’s always been you.” His eyes were so dilated I could hardly make out the green. It took all my effort not to fall into them.

“It’s not that. It’s something else. It’s—” I grimaced. It was such a simple statement, but too heavy to push out of my mouth.

“Does it have to do with Graham Montague?”

“Yes. But not in the way you think.”
“If you’re still mourning him, I’ll wait for you.”

He was such a wonderful idiot.

“No,” I said. I just had to push it out: “It’s Armand!”

I sighed. There. Done.

“What about him?” Potter asked, leaning over me with his hand on the tree trunk.

I sighed again. “He was conceived around the time...you and I...were seeing each other.”

“Oh. Okay.”

Granger was right. You really did have to spell it out for this one.

“Potter, he was conceived at exactly the time you and I were seeing each other.”

Understanding dawned in his eyes, but he seemed to push it back, saying slowly, “So...you were sleeping with us both at the same time?”

“No! I saw Graham after you. Fuck.” I covered my eyes with my hand. I couldn’t watch this next part. “Harry, Armand is your baby.”

There was no sound except an owl hooting in the distance.

I peeked at him. He was still leaning, still close. “He can’t be mine,” he said. “Everyone says he’s Montague’s. You say he’s Montague’s.”

“I thought he was. I really did. I had been with Graham most recently when I turned up pregnant. He just seemed like the best bet. But then I sent off for that bloody DNA test, and it wasn’t Graham’s DNA, and there was no one else but you—well, Zabini, but obviously it’s not his kid—and, really, this is all Granger’s fault! I blame her, personally.”

“Hermione knows?” he asked distantly.

“She just found out today.”

“I have a son?” he said, not exactly to me. I began to nod, but I didn’t know why, for Potter was staring at the lit-up wand at our feet. He pushed off the tree trunk. “Um. I’ve got to go.”

And then he did.

***

The next time I was in Hogsmeade, I expected the most uncomfortable part of my day to be telling my mother that Graham Montague was not Armand’s father. The most uncomfortable part of my day would turn out to be telling her this news with Armand’s actual father standing beside me. Harry Potter was waiting at the end of the path that led to the Montagues’ cottage.

“Hi,” he said, his hands deep in the pockets of his Auror robes. “Hermione said you were going to visit him here this weekend.”

I nodded.

“I took off work early, so I could—“ He cleared his throat. “Can I see him?”
“Um. Yeah. But it might have to wait, because I have to—”

“There he is,” someone exclaimed. It was my mother. She was gliding down the steps, and waving Armand’s hand at me. When she approached, I saw that Armand was wet in the eyes and throwing his weight frantically. He must have seen me from the window. “Is everything quite all right?” she asked, growing cold at the sight of Potter and his uniform.

I took the heavy toddler, now large enough to walk when he felt like it, and managed a quiet, “Yes.”

Armand clapped his hands onto my face, opened his mouth to show me four teeth, and then noticed Potter. He launched himself out of my arms. Potter caught him against his chest, laughing more genuinely than I have ever heard up close.

My mother lifted an eyebrow. “He took a liking to you at my sisters house, too, Mr. Potter. I thought it was a fluke, but apparently you have a gift with children.”

The way Potter’s face had lit up, the way he and Armand put their heads together, their hair curling in all the same directions, and certainly the way their eyes twinkled with the same shade of green, I thought my mother would have guessed before I spoke. Perhaps she had, as one white-gloved hand came up slowly to perch on her cheek. She didn’t make another movement until I said, “Mum, I think there’s a reason Armand likes Harry so much.”

She closed her eyes, as if it would block out the inevitable truth. By the time I finished explaining, both hands were on her face and she was leaning on the lamp post at the end of the drive like she might faint.

“There is much to discuss,” she said, looking at Potter like he was some kind of contagion on our house. “At least it will make a more interesting letter to your father than what Armand and I ate for breakfast that day.”

“No! Merlin, I forgot about Dad. Let me tell him when he gets out. It’s only another...oh fuck, it’s this month.” My mother gave me a sharp look, but the “language” admonishment never came. I imagine she was too preoccupied for properness. “Just let me handle it, Mum. I don’t want to upset him until it’s necessary.”

“Whatever you think is best,” she said coolly. “Now, we mustn’t be rude any longer. The Montagues have tea ready. You will have to tell them what you just told me.”

I looked imploringly at my mother, but I knew what had to be done.

