I'll Follow You Into the Dark
by Cjblack

Summary

Twenty-one-year-old Harry Potter didn't have much, but he worked hard for what he did have. His life was simple: wake up, go to work, pay bills, feed his cat, feed himself, sleep.

Simple...until one day when a blonde-haired man dressed to the nines slips into the pub Harry works at and offers him a job that turns his mundane life on its head.

Draco Malfoy might be attractive and alluring (not to mention great in bed), but the deeper Harry falls into his world, the more he can't help but wonder if the rumors surrounding the Malfoy's ties to organized crime are true.

Notes

This plot bunny has been hopping around and humping my brain so I decided to give it a shot. It's going to be a little angst, a little fluff, and a whole lot of sex.

This is also somewhat inspired by the 'Finder' manga series by Yamane Ayano. With that said, I do not own that series, nor do I own Harry Potter.
“What brings you ‘ere?”

Biting back a snort, Harry finished wiping away the water rings from the bar’s scuffed surface. He slung the rag over his shoulder as he looked up at the man speaking with an amused smile.

“Believe it or not, I work here. What can I get you, sir?”

Before he could get an answer though, the door to the pub opened and beams of sunlight drenched the dimly lit space. Harry squinted against yellow to see three new customers settle down at the other end of the bar.

“I’ll be right with you,” he called. When he turned back to face the now leering bloke in front of him, Harry’s guard flew up.

With a predatory gleam in dark eyes and a flashing grin of stained teeth, he leaned in closer. He must have been fifty or so. Bony and not particularly tall, with ratty, graying hair.

“How much do you cost?”

Harry set his jaw.

Five years of working in his best friend’s family-owned pub had taught Harry how to spot this type of drunk. It certainly wasn’t the first time he’d been hit on by men and women alike. As long as there was enough liquor in the world to fuel the drunken bums, it probably wouldn’t be the last time he had to deflect against lewd slurs and blatant requests for blowjobs.

Bracing both hands on the counter, Harry stared at the man evenly. “Sir, I’m going to have to ask you to order something or leave. This pub is for paying customers, only—and I’m not for sale.”

“Gimme a moment to think,” the man growled at him irately.

“Of course, sir. Let me know when you’re ready,” Harry told him stoically. Some days went smoothly and some days left him with a bad taste in his mouth. It wasn’t even four o’clock yet, and it was already shaping up to be the latter.

He walked to the end of the bar where the trio of suits sat. He wasn’t a stranger to the businessman-type of customer either, though they weren’t as common around here.

They were pristinely dressed in suits so fine that Harry would’ve bet a days’ worth of tips that they weren’t purchased off the rack from a department store. They were all tall and good-looking; but they carried an air that screamed arrogance. He had never been impressed by men who walked
around like they were superior.

The one in the middle, however, stood out the most; he was...sharp. Sharp and *pale*, in contrast to the two other men. His jaw and cheekbones were so chiseled that they probably could cut the diamonds on his flashy cufflinks. He was fair skinned and his hair was an unnatural shade of blonde that it was nearly white.

The two men sat on either side of him, ramrod straight and wearing what appeared to be *ear pieces*. Harry had to suppress a snort. *Like spies out of some clichéd film,* he thought wryly. *Either that, or the start of a really bad joke...two brunettes and a blonde walk into a bar...*

“What can I get you gentleman?” Harry asked them, forcing the corners of his lips not to twitch.

The blonde surveyed him with light grey eyes. “Scotch. Neat...please.”

Harry nodded once, his eyes flitting back and forth between the silent men on either side of ‘Mister Scotch-Neat’.

“They don’t drink on the job.” Mister Scotch-Neat informed him smoothly on their behalf. Harry’s eyebrows raised at that but he opted not to say anything else as he accepted the money for the drink and set a glass on the counter.

“Hey! Pretty boy! I’m ready for ya!” the old man to his right jeered at him. Harry gritted his teeth, poured some of the amber liquid into the whisky glass and pushed it toward the man gently.

“Let me know if I can get you anything else, sir,” he murmured before sidling down the length of the bar.

“What can I get for you?”

“Budweiser.”

“Budweiser, it is,” Harry repeated. He grabbed a tankard and poured the man a beer from the tap. He set the glass down before the man. A calloused hand seized his wrist before he had a chance to withdraw from the handle.

“You’re going to have to work for your tip, ya know?” the man growled lowly. Harry jerked his hand back firmly to no avail. The pub was relatively empty at this time of day, but there were still customers seated at the tables in the back having a late lunch (or an early supper), and he didn’t want to cause a scene. This kind of rowdiness was bad for business. Especially when it came to the older crowd that had been coming to Weasley’s pub for years out of loyalty. He’d heard many of them gripping over the neighborhood going downhill already.

Not like the neighborhood had ever been flourishing to begin with.

“Let go,” he hissed through his teeth.

Harry felt irritation spread through him. He tugged his arm again and opened his mouth to finally give the perv a piece of his mind. However, before Harry could threaten to call the police, Mister Scotch-Neat’s statues finally showed their first indications of life. They were flanking the scraggly old man, pulling him up by his arms and effectively disengaging his death grip on Harry’s wrist.

“I believe the barman told you to let go of him,” the blonde murmured, taking a sip of his scotch calmly. The two men dragged the bum from the bar. He kicked and shouted loud obscenities at them as he was hauled from the pub and out of sight.
So much for not making a scene, Harry thought jadedly. His eyes darted back to the man with a frown on his face. “Thank you, but I could’ve handled him myself. He’s not the first drunk I’ve ever dealt with,” Harry told him.

“Occupational hazard?” Mister Scotch-Neat asked mildly.

A huff of a laugh blew passed his lips before he could stop it. “Something like that,” he said. “Where are they taking him?” Harry looked out the window where he could no longer see the bum or the statues.

“I didn’t specify. They were just told to remove him from the property,” the man drawled, polishing off his drink before reaching into the inside pocket of his suit. Something along his shoulders stopped Harry in his tracks.

Straps.

A gun holster…

The man was armed.

Harry’s spine grew rigid with apprehension.

“Who are you?” he asked, hoping his bluntness wasn’t mistaken for rudeness as well, because. Guns. Around here, guns were never a reassuring sign. The man didn’t seem phased by his question. His face was perfectly serene as he pulled out a piece of paper and pen and scribbled something on the back. “Are you a businessman?” he continued uncertainly.

The man smirked, stowed his pen away—another glimpse of the holster—and slid the paper against the wooden counter in his direction.

“Something like that,” he told him, using Harry’s own words. “Come to this place if you ever get tired of having toothless old perverts hitting on you. I’ll give you a better job.” With that, the man rose from his barstool, set down some money beside his empty glass and strode out of the pub.

Harry stared at him through the window, but Mister Scotch-Neat never looked back at him. Instead, he climbed into a black, BMW with tinted windows. It was definitely unusual to see this kind of ride in their neighborhood.

People all around were watching him retreat into the vehicle with wonderment.

“Harry!”

Beside him, his best friend Ron Weasley had come into work, tying an apron around his waist and watching the car disappear with wide eyes.

“Mate, don’t tell me that bloke was in here,” the ginger haired man asked, bewildered.

“He was,” Harry told him with a small frown. “Why? Do you know him?”

“Blimey, Harry, he’s the Malfoy heir! Like Malfoy Industries? Couldn’t you tell? He looks just like his father,” Ron shook his head. “Wonder what he was doing in here. You’d think his sort wouldn’t be caught dead in this neighborhood.”

Harry stared at the now empty street. A Malfoy?

The Malfoy family practically owned half the city. They were billionaire entrepreneurs; one of the
wealthiest families in all of England, really… So what was Malfoy’s heir doing here?

“Well, I hope he doesn’t come back here,” Ron muttered uneasily to Harry under his breath. “I don’t want trouble with the bloody mob.”

“That’s speculation, Ronald.” Harry jumped. Hermione Granger, his other best friend and Ron’s girlfriend whispered as she swooped in on Harry’s other side. “Sorry, Harry,” she apologized for startling him before continuing, “there’s no proof that the Malfoy family is linked to the mafia, though. You cannot simply make those kinds of accusations without having proof.”

Ron scoffed in disbelief, reached over and waved the money on the counter that Malfoy left behind in front of their noses. Malfoy had left behind two fifties. Harry’s tip.

Harry’s jaw dropped.

“You don’t make this kind of money without getting your hands dirty,” he stated somewhat smugly. He tucked the money into Harry’s apron pocket before he retreated into the kitchen with his girlfriend admonishing him every step of the way.

Honestly, Harry had never seen two people more perfect for each other.

Harry had known the Weasley family since he was eleven. He and Ron had been put in the same class and hit it off right away. Both coming from humble backgrounds, he and Ron had similar outlooks on life. Though the Weasley’s had seven kids of their own and little money, they’d took Harry in as one of their own throughout the years.

His parents died tragically when he was an infant; a car accident that, by some miracle, only Harry had survived with nothing more than a jagged scar across his forehead. As a result, he’d been sent to live with his only living relatives, his Aunt Petunia, her husband Vernon, and their whale of a son Dudley.

He wasn’t a welcome addition to their family. Estranged from her sister, Petunia could barely stand to look at him. Vernon loathed his very existence and Dudley used him as his personal punching bag. He grew up as just another mouth to feed, a nuisance, a burden. Nevertheless, he did his part for them. He wasn’t ungrateful; he worked for what he had. They gave him a roof and he cooked and cleaned, and did more chores around there than anyone else.

When Harry was sixteen, Dudley had caught him holding hands with a boy in the park and ratted him out to his aunt and uncle. For the Dursley’s Harry being a ‘fag’ was the final straw. He was kicked out that very same day.

He’d spent a couple of weeks sleeping in alleyways instead of going to school. When Ron eventually discovered the reason for Harry’s absence from school, he dragged Harry home with him. Never one to impose, he politely declined the Weasley’s offer to move in.

He just couldn’t do that to them. They struggled enough to make ends meet.

Instead, he crashed on their couch on and off for a couple of weeks until Harry managed to secure an after-school job at a coffee shop, and on the weekends, he pulled two-twelve hour shifts at his favorite bookstore to help pay the rent on a small studio flat. He didn’t have much, but he worked hard for what he did have.