“Should I—?” Potter started.

“No, I think you should go,” Mum said, sweeping Armand out of his arms. She started up the path so swiftly that Armand was caught off guard and didn’t have a chance to cry.

As I trailed behind her, I looked over my shoulder. Potter was leaning against the lamp post with his arms folded and a curious tilt to his head. I gave him a cautious nod. He smiled slowly, and nodded back. Well, all right. Even if things weren’t okay with my parents and me, perhaps things would be okay with us.

Us, I thought with a smile of my own.

***

Potter blew it for me.
That’s not sexual innuendo. During his speech at the Battle of Hogwarts Anniversary, while I was standing in front of Hogwarts with hundreds of witches and wizards, and my mother and father flanking me, Potter announced to the whole world he had a son. Got to be honest. It was kind of sweet the way he did it.

“The last person I’d like to thank,” he said, after spending an hour on the podium, mentioning every person ever born, “is Armand Malfoy. He is proof to me that our families can come together to create something wonderful, despite our cultural and political differences. He is a living bond that I want to make known, so that all of you can see how serious I am about promoting togetherness in the wizarding community.” He looked at me, smiling his sweet, sweet, stupid smile. “You see, Armand is my son. And I love him very much. And his father, Draco, too.”

It was so quiet, I heard a pin drop.

Wait, it wasn’t a pin. It was my father’s champagne glass shattering in his hand.

Armand began to wail. Every head in the audience turned to me.

“Got a set of lungs on him, doesn’t he?” Potter joked. He was guiltily trying to draw focus away from me, but no one took the bait.

There was a deep, nervous laugh somewhere. I thought it was Rubeus Hagrid. Zabini was smirking off to the side, standing between his mother and his golden-haired little sister, and I vowed never to give him fashion advice again. Pansy was probably somewhere behind me glaring a hole in the back of my head. Goyle? Well, there were sandwiches at the refreshment table, so I’m sure you can gather.

Potter cleared his throat. “Anyway, thanks very much.” The microphone squealed, and he practically fled.

I was distantly aware of Kingsley Shacklebolt inviting the crowd to disperse for pumpkin punch, but I was acutely aware of my father and his sudden ability to loom like Snape and the glass he wasn’t noticing embedded in his hand.

“Son, might I have a word with you privately?” Not really a question. He glowered at my mother, who was looking at him with the air of someone about to compliment him on his new scarf. “Might I have a word with both of you privately?”

“I should tend to Armand first,” I reasoned. “He’s crying—think he needs to be changed—”

“Oh, that won’t be a problem. I understand Harry Potter can look after him now.”

Potter had just popped up next to me, looking deeply apologetic. My father plucked Armand out of my arms and shoved him into Potter’s.

“Oy,” Potter exclaimed, clutching the crying baby. “Now wait just a second!”

My mother swept her hands in front of her, as if to quell the growing number of onlookers with gracefulness alone. “Lucius, darling,” she said, “you are making a small spectacle. Why don’t we adjourn to this charming vegetable patch? Draco, you will join us momentarily.”

She glided towards Hagrid’s hut. My father followed in a trance, stopping only to gawk at the ghost of Snape, who was hovering nearby, looking highly amused with our Earthly concerns. I guess no one had told Dad about that either.
“What?” Potter exclaimed, noticing my look of outrage. “You said you would tell him when he got out. I thought he knew. Thought that was why he came.”

“He only got out yesterday! Did you think we would put it on his welcome home banner?”

“Well.” Potter looked at Armand, who blinked back. Oh, now he was silent. “You should really communicate with me more,” he concluded, holding up Armand as evidence.

“Da,” the little traitor agreed.

***

That evening, with my parents long gone (and by “long gone,” I mean having drunk every champagne in the place), Potter and I were laughing as he walked me to the dungeons.

“Son!” I exclaimed in my father’s voice, though I could not quite match his baritone. “Son! I would have preferred Weasley to Potter. Now I’ll have to join one of those pro-Muggle alliances.”

Potter steadied himself on my shoulder, still grinning. “Did he really say that?”

“Not quite, but I could see his mind working. He’ll need to shed a positive light on the fact that his grandson is now a half-blood.”

“The fact that he couldn’t tell the difference before rather sheds some light on the validity of all that nonsense, doesn’t it?”