It was enough.
Harry arrived to his flat at eight o’clock feeling dead on his feet. Yawning loudly, he wrestled the door open and bolted it shut behind him. He toed off his trainers and went to the cupboard closest to the refrigerator to retrieve a small can.

“Hedwig,” he called out softly. A white ball of fur leapt onto the counter and glared at him reproachfully. “Don’t give me that look,” he told the white feline, “I stayed late to help Ron with dishes. He’s got an early class in the morning. Look, tuna.” He set the can of fish on top of the counter for her. She permitted him to scratch behind her ears briefly before digging in.

He shirked out of his jeans down to his boxer briefs and a black tank, and picked up the old guitar in the corner and plopped down on his futon with it. He was self-taught, of course, but between music and books, was where his solace was found. He strummed idly, playing nothing in particular, but wanting to hear the sound in his ears all the same.

Two Weeks Later…

Knock.


Harry groaned and rolled over to glance at his alarm clock. The glowing green digits told him it was ten minutes after midnight. He’d only fallen asleep an hour ago but his body still protested when he forced himself to sit upright.

Knock. Knock.

“Harry?”

Ron.

“Coming! I’m coming…” he called out tiredly.

Disentangling himself from his sheets Harry stumbled over to the door, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes. He undid the deadbolt and pried open the door to reveal the freckled-face of his friend. He paused, taking in the sight in front of him.

“Ron? You okay there, mate?” Harry asked, an arm outstretched to steady the swaying man. “Are you smashed?”

“’Lil bit,” Ron slurred, looking desolate.

“Here, come in. Sit,” he helped the redhead to the futon and guided him down onto it carefully. He ran to the sink to retrieve a glass of water. “Here, drink this,” he offered the glass.

After Ron complied, Harry sank down on the futon next to him. “What’s going on?”

Ron shook his head miserably. “Heard mum and dad talking,” he began, blinking blearily, “They’re going to lose the pub.”

Harry’s heart stopped in his chest.

“That’s their livelihood, Harry. They’ve sank everything they’ve got into runnin’ that place,” he added, scrubbing a hand down his face.
“Why are they going to lose it?”

“They can’t afford both the house and the pub anymore. Pub’s just not generating enough profit to keep it afloat and keep a roof over our heads. I was thinking maybe I could drop out of school and get a second job to help pay the bills, ya know? I’m twenty-one, I shouldn’t be living at home still, anyway.”

“You can’t. God, Ron, you mother would kill you. Hermione would kill you,” Harry protested, squeezing Ron’s shoulder. “Plus, if you stick with it, you’re going to be a brilliant architect one day. You don’t want this life, Ron, struggling to pay bills, living paycheck to—well, four days before paycheck.” He grinned half-heartedly. “Maybe I can chip in. Work for free at the pub and see about getting my old job back at Flourish and Blotts to pay the bills.”

“Mum would kill you, for even suggesting that, Harry,” Ron told him seriously. “She and dad wouldn’t allow that. Plus, what about Anthony?”

Anthony Goldstein had been Harry’s first and only boyfriend. They had started dating each other when they were sixteen and carried on for two years until he cheated on Harry with some other guy. Since then, Harry had little urge to give his heart to anyone else. Aside for a few flings, he hadn’t been with anyone else exclusively. Truthfully, the thought of seeing his ex-boyfriend again was nauseating; he had boycotted his favorite bookstore to avoid the man, after all. That had only added to the heartbreak.

“Good point. Somewhere else, then,” Harry conceded, laying down on the futon. Ron followed, flopping down heavily beside him. There was little room for them both but they made do.

“Do you wish you could’ve gone to Uni with ‘Mione and me?” Ron mumbled after a moment.

Harry sucked in a long breath and let it out slowly. “Sometimes, yeah. But it just wasn’t in the cards for me right now. Maybe someday.” He knew, even as he said those words, that him going to college was highly improbable. “I didn’t even know what I wanted to study, anyway.”

“I thought you wanted to do something with music.”

Harry shook his head and sat back up, propping himself back onto his arms as he stared down at his drunken mate. “Can’t make much money from something like that. Stop stressing over me, okay? I’m fine…I’m more concerned about your parents right now. How much longer can they stay open?”

“Dad said something about paying the bank fifteen grand in the next six months or they’ll have to close the doors.” Ron sighed. “Blimey…that place has been home away from home. I can’t—I can’t imagine life without it. Remember when we used to sneak in the back and steal beer from the tap after hours?” he added with a sleepy laugh.

Harry chuckled. “Yeah, I do. Remember our freshman year when Bill caught us drinking?”

“Fuck, who could forget that? My arse still stings from the walloping he gave us for that.”

“He did us both a solid. Better him than your parents and the Dursley’s knowing. We would’ve gotten so much worse.”

“True, that.” Ron yawned loudly and rolled over onto his stomach, snuggling into Harry’s lumpy pillow. “…I don’t know what to do, Harry,” he whispered, a tear rolling down his dirt-smudged face. Man, Ron must’ve been really drunk to be weepy. Harry wiped it away briskly before covering them both up with the blanket.
“I wish I had an answer, Ron,” Harry murmured sadly, “but just know whatever happens, I’ll be there, okay?”

Ron smiled weakly, eyes finally too heavy for him to keep open. “Dunno how you do it, ’Arry. You’ve always been there. You’ve always ha’ it worse than any of us, but you’ve still always been there…” Ron mumbled before passing out.

Harry laid in bed, eyes fixated on the ceiling. In six months’ time, his best friend’s family would be out of business, out of work completely. His heart felt like someone tied an anchor to it and let it sink down to the floor. It ached.

Ron snored loudly in his ear and Harry jerked his head sideways to avoid being blasted by the stench of alcohol on his breath. He couldn’t blame Ron for feeling so helpless. Harry felt helpless too.

Hedwig jumped up onto the end table to pin him with an unimpressed glare. “Be nice,” he told her quietly. “I know he snores but he’s having a rough day. I don’t know why you hate everyone.” She flicked her tail moodily, sending something dark fluttering to the floor. Harry slid out of bed to retrieve it, fingers stopping in the tracks and hovering over the silvery business card.

In bold, emerald green cursive were only three words.

Club Salazar

VIP

He picked it up gingerly, flipping it between his fingers to read the words on the back written in an elegant scrawl that was an uncommon skill for most guys Harry knew.

Show this to the bouncer at the door.

Ask for Draco.

Mister Scotch-Neat had penned his signature beneath the message. Harry ran a finger over it thoughtfully as he recalled the blonde man with soul-piercing eyes. Harry grabbed a ripped pair of jeans from the closet and slipped into them. He yanked a black tee over his head and then slid his arms into his denim jacket. His hair was messy but that wasn’t unusual whatsoever. Combing his fingers through it to work out the knots, he shoved his feet into his shoes.

He leaned over the counter to find a stray pen and old receipt to scribble a note to Ron incase his friend woke up looking for him.

Ron,

Went out for some air.

Be back soon.


Water.

-Harry

Harry picked up the card again and pocketed it, along with the two, fifty pound (now wrinkled) notes the man had left as a rather ostentatious tip a couple weeks prior. He glanced back at his best
friend sound asleep on his futon one last time. There wasn’t anything he wouldn’t do to protect those he loved.

He left quietly, locking the door behind him.

*Ask for Draco.*

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**Chapter End Notes**

If you're interested in seeing more of this, let me know! I'm excited for this one. :)

xx

CJ
Harry's second meeting with Draco Malfoy is even more bizarre than the first.

Chapter Notes

The first thing Harry observed when the taxi dropped him off at Club Salazar was that it was unlike any of the other nightclubs he'd been to in the past. For starters, there wasn't a single scrap of garbage or vomit around. Nor were there any people screwing up against the side of a scetchy brick building.

Club Salazar was a tall building; probably three stories by the looks of it. It was sleek, with a modern flare; all silver steel and black-tinted glass.

Not a graffiti-covered brick in sight.

Green lights lit up the along the front, giving it an edgy, mysterious vibe. To Harry, it felt almost...seductive. On either side of large double doors stood two massive men flanking the entrance like they were part of the Queen’s guard.

Well, don’t they look friendly? Harry thought to himself silently. He took a deep breath to steady his nerves and put on the cordial smile he usually reserved for customers as he approached the giants.

They didn’t even so much as look at him.

Harry's brow furrowed.

“Excuse me, sir?” He asked the one closest to him. Not even a blink. “…Excuse me,” he repeated more firmly. “I'm looking for Draco.” He held out the card Malfoy had left him so that the man could read it.

Nothing.

“Excuse me!” Harry snapped, irritation rising.

Nothing.

Talk about fucking rude.

Scoffing his disapproval, Harry threw his hands up in the air and spun on heel to walk away. Swearing under his breath, he strolled back to the street looking left and right for another cab to wave down. This had been a mistake. He should’ve known someone like Draco Malfoy, billionaire heir extraordinaire, would play games with someone like him.

Pompous jerk.

“You there!” Harry stopped in his tracks, nearly tripping over the curb in the process. He turned
Another man had appeared, with dark skin and black hair cropped short against his skull.

“I know you!” Harry said in relief, finger extended in the direction of the tall figure. “You’re one of
the statues.” An eyebrow arched sharply, evidently unimpressed by Harry’s nickname for him.

“Zabini,” the man clarified in a deep timbre. “Come with me Mister Potter.” He beckoned Harry to
him with a curt wave of his hand and glared at the security guard whom Harry had showed the card
to. “He’s got a VIP access card signed by the boss, Goyle. Why didn’t you let him in?”

“Figured he’d swiped it. Looks like a street rat to me,” he grunted. Harry balked at the insult but
Zabini didn’t so much as acknowledge the large man after that. Instead, he walked through the door
held open for him and Harry followed dutifully behind, having to speed-walk to keep up with his
irritatingly long stride.

Inside the club was even more so impressive. Massive chandeliers and lanterns lit the place with the
same emerald green glow that was outside. It was a massive, open floor plan. The bar was in the
center of the first floor; a large black, circular counter with leather-bound stools surrounding it. In the
center of the bar he could see two young women and a young man, busy at work mixing drinks.