“Maybe,” I said, giving him a sidelong glance. “I should hope you told your friends. I don’t want to be attacked by any rabid Weasleys. The male or the female variety.”

Potter stopped and made a guilty face.

I gasped. “Potter!”

He held up his hands, snickering. “I’m joking. I told them straight away. I think Ron may have taken it harder than Ginny. Though, at least he had the decency to yell and call me a daft git. Ginny won’t even look at me.”

“And here I thought they were taking a liking to me.”

“It’s a lot to take in.”

“Yes, well,” I said slowly, realizing the dungeons were fairly abandoned because of the celebration. “I know what else is a lot to take in.”

“Sorry?”

This would take all day if I waited for him to wise up. I launched myself into him, pushing him through the door of the Arithmancy classroom. He melted into my kiss immediately, grabbing me by the face, circling me around, and shoving me into the door, which shut with a heavy click. We hadn’t gotten many opportunities for intimacy, and I was thrilled to know we were utterly alone, and there was no need to rush.

So!

I pushed him away.
He was heavy-lidded, flushed, and visibly excited. Like, yeah, down-there excited. He let out a
tragic noise when I began to slink down an aisle towards the professor’s desk, looking over my
shoulder.

“Do you know where we are?” I asked, feeling lighter and freer than I had in years. “We’re in the
same room where we first shagged. Remember when you didn’t know what to do with me?” I turned
around, and found him panting where I’d left him.

“I do,” he said, pushing off the door. “But I know now.”

I trailed my finger along the edge of the desk, putting it in between us as Potter drew close.
“Remember when I had to slap you to get a rise out of you?”

“Yes,” he said grittily, swooping around the desk. But I was faster. As established! I put the desk
between us again, leaning on it challengingly.

“Remember when you kept insisting you weren’t gay?”

Potter did not move. He smirked. A dimple formed in one cheek and his eyes grew warm and dark. I
was as transfixed as I had been September 1st when he burst into the Great Hall in his leather jacket.
He slid his palm along the desk’s edge until he was covering my hand with it, and wrapped his arm
around my middle.

“I’m still not gay,” he said very quietly. “I’m just mad for you, Draco Malfoy.” He jerked me so
close it felt like our hearts were touching. “And I’m going to ask you this one more time. Do you feel
the same about me?”

Slowly, I smiled.

I would never say no to him again.

***

Nine years later

“No, Harry.”

“Draco, please.”

“Hmm, I think not, darling.”

“Draco,” he said shudderingly, hot and tense between my legs. He opened his eyes. They were
beautifully green and agonized. “You’re just messing with me, aren’t you?”

“Maybe.” I ran my heels up the back of his thighs and clenched them around his waist. “But what do
I get if I let you come in me?”

The agony turned to lust. He dipped his head and whispered against my mouth, “Another baby, like
we talked about. Maybe a little girl this time.”

I hummed in pleasure as he kissed me. He took the opportunity to sink deeper inside me. “You know
I won’t stop trying until you give me my girl,” he said, moving slowly. “I’ll knock you up ten times,
if I have to. Just the thought of you swollen with my child—” He cried out, forgetting himself. He
started pumping into me with abandon.
“Harry,” I laughed, grabbing his arse, holding him still.

He slowed, huffing against my ear. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry. I’ll pull out.”

“No,” I said, not at all mischievous this time. “I was just messing with your head. You know I want it, too.”

“As devilish as ever,” he growled. I took him by the hair, as he kissed me brutally.

“I want it,” I said, though he had started to move on his own accord. “Give it to me.”

“Tell me,” he said, bearing down on me, so my knees were close to my ears. My dick was pressed between our stomachs, and as he moved his skin dragged against it, teasing me, bringing me close.

“Tell me what you want, Draco.”

God, I would feel so stupid saying this at any other time. But looking up at my husband, into his adoring and passionate eyes, I felt like it fit. “I want your come, Harry. Fill me up. Give me another baby.”

I felt his dick swell inside me. No, I’m not exaggerating! My husband was ruthlessly sexy like that. He made a strained sound and kissed me to drown it, clutching the bends of my knees as he gave me the heat he knew I loved. He moved languidly at the end. His mouth opened, joyous, as he buried himself one last time.

He gave my arse a weak slap, an amusing afterthought. There was a wet pop as he slipped out of me, and made his way down my chest, kissing audibly. He arched a black eyebrow, finding wetness on my belly.