Harry felt the bass of the music reverberating throughout, but not as loudly as it would’ve been at a
nightclub back home. In fact, even though the place was filled with bodies, there wasn’t much
dancing at all aside from performers dancing seductively on a raised platform in the back, for dozens
of men and a few women intermixed, watching on, seated in leather arm chairs with fancy drinks in
hand. These people weren’t regular people. They were all dressed much like Malfoy had been two
weeks ago, impeccable and flashy.

These people came from money, that much was obvious. This wasn’t so much a hot, booming
nightclub as it was a sensual lounge where rich people went to engage in petty gossip and
drink overpriced cocktails and meet wealthy potential lovers. How exciting.

He didn’t miss the several looks of derision thrown his way by a group of women as they passed by,
either.

He could see the two upper levels from where he was standing and the several sepearate staircases
leading up to them. The other levels were more narrow, creating a perimeter around the club, so
whoever was up there could simply peer over the metal bars down into the heart of the club.

Probably not a good spot for sloppy drunks to hang around, Harry decided. He wondered if guests
had to sign a waiver before getting access to this place. Zabini was leading him through a door on the
left hand side, then to a discreet elevator that he assumed wasn’t meant for public access judging by
the fingerprint scan he used to open it.

“Where are we going?” Harry asked conversationally. The silence was far too awkward; it wasn’t
every day he was stuck in an elevator with a bodyguard-slash-spy-slash-statue-slash-potential-
gangster.

“You ask too many questions.” The man said, chin set and eyes staring straight ahead.

“I asked one question,” Harry pointed out.

“You would be wise to ask none,” the man stated coldly as the lift began to raise.

“How come?” he questioned cheekily. Okay, so he couldn’t help himself. The man was too much of
a haughty arse.

“Because, little kitten,” the man began, as the doors slid open to reveal a large room, “curiosity killed the cat.”

He pushed Harry firmly through the threshold.

Jerking away from the touch and the ‘little kitten’ jibe, he spun around and glared at Zabini.

“—and _satisfaction_ brought it back,” he snapped, crossing his arms over his torso defensively. He wasn’t about to be manhandled by a man he didn’t even _know_. Zabini couldn’t have been that much older than him; who was he to look down his nose at Harry?

“Did you come here looking to be satisfied?” came a smooth voice that didn’t belong to the man before him. Harry turned his head to see Draco Malfoy sitting on a leather couch watching them. His legs were crossed at the ankle and propped on a matching foot stool. He was casually scrolling through something on an iPad, looking every bit as elegant as Harry remembered him.

Harry licked his lips absently. “No—I mean, I came because of—you-you offered me a job?”

_Well done, Harry_, he sighed inwardly, _you sound like an incompetent idiot._

He suddenly wished he was wearing a pair of jeans with less tears—and a jacket that didn’t have patches all over it, even though this one was his favorite.

“That will be all, Zabini,” the blonde dismissed the man behind Harry. Harry didn’t tear his eyes away from Malfoy to watch him leave. When the doors to the lift closed once more, Draco met his gaze intently.

“I believe I offered you a job over two weeks ago,” he stated. “Do you usually make men wait so long before you finally come?”

Whether intentional or not, the double entendre didn’t go unnoticed by Harry, who felt heat rise into his cheeks. His attempt to force it away was futile. If Draco noticed it, he didn’t say anything.

“I’m—I didn’t know if I could handle taking on a second job,” Harry offered. “But something came up and if your offer still stands, I’d like to put in an application.”

“Sit,” Malfoy commanded softly. Harry obeyed, sitting down on the opposite end of the couch, trying to not feel intimidated by the man’s very presence. He tried even harder not to dwell on whether Malfoy was wearing his shoulder holster today.

“Harry James Potter,” Malfoy stated simply. Harry’s eyes widened at the sound of his name. His name that, he was almost positive, he’d never given the other man.

“Yes,” Harry muttered.

“Born in July. Twenty-one years old, am I correct?” Malfoy continued, eyes fixed on his tablet.

“Yes. Um, how—”

“Your father James, was a police officer, your mother Lily, a journalist. Orphaned at one; I’m sorry for your loss,” he went on briskly, “and raised by your mother’s sister, Petunia Dursley, and her husband Vernon.”

“How—”
“Hospitalized twice over the last two decades, once for a broken collar bone and once for a sprained ankle. How’d those heal up for you?” he asked, finally giving Harry a pause to speak.

“Fine,” Harry said, aghast. “How do you—are n’t hospital records supposed to be private?” Malfoy cocked his head to the side, which wasn’t an answer at all. Harry leaned back a bit, unnerved.

“Criminal history shows you spent one night in jail for getting into a physical altercation? Care to explain?”

Harry pursed his lips. “A guy was beating on his girlfriend outside Weasley’s pub. I intervened but he was drunk and I—I ended up breaking his nose and he had to go to the hospital.”

He cringed inwardly, hoping his misdemeanor wouldn’t count too much against him.

“How chivalrous,” Draco said simply, corners of his mouth twitching into a hint of a smile. He looked back at the screen. “Graduated high school at seventeen, average student, mediocre attendance...my, my, you’re not very good at chemistry at all, are you?”

Harry gaped.

“What else, what else...blood type, AB negative. Went to a free clinic for HIV testing at eighteen, also negative. That’s fortunate.”

Harry leapt to his feet, his hands curling into fists. “What the fuck is this?” he growled at the man. The blonde didn’t seem phased by his ire, which only made his ‘AB negative’ blood boil even more.

“A background check,” the Malfoy heir told him coolly. “I like to be thorough. Please do sit back down, Mister Potter.”

Shaking slightly, Harry dropped back onto the couch ungracefully. Honestly, if he hadn’t been so desperate to help the Weasleys, he would’ve taken off by now. Hell...he wouldn’t have ever came here to begin with. Yet, the vision of Ron’s teary, drunken face swam into the foreground of Harry’s memory; the only thing preventing him from fleeing. He forced air into his lungs to calm himself, exhaling through his nose quietly.

“One hundred and seventy three centimeters, fifty-nine kilograms—”

“You know how tall I am? I don’t even know how tall I am,” Harry grumbled under his breath.

“Not very,” Draco quipped, smirk growing. “Five years’ work experience at Weasley’s, two years at Flourish and Blotts bookshop, and a coffee shop called the ‘Elixir of Life’? My, the owners must be extremely zealous about their coffee.”

Harry smiled nostalgically at that, remembering the man who gave him his very first job. Harry had been freshly kicked out of the Dursley’s and hadn’t had a good bath in days, but the elderly man and his wife had been kind enough to give him a chance. He was forever grateful to them. Nicholas and his wife had both died two years ago, within a week of each other, of old age.

They were good people.

Good people were hard to find these days.

“You’ve got a lot of work experience for someone so young,” Malfoy told him quietly.

“I’m a hard worker,” Harry told him seriously. He was never one to sing his own praises, but his
work ethic was something that had always been important to him.

“Here’s the thing,” Malfoy started, setting down the iPad beside him on the couch. “Being a barman at a pub is different than being a mixologist. Do you have any experience in mixing drinks?”

Harry wet his dry lips with the tip of his tongue. “A little, but not much,” he said truthfully. “...But I’m eager and willing to learn,” he added, sitting up a bit straighter.

He could feel grey eyes on him, dissecting him through his clothing, sizing him up, judging him. He pulled the denim jacket tighter over his chest and wished that it would magically turn him invisible.

“I am glad to hear it,” Malfoy said. “I’ll let you know my decision within the next two days. What number can I reach you at?”

Harry’s face flushed again. “I uh, well I don’t own a phone,” Harry muttered. He ruffled the back of his hair uncomfortably.

Draco arched an eyebrow, some surprise seeping through his mask of indifference. “I can call the pub you work at?” he offered after a moment. Harry grimaced. He didn’t really want to alert the Weasley’s of his efforts to get a second job. Ron would have his true motives figured out quickly if he found out about this.

“Could you maybe—send a letter, or something?” Malfoy gazed at him thoughtfully before reaching for his iPad beside him. He brought up a digital note pad and offered it to Harry.

“Put in your address for me.”

It was kind of disconcerting, leaving this man his home address. *But it's hardly unusual for employers to have your home address. Don’t be a dolt,* he reasoned with himself.

“Sure.” He typed in the address quickly and then handed it back to the other man. For the first time, Malfoy stood up gracefully and walked over to the large desk. He sat down in the large wingback chair behind it and brought his phone up to his ear.

“We’re done...Okay...Good...Yes, bring them to me. I’ll look at them before I leave.” He hung up his phone and set it onto the desk and looked up at Harry again, who was now lingering near the elevator, uncertain as to where he should be. “Zabini is coming to escort you back down to the first floor. I’ll be in contact soon.”

Harry rubbed the back off his neck uncomfortably. “Can I ask you something, sir?”

“I’m not sure. Can you?” Draco said wryly, before he reached in his desk drawer and withdrew a pack of cigarettes and a lighter.

Suddenly reminded of every single primary school teacher he’d ever had, Harry suppressed the urge to roll his eyes.

“May I ask you something?”

“You may...”

“Do I even stand a chance at getting this job?” he asked bluntly. His stomach twisted in his gut.

“Depends,” Malfoy said silkily after taking a drag. “…Of all the properties I own, this particular establishment is my favorite. I expect nothing less than perfection from my employees. To be frank,
"I’ve been told before that I’m a very demanding boss. Do you think you could handle it?"

Harry stomach twisted tighter, his body feeling too warm.

“There’s not a lot I can’t handle, sir,” Harry responded with determination apparent in his tone. Malfoy’s eyes gleamed, seemingly pleased with his answer.

“Well then,” he stated as Zabini came in and handed his boss a sealed, manila envelope. Malfoy took it with an incline of his head, “I imagine there’s a strong chance we’ll be seeing more of each other, Harry Potter.”

With that, he was ushered back into the lift by Zabini. The last thing he saw before the doors shut in front of him was Malfoy’s penetrating gaze.

He held his breath the whole way down.

...  

**Two Days Later...**

Buzz.

Buzz.

Buzz.

Harry jumped up in a panic, caught in limbo between a dream he’d already forgotten and the roused reality of someone at his door. Honestly, when was the last time he’d gotten sleep uninterrupted by people at his door?

Buzz.

Heart stammering in his chest, he scrambled to his door to buzz whomever was looking for him into the building. It couldn’t be Ron or Hermione. They both had a key, so Harry shimmied himself into a pair of discarded sweat pants just in time for the knock at his door.