“You really do like that talk,” Harry said, impressed with himself.

“I don’t like that as much as I like you.”

“I am good at what I do,” he said, sinking into the pillows next to me. He folded his arms behind his head. Cocky arse. There was just enough time for me to throw him a mocking look of derision before someone yelled, “Daddy?” from outside the door.

Harry shot up. He widened his eyes at me. “Did you silence the room?”

“Being the brains of this operation—yes, I did.”

“Thank God.” He turned to the door. “What is it, Armand?”

“I silenced. The room,” I said, flicking my wand. The door swung open to reveal a sleep-rumpled ten-year-old boy. Harry flung the sheets back over himself, only to realize I had magicked on his sweatpants and cleaned us up, too. Did his cute dumb-arsery know no bounds?

Armand folded his arms, looking haughtily at us in a way I knew Harry attribute to me later. “James wet the bed again and it smells in there. Can I sleep with you tonight?” He was already climbing between us, pushing his head into my armpit.

“No, I didn’t!” Another boy, a couple years younger than Armand and the spitting-image of Harry, flew into the bed and landed on Harry’s gut, knocking the wind out of him. “Armand’s just scared of the dark. The nightlight Auntie Hermione gave us went out.”

“Because you broke it!”
“Nuh-uh, you broke it with your face!”

“That doesn’t even—” Armand stopped, pinched his nose, and inhaled slowly. All right, maybe he was like me. But who said that was a bad thing? “Daddy. Father. Do you see what I have to put up with? I would like my own bedroom like I have at Grandpa’s house.”

“You share a room there, too,” Harry reminded him.

“No,” Armand moaned, “Not Grandpa Montague! Grandpa Malfoy.”

“Ah. Well, Grandpa Malfoy has many bedrooms, but we only have three.”

“But Scorpius has his own room.”

Harry began to stretch and yawn. “Scorpius is two. But you’re welcome to bunk with him if Jamie isn’t to your liking. Though, I have a feeling your room really will smell like pee, in that event.”

Armand flounced into the pillows. It wasn’t long before he was asleep, arms still folded, but with a much softer expression than he tended to carry around in the day. I stroked his cheek and looked across him at Harry. He was smiling at me with Jamie drooling on his chest.

“Are you sure you want a fourth one of these?” I asked quietly. “I’m beginning to feel like Weasley’s mother. But attractive.”

“Oy,” Harry whispered, putting a hand on mine where it sat in Armand’s tawny blond hair. “You’d be lucky if anyone compared you to her. She’s a gem. As for your question, you know I do.”

“If it’s not a girl this time, I’m done. You can run off and adopt one of those orphans you’re always rescuing from trees, or whatever the Daily Prophet says you get up to.”

Harry snorted. He touched my face, stroking it with his thumb. “How can I ever repay you for bearing my children?”

“You could take my damned last name.”

“I’m not that thankful, am I?” He laughed quietly. “I already let you give our kids your last name, anyway.”

“Let me? I’m a Malfoy, that’s just the way it goes, by rights.”

“I love how we have a marriage of equity and respect.”

“Yeah, you’d better,” I said, leaning into his hand.

He gave me a half smile, yawning again. “You going to think about going to the mediwizard soon? I’m worried it’s taking so long this time. You were pregnant only a few weeks after trying for Scorpius. And you were carrying Jamie before we even left Hogwarts,” he added, winking at the memory.

“Well, how was I to know anything about birth control?” I said, looking at my nails.

“Draco.” He gave me that look he always did when I was overly foul-mouthed or refused to pick up after myself. “I want to know if something’s up. Let’s go tomorrow.”

“I have work tomorrow. Potions don’t brew themselves. We’ll go next week, I promise.”
“Thank you.”

Harry was asleep in an instant, his mouth hanging open like both of his children’s. I settled in, too, quite content with my family of five. Though, between you and me, it was a family of six.

I looked down at my protruding belly. With the illusion charm in place, no one knew but me (well, except for Granger, but she seemed to know when I was with child before even I did). I was waiting to tell Harry on his birthday this weekend. The sentimental prat would love that kind of presentation, and, besides, I had wanted to wait as long as possible, since he would refuse to manhandle me as soon as he knew. Harry was annoying like that. I took his hand off my face, kissed it, and put it on my belly. He was going to flip.

Because, yes—if you must know—it was a girl.

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