He peered out the peephole before opening the door timidly for another man he recognized: statue-man number two.

“Yes?” he asked.

The man thrusted a small package at him and Harry fumbled to latch onto it, blinking owlishly as the man walked away, heading back down the stairwell without a word to him. Harry stood in the doorway for a solid two minutes, utterly perplexed. Finally, he forced himself out of his stupor and shut it tightly, locking back up for good measure.

Hedwig jumped up onto the counter just as he set the box down and brushed against his elbow in greeting. She turned her head to sniff at the box inquiringly.

"Good morning, girl. Did the buzzer wake you, too?” Harry mumbled, scratching behind her ears lovingly and then he opened the drawer for a knife to cut open the tape.

On top of a layer of packing peanuts was a small envelope. He pulled out the card inside that was monogrammed with the initials ‘DLM’…how pretentious. Harry snorted and shook his head before unfolding it.
Congratulations, Mr. Potter.

You're hired.

Report to the club this evening at six o'clock sharp.

Your uniform will be provided upon your arrival.

Please attempt to comb your hair.

Doors open at nine so be prepared; you've got a long night ahead of you.

Sincerely,

Draco L. Malfoy

“Good lord, Hedwig,” Harry told her with another snort, “Even in writing he manages to sound holier-than-thou.”

Despite his mixed feelings about the Malfoy heir, Harry couldn’t deny that he was somewhat… excited at the prospect of seeing him again. Something about the blonde thrilled him. Maybe it was a simple physical attraction or the very mystery of the man. Maybe Harry just wanted the opportunity to love-to-hate him, because he was so bloody cocky.

Or maybe he just really needed this damn job, even if it meant selling his soul to the devil, himself.

Harry frowned suddenly, reaching into the box to move aside the packing foam. At the bottom of the box sat a shiny new phone, staring innocently back up at him.

Harry shoved the box away in displeasure.

Oh hell no.

Chapter End Notes

Holy wow. Can I just say that all of you lovely people that left comments and kudos are friggin’ ANGELS? I’m so happy how many of you are already into this story after just a single chapter. I better stay on my A-game. :)

Also! Please let me know if there’s any glaring mistakes with spelling and such, in this chapter. I did the editing on my phone and autocorrect likes to mess with me a lot.

xx
“I’ll take that, Mrs. Weasley,” Harry called, jogging to intercept the older woman who was in the process of dragging a large bag of trash out of the back door. He eased the garbage out of her hands.

Panting from exertion and patting her messy bun on her head, Molly Weasley gave Harry a fond smile as he hauled the bag up into the dumpster. “Thank you, Harry,” she said appreciatively. “Are you heading home, then?”

Harry nodded, scratching at the back of his neck and trying hard to keep his face void of the nervousness he felt.

“He, yeah, I’m pretty beat,” he told her, which wasn’t a lie, he reasoned. He was beat and he was going home. He just wasn’t staying there.

“Well you take care and get some rest, dear. I’ll see you for Sunday dinner, yes?” Harry beamed.

“You won’t miss it, Mrs. Weasley,” he told her, coming back to the door to give her a warm hug. “I’ll see you Sunday.” He left briskly, checking the time on his wristwatch as he ran in the direction of his flat a few blocks away. He had less than an hour to shower and get to the club downtown. It would be cutting it close, but he wasn’t about to be late on his first day.

Besides, he had a bone to pick with one Draco Malfoy.

“What is this?” Harry demanded as soon as one of Malfoy’s men escorted him to the office on the third floor of Club Salazar.

Draco Malfoy sat at his desk, smoking a cigarette and reading through a stack of papers with a bored expression on his face. He gazed up at Harry through strands of blonde hair that hung in his eyes stylishly.

God, he was good-looking. Harry mentally scolded himself for thinking so. This man was now his boss; he wasn’t allowed to be attracted to his boss. It was…unethical.

“I believe that is what people call a cell phone, Mister Potter,” he said with an amused twist on his lips. “Or simply ‘phone’ since, really, who uses a landline these days? If you want to be specific, that one happens to be an iPhone. The latest model, if you like to keep up with that sort of thing.” Malfoy took a long drag of his cigarette and leaned back in his chair.

God, he was a pompous jerk.

“With all due respect, Mister Malfoy,” Harry began through gritted teeth while sitting the phone crisply on the desk, “When I told you I didn’t have a phone, I wasn’t trying to-to guilt you into buying me one, or anything. I’m not here looking for handouts.”

Malfoy flicked the ashes of his cigarettes into the ashtray on the desk as he regarded Harry silently. Harry folded his arms over his chest self-consciously.
“Don’t think of it as a handout,” Malfoy advised eventually. “There are many jobs where employees receive work phones. Consider this one of those jobs.”

“What kind of bartender needs a work phone?” Harry asked disbelievingly. “Listen—sir—I’ve gone twenty-one years without a phone and I’ve managed just fine. Really, I don’t need it.”

“Just take the phone, Potter,” Malfoy said.

“I don’t want it,” Harry insisted stubbornly. What didn’t he understand? Even if Malfoy was the kindest, most generous person alive, Harry was nobody’s charity case.

“Do you want this job?”

“I—yes,” Harry bit out, ears turning bright red.

“Then, as your boss,” Malfoy’s voice was oozing with authority; “I’m going to ask you to accept your new work phone without causing such a fuss and go into the bathroom so you can try on your uniform. It should fit, but I want to be certain.”

Fuming inwardly, and feeling embarrassed to boot, Harry obeyed Malfoy’s command. *Think of the Weasleys, think of the Weasleys*, he repeated in his head like a mantra, trying to soothe his ire. *You can’t be going off on a man who just gave you a damn job, Harry. Even if he gets under your skin.*

Harry slipped into Malfoy’s bathroom and shed his clothing in favor of donning the uniform laying neatly folded on the counter, along with a matching pair of glossy dress-shoes resting on the floor. Waiting for him.

The top was a simple button-down collared shirt, stark white, with a green and silver striped tie adding a subtle touch of the whole ‘green theme’ Malfoy seemed to be fond of in his club. He held it in front of his face to glare at it moodily. Regardless of his ever-growing disinclination to ask Malfoy for anything more, he knew he would have to ask him how to tie the tie properly. The only time he had occasion to wear a tie was at the Flamels’ funeral a couple years back. Arthur Weasley had tied it for him then, but Harry hadn’t paid attention.

He was beginning to regret that.

Harry dropped it back onto the counter and plucked the black slacks off instead. He climbed into them.

They fit him like they had been tailored for him, hugging his thighs and hips but a bit straighter on the legs. Unused to wearing something this form-fitting, Harry squirmed in them a little as he tucked in the tails of the shirt in the same fashion he’d seen on the bartenders from a few nights ago.

He picked up the vest next and eyed it distastefully, though nothing was truly wrong with it, before setting it aside and exhaling loudly. Swallowing his pride, he eased open the door and peered out in search for Malfoy. While Harry was in the bathroom, the man had moved to one of the armchairs in the seating area, sitting cross-legged with a glass of brandy in hand. “All set?” he asked when he caught sight of Harry.

“I…don’t know how to tie a tie,” the brunette mumbled sheepishly. Looking unsurprised at Harry’s revelation, Malfoy simply uncrossed his legs and set the tumbler on a side table.

He rose to his feet and met Harry at the bathroom door, gently tugging it open. He took the tie from Harry’s hands. “Face the mirror,” he said with an inclination of his head. When the blonde slid behind him, Harry’s heart stuttered beneath his ribs. Malfoy wasn’t pressed up against him
inappropriately, but Harry could still feel the warmth radiating between their bodies.

He held his breath as Malfoy lifted his collar and draped the tie over the back of his neck. He reached around Harry’s front to tie the silken strip of cloth and this time, with his chest leaned forward just a fraction away from the back of Harry’s shoulders and arms loose in an almost-hug, it felt more personal.

“Pay attention, okay?” Malfoy stated, his voice low and smooth in Harry’s left ear. “It will take some practice to perfect it, but you’ll get there. You’re going to start with the wide end on your right side, and the slimmer end on the left. The tip of the slimmer end you want to rest just above your navel here,” he continued, two fingers pressing gently against where he estimated Harry’s belly button to be. Harry’s breathing hitched at the touch and even after the digits left his stomach, Harry’s core still burned. “You’re only going to be moving the wider end when you’re tying. Are you following?”

Harry nodded, unable to speak. “Good. You’re going to bring the wide end over to the left, right over the slimmer end, and then bring it right up into the neck loop from underneath…then back down to the left…around the back, to the right…up to the center…through the neck loop and down to the right…”

Harry’s eyes followed Malfoy’s hands in the mirror, his long, slender fingers expertly at work. How the hell was he going to remember how to do this on his own?

“…across the front to the left, up into the neck loop from underneath again—see this loop we just created? You’re going to bring it down through the front here, and there you have it. Then you’re simply going to want to tighten by pulling down the wide end, slide the knot up, and adjust it accordingly. Not too hard, right?” Trying not to be… Harry’s throat had to work in overdrive to form words but eventually he managed to respond weakly.

“I have to be honest; I’m really not going to remember any of that come tomorrow.” Malfoy chuckled, his breath much too close to Harry’s neck but then he stepped away completely composed and the brunette wondered if he’d only imagined the soft laughter. He mentally kicked himself in the head. Why Malfoy had such a bizarre effect on him, he had no idea. He couldn’t understand what about him made it too hard to breathe or why his head felt dizzy whenever their eyes met.

Admittedly, he was attracted to Malfoy. He was tall, with handsome, aristocratic features but damn… his personality was certainly lacking. It wasn’t as if Harry hadn’t been attracted to other men before, either. Furthermore, it wasn’t as if Malfoy would ever spare Harry a second glance—

“Wha—” Harry squeaked when Malfoy’s hand tugged at the backside of his trousers, mere centimeters above the swell of his arse.

“Relax, I’m just straightening you out,” Malfoy drawled, adjusting Harry’s shirt and bottoms and a small, wicked part of Harry wanted to respond with a good luck. He squashed the compulsion. Feeling faint, he braced his hands on the bathroom counter to keep his knees from buckling underneath him.

Malfoy was a nearly head taller them, his chin visible just over the top of Harry’s black hair, so it wasn’t surprising when unobscured slate grey eyes landed on green in the mirror. The Malfoy heir’s left hand came down near Harry’s waist to retrieve the vest off the counter. He held it out behind Harry for him to slide his arms into the openings. “…Turn back around,” the man murmured in a deliberate tone that was liquid heat oozing into Harry’s veins. Harry complied carefully, spinning around to face Malfoy once more.
Slipping his deft fingers between Harry’s clothed chest and vest, the blonde smoothed out the vest against Harry’s midsection, fastened the six or so buttons there and then he withdrew again, stepping back to admire his work.

Maybe Draco Malfoy wasn’t as irritating as Harry presumed him to be.

“Green suits you,” he complimented while thoughtfully stroking his smooth jaw. “Though… evidently, I should’ve included a comb in the package I sent to you.”

Never mind.

Draco Malfoy was an irritating twat-waffle.

Face still annoyingly flushed, Harry ran his fingers through his messy hair in a poor attempt to flatten it.

“Well now you’re just making it worse,” Malfoy chided, shooing Harry’s hands away from his hair. Harry’s arms dropped to his sides helplessly.

“I’m sorry. It’s just the way my hair is. I’ve tried for years to get it to lay flat but nothing I’ve done seems to help.”

Malfoy cocked his head to the side. “I suppose we can just leave it as is. Perhaps my guests will be charmed by it.”

“You think so?”

“You’d be surprised how many people like that ‘just-been-shagged’ look,” Malfoy mused, stepping out of the bathroom and back into his office to retrieve something from his desk while Harry was left to choke on air. “Roll up the sleeves halfway and get your shoes on. It’s early yet; I have time to give you a quick tour of the club before you start in on your training.”

Daphne Greengrass, Harry discovered, was not one to mince words or respect boundaries. Within fifteen minutes of meeting the young woman, Harry had been called short, had his hair insulted, and then told he had a sweet arse (which maybe wasn’t insulting, per say, but was nonetheless baffling). Despite her lack of socially acceptable limitations, Harry found out rather quickly that he kind of loved her.

Daphne was his age, with brown hair that was partially shaved on one side and fell in thick natural curls on the other. She had thick lashes that surrounded bright blue eyes and a small nose piercing.

“I have to say, I’m impressed. You catch on quick,” she acknowledged with a grin, “but you’re going to have to move like someone lit a fire under that perky butt of yours come nine o’clock. You’ve got a few of our best sellers down, so that’s good. You should be able to survive tonight if that’s any consolation, and then we can get you started on more tomor—oh hey, Justin.”

“Hi, Daphne—fresh meat?” A young man asked, sizing Harry up with a wry grin. Harry held out a hand and Justin shook it warmly.

“Harry,” Harry offered.

“Nice to meet you. I’m Justin,” Justin replied. “You must be Cedric’s replacement, then.” He looked at Daphne who nodded in confirmation.
“Cedric’s been here the longest,” she informed Harry, “One of the first people Mister Malfoy hired when the club was built. He just graduated medical school in the spring so now he’s off saving lives like the big shot everyone always thought he was.”

“Be nice, Daphne,” Justin said, sighing. “Daphne doesn’t have a filter. She also never cared for Cedric.”

“Goody two-shoes,” the girl grumbled with an eyeroll. “Anyway, how’d you get to be here? The boss is pretty damn selective in who he hires. Most of us had connections. Justin here’s father is an accountant for the Malfoys and Draco dated my younger sister for nearly a year, so that got me in.”

“Your sister?” Harry repeated, curious.

“Yeah. She’s a right bitch so it didn’t last. We might have the same parents but we couldn’t be more different. Luckily for me, the boss liked me enough to keep me around or they’d be digging up Astoria’s body for costing me this job.”

“So, you like it here?” Harry asked, relieved.

“What’s not to like? The pay is good, the tips are good, I love alcohol—”

“—and the view,” Justin butted in teasingly. Daphne laughed.

“The view is superb.”

“The view?”

“The view,” Daphne said, jerking her head up in the direction of the second level. Behind the railing, Harry could see Draco Malfoy seated beside a woman with a short, ebony bob, on one of the couches.

Harry’s stomach did a small somersault but he gave Daphne a (slightly forced) smile and hoped he wasn’t too apparent. “Isn’t there something in the rules about dating your sister’s ex?” Daphne’s eyebrows rose in confusion before realization dawned and she let out another short laugh.

“You mean—? Oh no. Fuck no. The Malfoy heir is not my type.”

Harry frowned slightly but then Daphne looked back up at the pair and smirked before saying, “See that woman next to him? Her name’s Pansy Parkinson. She’s the boss’s secretary.”

“Okay…good to know?” he replied. More than a little nonplussed, Harry rubbed at the back of his head, probably mussing it up further.

Daphne sighed, aghast. “She’s my type.”

Harry’s lips formed a little ‘o’ as the information sank in and he nodded his head in understanding. “Got it. Sorry, I shouldn’t have assumed…Are you two together, then?”

Daphne shook her head with a wistful smile on her face. “No. She’s a total snob, actually. Completely unapproachable. But God help me if I ever have the opportunity to get her into bed…” she trailed off dreamily before she suddenly snapped her fingers and peeled herself away from the counter she was leaning on to step closer to Harry. “I know why you’re here, though,” she whispered quietly to him.

Harry’s neck swiveled to look at her, perplexed. “You do?” There was no way she knew anything
about him trying to save Weasley’s Pub. Hell, it was unlikely she’d ever heard of the place before. She leered at him a bit and it was so disconcerting that he took two steps backwards in order to put some distance between them.

“You’re really thick, aren’t you?” Daphne drew nearer to him so she could murmur into his ear, “He hasn’t taken his eyes off you this entire time you’ve been down here, which means one of two things. A, there is something going on between the two of you, or B, there’s sure as hell about to be.”

Working a pub like Weasley’s was nothing like working at Club Salazar. For one, there were a dozen servers dressed just like Harry, coming back and forth to the bar at the center with trays in hand, delivering flutes of champagne. For any mixed drinks, customers would come directly to the bar to make a request.

Although this place was much, much busier, his fellow employees worked like a well-oiled machine. Perhaps Malfoy hadn’t been exaggerating when he told Harry he expected nothing less than perfection from his employees.

Their customers, it seemed, were from another world. Wealthy, sophisticated, and while some walked around with their noses high in their air or sneers curling their lips, many, Harry was relieved to discover weren’t so bad at all. A few even left him with a nice tip, despite Harry being a new face to regular patrons.

“What can I get you, Mister Avery?” Daphne asked as Harry handed a young female her martini.

“The usual,” a sharply dressed man with dirty blonde hair and an oily voice replied. “You must be new,” he added to Harry as he propped himself on his elbows against the counter.

“This is Harry. It’s his first day,” Daphne said briskly as she set out to prepare the man’s drink.

“Hello there, Harry,” the man said with a wide grin.

“Hello,” Harry replied.

The man’s tone set his teeth on edge; instincts telling him to be vigilant and he felt eyes on him but Avery remained silent until he was handed his gin and tonic. “Thank you, Daphne,” he told her before studying Harry up and down. It made Harry feel unclean. “…So, Harry. Does a sweet boy like you ever work the back?”

Harry’s brow wrinkled in confusion at the eerie question. “The back?”

Daphne swept in quickly, casually stepping in between Harry and the Avery. “No, he doesn’t. Enjoy your drink, sir,” she said with a tight smile. “Harry, do you remember where the kitchen is? Great—would you mind getting us some more some more champagne glasses from there? Hannah must be running behind tonight and we’re running low.”

Not needing to be told twice, Harry took off in the direction of the kitchen at Daphne’s obvious excuse to get him as far away as Avery as possible without being rude.

Evidently, rich or poor, there were creeps all over.

…

Harry left the club from the back entrance after bidding farewell to Daphne and Justin and some of
the other staff he’d become acquainted with. He set out on foot to start, figuring it’d save him some cab fare if he walked some of the way home. At four o’clock in the morning, the streets were mostly void of life.

“Potter!”

At the sound of his name, Harry jumped and turned, blinded momentarily by headlights shining bright in the early morning. Malfoy’s BMW pulled up next to him and came to a stop. A pair of eyes that were becoming increasingly familiar peered through a partially opened window.

“Get in, I’ll give you a ride.”

“Oh—er, well I’m all set. I’m only walking part of the way and then I’ll catch a cab home. Figured a breath of fresh air could do me good. Thank you for the offer, though.” Harry said with a casual grin before resuming his walk. The black car rolled forward to catch up with him.

“It’s four o’clock in the morning. Even if you take a taxi halfway, it will still take you the better part of an hour to get home.”

“I’ll be fine, Mister Malfoy,” Harry repeated.

“What about your clothes?”

Harry stopped in his tracks and looked down at his uniform. In all the hustle and bustle of his first night on the job, Harry hadn’t remembered to return to Malfoy’s office for his clothing. He grimaced, fairly certain that he hadn’t even had the good sense to fold them before leaving the man’s bathroom. “I’ve got them here,” his boss said, holding up a black bag with the silhouette of a single dragon on the front.

“Thank you. I didn’t even think about the—” Harry began with sincerity, extending an arm toward the window to accept the bag. As soon as his fingertips touched the bag, Malfoy pulled it just out of his reach. “Wha—?”

“Let me give you a ride home,” he said again, his tone telling Harry he wasn’t going to take ‘no’ for an answer, which rubbed him the wrong way entirely. Clearly Draco Malfoy was used to getting whatever he wanted.

“And if I don’t, you’re going to hold my clothes and shoes hostage?” he pressed incredulously.

Malfoy raised an eyebrow. “Certainly not. I was raised better than that. Here, take them. You can keep the bag.” He handed it to Harry, who accepted the bag and hooked it over his shoulder, holding it against his side tightly, like he wasn’t sure if he trusted Malfoy not to try to snatch the clothing back. Harry gnawed on his bottom lip nervously as Malfoy’s light eyes pierced into him.

Suddenly the man who’d delivered the package to Harry on Thursday came around the front of the car and opened the backdoor of the car, waiting expectantly.

“I insist,” Malfoy drawled, “Please, it would be impolite to make Nott’s efforts go to waste,” he added while gesturing lazily at the man holding the door. Harry stared at the Nott. He was tall with dirty blonde hair, and clearly lacked the ability to react to...

Because he was a fucking statue.

Maybe he couldn’t speak, he thought, a wave of shame splashing over him for being too judgmental. Surrendering to peer pressure, something he was always taught not to do in school, Harry climbed
into the back of the BMW. The expensive car smelled a little of smoke and leather and expensive
cologne which shouldn’t have been as alluring as it was, but it was.

Harry’s stomach fluttered with treacherous little butterflies.

“Thanks,” Harry mumbled begrudgingly, consciously aware of the proximity between their bodies.
Malfoy turned in his seat a little, one leg crossed over the other as he faced Harry.

“No problem. How did your first day go, then?”

Harry watched as Malfoy’s lips formed the words, not too thick but not terribly thin either. They
were light pink and soft looking—

“Sorry—what did you say?” he asked, mentally slapping himself for getting distracted by something
so shallow.

Malfoy smirked at him, his eyes appearing almost silver whenever they passed by a street light.

“I asked how—”

“Oh! Right. Sorry, um, it went good, thanks…though, I thought you said I wouldn’t get hit on by old
perverts?” Harry finished with a grin splitting his face before he could stop it.

“I believe I said toothless old perverts,” the other man corrected, cocking his head to the side. “Did
you get some nice tips at least?”

“I did. The pervert left me fifty quid and I didn’t even make him his drink,” Harry recalled
displeased. He’d returned from the kitchen with a cart full of glasses when Daphne handed him a
fifty pound note with an eye roll. Avery, she warned him, was a sleaze-ball. Although Harry gotten
that vibe already, he couldn’t ignore the burning curiosity he’d felt at the man’s words.

Really, what had he meant by ‘do you ever work the back?’ He wanted to ask but something deep
down told him not to bring it up to the other man, which made no sense, really, because what were
the odds of anything unseemly going on inside a spoiled heir’s nightclub?

Suddenly, his stomach clenched in trepidation as if a fist seized hold of his gut and squeezed tight.
The image of a shoulder holster popped back in his head like an unwelcome visitor, Ron’s
accusations several weeks ago drilled their way back into his mind—but no, there was no way.

Honestly, ‘the mob’ seemed more like a myth, or, at the very least something that happened decades
ago. A slice of time in a less-civilized past. Or, if the movies held any truth to them, Harry deduced,
the mafia existed only in a select few countries far away. Like Russia. Maybe Japan?

“You seem bothered by that.” It took Harry a split second to grasp what the man was referring to.

“I didn’t earn it,” Harry said, scratching at his neck absently, shaking his head to ward off his crazy
train of thought. “I tried giving it to Daphne because it should’ve been hers, but she refused.”

“Daphne is kind. She’s also a bit stubborn and audacious, but she has a good heart.” Harry gazed at
Malfoy quickly, surprised by the compliment coming from the usually standoffish man.

“You dated her sister?” Harry asked looking up at the sharp jaw, and then his cheeks flushed and he
avoided his eyes apologetically. “Er—sorry.”

Malfoy went silent for a moment before he spoke. “No matter,” he stated lightly, “Yes, Astoria and I
were together. Were you two discussing me?"

Harry’s spine broke out in a sweat, whether from being put on the spot or from Daphne’s earlier teasing, he wasn’t certain. “No—well, just that. She told me that’s how she got the job,” he rushed, “that’s it.” He needed to get out of this car. It was becoming stifling.

“I see,” came the simple response.

“It still doesn’t seem right,” Harry reiterated in hopes of changing the conversation as the car turned a corner, drawing closer and closer to Harry’s flat. “To keep a tip that shouldn’t belong to me.” The sound of a lighter ticked and Malfoy lit a cigarette. He opened the window nearest him to ventilate the car.

“You’re rather noble, aren’t you?” he asked after taking a drag and blowing it into the darkness still outside.

“Well, no. I’m not trying to—"

“You don’t have to try to be noble. It’s just the way you are. You’re a nice boy. Polite,” Malfoy murmured lowly, studying Harry closely and Harry tried not to scowl at being referred to as a boy when he was an adult. “…I imagine the customer simply liked you, and wanted to leave you his gratitude. Don’t read too much into it. A lot of men at my club like pretty things.”

Harry’s head snapped up at that. “I’m not a thing. I don’t need to be objectified either.”

“My apologies,” Malfoy told him with a softness that seemed rare for him. “I didn’t mean to make you feel objectified. You owe that patron nothing just because he decided to give you a big tip you feel that you didn’t earn. That was his wallet. His choice.”

When Harry nodded but said nothing, Malfoy continued, “If a customer were to ever lay their hands on an employee of mine without consent, they’d be leaving with said hands broken.”

Harry let out a short, breathy huff of a laugh.

Malfoy eyed him unblinkingly and for a split second, Harry wondered if he hadn't been joking after all.

He swallowed heavily.

“I would never subject an employee to any unwanted advances. If you ever feel unsafe, I ask you to come to me so that I can address the issue.”

“By breaking hands?” Harry asked dryly.

Malfoy smirked but his eyes held no humor.

“Always an option.” A beat. “We’re at your stop. Will you be coming back, then, or has my club scared you off?” his tone held a teasing air to it this time. Harry took a minute to gather his bag and slip out of the car when it was opened for him. Harry ducked his head back inside with a lopsided grin before Nott could shut it.

“I don’t scare easily, Mister Malfoy,” he told him seriously despite his half-smile. “Thanks for the ride. I’ll see you tomorrow.”
Ah!! I'm continuously floored by how awesome you guys are. All your lovely comments make my day and keep me motivated to write more. I divided the story into five arcs and an epilogue. This first arc I'm thinking might be the shortest one, but it's main purpose is really just to be a foundation for the rest of the story and main plot, so I'm sorry if it seems boring right now! Buuuuut, things are going to escalate next chapter, if things go the way I planned. ;)

Also, any mistakes are mine. Feel free to point any issues out so I can fix them. I'm beyond sleep-deprived so my proofreading is not at its best right now.

xx

CJ
ARC ONE: Inferno

Chapter Summary

Harry discovers what goes on in the back rooms of Club Salazar and jumps to conclusions.

Chapter Notes

NSFW chapter, people.

A little POV switching back and forth but I imagine it's easy enough to follow. Also a small time-jump (one month), so don't be surprised if they seem a tiny bit more familiar in this one.

Thanks a bunch for all the love! So happy people are liking this story, thus far! Especially since it's only just begun... ;)

'S never let them see you cry, Draco.'

Those were the seven simple words his father spoke to him at age fifteen that he’d never forgotten. ‘Never let them see you cry, Draco.’ Of course, at the time Draco would preferred any other seven words strung together but those. Perhaps, Are you okay? I love you, son, would’ve been more suitable to tell your teenaged son who’d just gone through a life-threatening ordeal. Hell, even How about that weather? Looks like rain! would’ve soothed his shaken soul more than ‘Never let them see you cry, Draco.’

Nonetheless, Draco soon discovered that they were crucial words to live by in their line of work. Years of carefully schooling his features, learning how to internalize emotions instead of outwardly reacting to stimuli—well it wasn’t always easy. There were times he still felt on the verge of spilling, but there were other ways, better ways, to handle oneself than tears.

The papers never got ahold of the news of the Malfoy heir’s abduction from his school one afternoon. His father had managed to keep it under wraps so he could mend the situation below the radar of the police force.

Plus, his father was never one to negotiate ransoms with crooks, even if said crook held his only son at gun-point. Maybe it was because Lucius knew the power he had was far vaster compared to some crazed man who owed a bookie too much money that he figured his son was in no real danger. The man, Greyback, his name had been, was taken down easily; Draco was never harmed more than a bit of rough-handling and a split lip.

Those few hours of fear and unknowing became permanently etched into his head though, catalogued in the portion of his mind as a moment he would never be able to forget.
His father’s men had Greyback unarmed and down on the ground, whimpering like a dog, with a bullet in his kneecap. Lucius walked in, cool and composed as ever. He didn’t so much as blink as he withdrew a gun from beneath his coat, attached a silencer with ease, and shot the man pointblank between the eyes.

Draco’s innocence was obliterated with the man’s skull.

‘Never let them see you cry, Draco,’ were the words that came minutes later, in the back of his father’s car as the driver took them both back to the manor. He handed Draco a handkerchief to wipe away the tears that had managed to spill from his eyes and Draco could do nothing more than nod his head and obey, while suppressing the overwhelming desire to enfold himself in his father’s arms like he’d only been permitted to do as a child.

Vulnerability was an atrocious feeling. He sought from that day on not to let himself become so defenseless. He had no use for tears.

‘...Speak of this to no one, my son.’

‘Yes, father.’

From that day on, Draco’s life changed completely. Like a hazing gone wrong, his abduction seemed to serve as the official initiation into his father’s world.


Draco’s eyes popped open suddenly and he sat up straighter in his desk chair, reaching into the interior of his suit jacket to answer the phone call.

“Malfoy speaking.”

“Potter is here, boss.”

“Bring him on up.”

“Yes, sir.”

Harry Potter was an intriguing young man. Big eyes obscured slightly by thin-wired glasses that went out of style sometime around whatever era his denim jacket was from. Nonetheless, he couldn’t help but find him enthralling. Maybe it was his mouth that tried so hard to be polite when it was obvious those plump red lips really wanted to scowl at him.

Sweet and sour.

Draco smirked as he lit a cigarette.

Good at reading people, Draco could tell that Harry Potter was a wild one.

The defiance practically glowed in his vivid eyes.

And Draco had always been a fan of emerald green.

He also thoroughly enjoyed taming wild things into submission, but not wholly, because where would the fun be without a little resistance every now and then?

His body hummed in pleasure as Draco took a drag of his cigarette and blew it out just as the elevator doors sprung open to reveal the brunette, dressed in his uniform, bar the tie that was draped
over his shoulder in defeat.

“I tried following a tutorial on YouTube,” Potter began when Draco raised a knowing eyebrow, “but it still came out crooked so…” he shrugged, his cheeks tingeing a delightful shade of pink. Draco stubbed out his cigarette and stood up, motioning Potter to him who inched over cautiously.

“I’m sorry,” he muttered as Draco proceeded to tie his Windsor knot for him with ease, “You make it look so easy. I don’t want to come to work looking disheveled.”

“No need to apologize,” Draco responded quietly, adjusting the tie and vest as Potter chewed on the inside of his cheek.

“I have a favor I wanted to ask you,” Potter mumbled, averting his eyes to the ground. The line of his jaw grew hard as he clenched his teeth and swallowed, and Draco cocked his head in interest at the man’s obvious reluctance.

“Yes?”

“Would it—er—be possible if maybe—”

“Speak plainly,” Draco cut in as he folded Potter’s collar down and straightened it, hands lingering longer than it was necessary but neither of them seemed to notice right away.

“Would it be possible to work some extra hours?”

Draco’s hands stilled.

“Don’t you work overtime at the pub?” he asked nonchalantly.

“Er—well, yeah.”

“And you work here part-time, yes?”

“Yeah…”

“How many hours would you say, altogether?”

“…seventy or so…”

“And that’s not enough? On top of tips, as well?”

“You can just say ‘no’, you know!” Potter snapped, patience thinning like the line of his mouth. He crossed his arms over his chest defensively and took a step back, dislodging the grip Draco had on his tie.

Draco smirked at the petulant reaction, desire seeping deep within his bones but he pushed his proclivities to the side, because now was not the time to fantasize what he really wanted to do to Harry Potter.

“I didn’t say no,” he told Potter. “If you want more hours, I can put you on cleanup after your shift.”

The tension in Potter’s shoulders seemed to lessen with his words and Draco eased himself back into his desk chair with finality.

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have acted that way—but thank you, for understanding, I mean. I appreciate it, sir.”
“You’re most welcome, Potter.”

... 

As a child, Harry had naturally been curious, despite his Aunt’s favorite saying being ‘Don’t ask questions!’ (which, frankly, was an unfair expectation to have of a youthfully inquisitive mind). Unable to quench his desire to discover things, to learn, Harry had sought the answers in books and, as he grew older, through his own learnt experiences. 

Because, while loved a good book, but there was no greater teacher than the harsh reality of life. 

Harry pushed the cart of dirty glasses around the corner and down the next hall, towards the kitchen for washing. He halted in his steps as a set of black doors caught his peripheral on his left that he’d never noticed before. There were no windows in them to peer through, and they were locked, if the barcode scanner was any indication. 

His eyes drifted up to the narrow space between the doors and the ceiling, where a single green light was lit up, brighter than the dim glow of the club, small and round and out of place. It occurred to Harry suddenly, why he’d never paid attention to these doors before now. 

That light wasn’t on before. 

Shaking his head forcefully, Harry carried on, guiding the wheels of the cart the rest of the way through the corridor. 

“Here’s the last of them, Susan,” Harry called out over sound of spraying water and clinking dishes to the young redheaded woman who beamed her appreciation. 

“Thank you! You’re a godsend, Harry. It looks like we’ll all be out a bit earlier this morning.” 

“No problem,” Harry told her, rubbing the side of his face, tiredness finally starting to set in, “I’m happy to help.” 

Hannah, a tall blonde, swooped in to take the cart from him. “Go on home, Harry. You were off duty at six and it’s nearly quarter passed. Get some rest!” 

Harry allowed himself to be shooed from the kitchens and he slowly made his way back up front until his feet stopped on their own accord, directly across from the doors. Malfoy’s office was secured by thumb print, only permitting a handful of people access. VIP membership cards did have barcodes, however. Reaching into his pocket, Harry withdrew the black card from his wallet. 

He wasn’t a VIP Member, technically, but Malfoy did hand him this card and never requested it back...so... 

Licking his lips and ignoring his inner voice that shouted at him not to snoop, Harry quickly waved the card in front of the scanner. The small clicking sound was the only indication that the doors unlocked. 

Looking both ways down the hall, Harry opened the door and slipped into another hallway. Dimly lit, just like the club during their main hours of operation. Harry followed the length of the corridor. There were a dozen or so doors in total, separated far enough to give Harry the impression each room was of a fairly decent size. They all had windows, but most were covered by a sort of opaque shutter on the inside. For privacy? 

Each window, except one at the end of the hall, was covered.
Harry crept down the hall as silently as possible. While it seemed that he was completely alone, he still wanted to proceed on the side of caution. Heart beating a tattoo beneath his ribcage, he approached the door and very carefully stole a glimpse through the glass.

Harry jumped and pulled his face away from the glass in horror. Seizing the handle, he tried opening the locked door without success.

“Hey!” he shouted as he pounded on the door with a furious fist. When he only got a wicked smile from one of the figures on the other side, Harry stumbled back and turned on heel to run back to the doors he came from, shoving it open carelessly. He bumped headlong into a statue.

Zabini.

“Didn’t I tell you before,” the dark-skinned man murmured in a deep voice, “that curiosity killed the cat?”

Harry pressed himself against the door in a pathetic attempt to create some distance between him and Zabini. “You—someone needs to call the police!” Harry wheezed. “Someone’s being—”

He was cut off by a harsh grab of his arm that propelled him in step with the taller man’s brisk pace. “Let go of me!” Harry sputtered as he was tugged along to a familiar elevator. “Let go of me you bloody brute—ah!” Harry’s arm was freed from the tight grip just in time for him to catch himself from face planting on the floor of the lift, but not quite in time to escape the closing doors.

He was trapped in an elevator with a stone-cold henchman, on his way up to Draco Malfoy’s office and Harry, Harry couldn’t remember how to breathe. Had the lift always been this small?

Malfoy was at his desk when the doors sprang open and Harry was ushered smartly into the room.

“That will be all, Zabini,” Malfoy dismissed the other man, eyes never leaving Harry’s face as he spoke. “Don’t look so worried, Potter. Come here, would you?”

It was like a fist had seized him by the front of his shirt and tugged him in the direction of the Malfoy heir. As soon as he reached the desk, Malfoy set down his tablet so that Harry could see the screen. Reflected at him—was him. A camera angle capturing Harry from above, walking down that hallway, peering into the door—

“You’ve got to call the police,” Harry croaked out, head jarring up to look Malfoy in the face. “Someone’s being raped in that room—”

“I beg your pardon?” Malfoy asked incredulously.

Feeling ill, Harry shook his head and gripped the edge of the desk so hard his knuckles turned white.

“Someone—there was a guy tied up and blind-folded in that room. He was—another guy was—why the fuck are you smirking at me right now?” Harry sputtered angrily, shoving the iPad across the desk at the blonde.

“No one is being sexually assaulted in my club. That’s a dangerous accusation to make,” Malfoy said coldly, standing up and circling the desk to stand by Harry. He perched himself against it, his arms crossed with a mildly amused expression.

Harry took a step back.

“I—”
“My word, you are naïve, Potter,” Malfoy interjected with a small sneer. “You see someone tied up and immediately assume the worst? Do you really think so little of me? As if I’d never allow something so revolting to occur right beneath my nose.”

Harry tugged collar of his shirt guiltily, hating the way it suddenly felt so constrictive.

“If you don’t believe me, we can go down and ask Terry about it? I’d hate to interrupt their business transaction, but if it would put your mind at ease...”

Harry swallowed the bile that rose in his throat and shook his head. “So, what is this, then? He’s a-a prostitute?” he whispered the last word and hated that he couldn’t seem keep his voice from wavering.

Malfoy raised an unimpressed eyebrow. “Terry is one of the escorts here,” he corrected, surveying Harry with strange glittering eyes. “Safe and consensual sex, Potter. A little kinky, but I assure you, nobody here is unwilling. It is also a better alternative than being on the streets offering yourself up to strangers who may not play so nicely.”

Harry gaped. “There was a riding crop on the floor and he was covered in marks. That doesn’t seem nice!”

“You must have a very vanilla sex-life, then. Pity.”

Malfoy exited out of the camera app that had Harry’s security breach playing on a grey-scale loop.

Harry balked, face turning bright red at the jibe.

“I’m not—that’s so—so—I am not vanilla,” Harry grit out and then he bit his tongue hard and grimaced because he didn’t understand why he felt compelled to defend his sex-life instead of protesting the sheer inappropriateness of this conversation with his employer.

Malfoy’s smirk grew and Harry wanted to slap it off the taller man’s stupidly perfect face.

“Then surely you’re not so scandalized over a little roughness?” Malfoy drawled, his hand reaching forward to fix Harry’s haphazard collar. Harry jerked at the touch.

“This isn’t appropriate, Mister Malfoy,” Harry mumbled out almost reluctantly, his stomach doing odd little flips. He felt betrayed by his body’s response to Malfoy and embarrassed over his own naïveté. “…didn’t you tell me before that you’d never subject anyone to unwanted advances?”

Malfoy’s hand snapped back to his person instantly and for the first time since Harry had known him, the other man looked truly sorry. “My apologies, Mister Potter. Forgive me. You’re free to go.” With that, Malfoy made to round the desk once more.

Before he could stop himself, Harry’s hand reached out to seize Malfoy’s arm. It was the first time Harry ever actually touched the blonde. Malfoy stopped and looked at Harry’s hand and then at his face. “Unwanted?” Malfoy repeated softly, eyes boring into his and Harry felt himself harden at the desire he saw there.

Harry licked his lips and swallowed, mouth suddenly feeling parched from being stared at so intently and from merely touching Malfoy.

Harry was so screwed.

He shook his head slowly, his resolve crumbling.
“…wanted,” Harry heard himself rasp out before he pounced.

Potter, Draco quickly deduced, was a good kisser. He had technique, which gave Draco the impression he had some practice in this area; just enough tongue and teeth to be sensual instead of sloppy. However, it was starting to last a bit longer than it should have.

Lungs burning with need for air and his loins simply burning with need, Draco’s arms came around to pull Potter tighter into his embrace and then up onto the desk before parting their mouths. They panted against each other, chests heaving, breath coming out in a staccato of warm puffs between them. Potter’s hand wrapped itself against the back of his neck, keeping him from distancing himself too much.

Draco smiled and peppered nipping little kisses down a slender throat, reveling in the hummed moan that reverberated beneath his lips. There was no gap between their bodies anymore; Draco’s own arousal was pressed against Potter’s leg and the contact was pure heat, a blazing inferno and fuck, he craved more of it.

A month-long storm had been brewing from their mutual attraction and this, this was inevitable—Draco knew it, although he didn’t think Potter did. Or maybe, his bashfulness had prevented him from acting on it, because Potter was bashful.

Bold, too.

A conflicting blend of characteristics, but it suited Harry Potter. At the very least, he was keeping Draco on his toes.

He wanted to take Potter apart, piece by piece.

Potter leaned up into him for another needy kiss and Draco swept his tongue out again to duel with his playfully. Stepping fully in between the circle of Potter’s legs, his hands gripped onto a pair of lovely thighs and hoisted them up and arounds his waist, supporting the other man precariously on the edge of his desk.

“Mmph, fuck,” the brunette gasped into his mouth, back arching when Draco’s erection met his straight-on.

“Well there’s an idea,” Draco murmured, kissing up a smooth jaw to purr in Potter’s ear. He pulled back just enough to meet Potter’s lust-blown eyes. There was barely any green left. “...Yes?”

“Yeah,” Potter consented before he sat up on the desk more steadily, snatching at Draco’s jacket and tugging it down passed his shoulders impatiently.

Draco chuckled low in his throat and assisted Potter in his endeavor, letting his Armani coat drop onto the floor. He noted the hitch in Potter’s breathing and Draco's hands trailed slowly to the straps of the shoulder holster. Oddly enough, he hadn’t even considered them being a problem up until now.

“…No?” He asked, pulling away slightly.

“…Yes,” Potter stated, eyes darting back and forth at the twin guns holstered at his sides, "Just, you know, put them over there?" Bemused by Potter's reaction, Draco removed the harness from his body and set it to the side. Potter’s gaze followed every movement from where he sat on top of his desk.
"This all right?"

A rushed head-bob.

Draco loosened his tie and set it aside as well, pinning Potter with a hungry stare. The other man practically tore off his vest and tie.

Draco’s trousers felt ridiculously tight.

Draco untucked his shirt and unfastened each button as he watched Potter do the same, slender fingers trembling with nerves or desire, or both. Bit by bit, smooth flesh kissed golden from sunlight, revealed itself behind pieces of white fabric. Dark nipples were bared to him as the shirt was removed, sweet little nubs hardened from arousal and exposure to the cooler air.

Draco’s hands grabbed at his own belt and undid the buckle, unhooked the little metal clasp holding his trousers together and let the material fall open.

“Damn,” the brunette let out a hushed curse when he realized that Draco wasn’t wearing pants underneath. Draco grinned as Potter scrambled off the desk to toe off his shoes and shirk off his own bottoms until he was standing in nothing but his socks and light-blue boxer-briefs before Draco.

They were both impossibly hard. Draco advanced again, urging Potter back up onto his desk so he could stand between his thighs once more.

Draco brushed his hand down against Potter’s covered erection, mouth splitting in a smirk when his fingertips grazed against the growing spot of wetness darkening the baby-blue of his pants.

“How sweet, Harry,” Draco whispered, his face centimeters away from Potter’s in an almost-kiss. “You’re already wet for me.”

His hand slipped into the waistband suddenly and seized the young man’s cock firmly in his fist, squeezing promisingly and eliciting a strangled whine from Potter’s lips. He gathered some of the warm precum from the head onto the tips of his fingers before dragging them up Potter’s naked torso, leaving wet tracks behind. He traced the contours of a surprisingly defined stomach, watching as it trembled slightly from his touch.

Potter had a dark little beauty mark right by his belly button, he noted, and two small ones along his clavicle. The lithe body quivered on his desk and Draco wasted no time capturing his mouth in another passionate kiss.

Oh, how Draco wanted to consume this young man.

Fingers returning to Potter’s sides amidst their heated snogging, Draco hooked them into his waistband once more and tugged the briefs off. Potter leaned back on his palms and obediently lifted his hips to give Draco aid in divesting them, passed his arse, down both lean legs, and then somewhere across the room.

Potter’s cock was maybe a little above average-size but lovely to look at; a darker, rose-hued length of hardened flesh, curving the slightest bit toward his stomach where it was leaking clear drops of precum onto it.

Draco touched him again, hand jerking Potter a bit, smiling when Potter groaned and thrust into his fist eagerly. After a few moments, Draco released him and slid his hand down passed taught balls to press behind them inquisitively, closer to his goal but unable to fully get there due to the way Potter was sitting.
This wouldn’t do.

Pulling Potter off the desk and against his body, Draco used the back of his knuckles to trace against the brunette’s cheekbones gently. “Yes?” he asked again, his free hand sweeping down to cup beneath the curve of Potter’s arse.

Face flushed much like the rest of his body, Potter reached down to finally take Draco in his grasp, eyes fluttering shut briefly as he felt the rigid length but he nodded resolutely and cleared his throat to let out another affirmative “Yes,” that was raw with desire.

Draco spun him around to face the desk, sucking at his throat once more, determined to leave his mark behind. “It’s been a while for me,” Potter confessed breathlessly as his head lolled to the side when Draco attacked his neck while simultaneously stroking his cock. “Please tell me you’ve got lube here—and-and a condom,” he muttered with a sliver of seriousness piercing through the thick lust in his tone.

“Of course I do,” Draco reassured before he pressed between Potter’s shoulder blades and bent him over his desk. He leaned over Potter’s back so that he could reach into the top of his desk drawer and snatch out a tube of lubricant and a condom. His cock was hard and leaking fluid from the tip as it brushed against Potter.

He set the condom aside in favor of uncapping the lube, squeezing a dollop onto the tip of his finger to start. With one hand, he separated the cheeks of Potter’s perky arse, revealing that tiny, pink swirl of tight muscle that seemed to quiver from Draco’s gaze alone.

Biting his lip between his teeth, Draco set out to work Potter open, one lubed finger circling his entrance teasingly, adding just enough pressure without actually penetrating. Potter whimpered against the desk.

“Do it!” he snapped out, more desperate than irritated but Draco couldn’t help himself. His finger sank in a millimeter and stopped.

“That’s not very polite, Harry,” Draco purred, his free hand running down the length of his spine and then back up to his shoulder blades, pressing down firmly like he was pinning a butterfly to a board for display.

Unable to twist around properly to look at Draco, the dark head of messy hair turned to the side and huffed out incredulously.

“You’ve got to be kidding me right—I’m not about to beg!”

“No? Shame.” Draco responded with a sigh as he pulled his finger away completely.

“W-wait!” Potter rushed, hips jutting back in search of Draco’s hand. “Damn it…please?”

Draco smirked, satisfied, despite the irritated huff.

“Good boy,” he whispered before breaching Potter with the slicked finger in one swift motion. Potter cried out in shock, arse clenching around the invading digit instinctively until he was able to breathe into it, to accept the intrusion, and Draco understood what Potter had meant when he said it had been a while.

Potter was tight, almost ridiculously so, but his body knew the touch of another man. He knew how to receive.
A blessing at this point, because Draco’s desire was increasing by the second and not having to
coddle a weepy virgin through first-time anal was a relief.

Besides, Draco Malfoy was not one to coddle his conquests.

He fingered Potter for a few thorough strokes, a small mimicry of what was to come, but one finger
was a joke, so he lubed up a second and slid it into place with the first.

A small grunt.

Draco pushed in and rotates his wrist in slow circles, separating the digits on the withdraw, stretching
the warm channel of Potter’s arse while occasionally crooking his fingers experimentally, searching
for—

A choked cry.

“Yes?” Draco drawled, pushing back in.

“Yes…fuck! There, right there…”

Another tap against Potter’s prostate.

Another whine.

Well, goddamn.

Draco was almost tempted to continue his teasing for another hour.

Almost.

As delightful as the image floating around in his imagination was: one of Potter bound by silk, black,
or maybe green, to bring out the color of his eyes…Muscles straining and trembling as Draco played
with him, massaging his prostate, bringing him closer and closer to the edge but never letting him
quite reach his peak while the minutes ticked by, reducing Potter to a mess of desperate sobs and
pleads…no, as delightful as those thoughts were, they both needed relief, faster, this time.

His cock twitched painfully and Draco found himself adding a third finger without bothering to
grease it beforehand. No matter, though, Potter was slick enough to take it by now if the obscene
squelching of lubricant was anything to go by.

And he did, with a blissful sob escaping him as shaking hands scrambled for purchase against sleek
wood.

“You can—now,” the young man gasped out finally, pushing up off the desk when Draco’s hand
left its place on his spine. He twisted to look at Malfoy, eyes shiny, lips reddened, and cheeks
flushed. The state of his hair was even more chaotic than usual.

Oh, how pretty Potter looked, when Draco was wrecking him.

He glanced down at the three fingers he had inside Potter. His rim was pulled taught around the
digits, shiny with sweat and lube. Draco twisted them again for good measure before pulling them
out and watched as the little hole winked at him.

How lewd.

“You don’t have to look,” Potter grumbled, looking embarrassed by Draco’s staring. Draco smirked
and squeezed Potter’s arse cheeks, massaging them firmly before picking up the condom and tearing it open with his teeth.

“I like to look,” Draco drawled, handing Potter the rubber. “Put it on me.” Green eyes gave him another incredulous look prompting Draco to purr, “If you want me to shag you, Harry, put it on me.” Potter exhaled sharply through his nose but he pushed off the desk and spun around to comply, looking horny and bitter.

Draco gave him a satisfied smirk. “Good boy.”

“Oh, screw you,” Potter hissed under his breath.

“No, Harry,” Draco said, his teeth showing in a grin now. Hands securing themselves around the backs of firm thighs, Draco hoisted Potter up bodily and legs instinctively wound themselves around Draco’s hips. His arms came up to cling around his neck so he wouldn’t fall as Draco reached behind him to line up his straining erection at Potter’s entrance.

Potter’s small cry was music to his ears as Draco pushed in, carefully, but not quite slowly enough, all the way to the hilt. Their position allowed for gravity’s assistance, causing Potter’s body to sink onto his cock, deeper than he was probably ready for. He pecked Potter’s cheek, right beneath his ear. “Screw you.”

A groan laden with pained pleasure left kiss-swollen lips. Draco felt that snug channel flex madly around him as Potter tried desperately to accommodate the stretch. He held Potter’s body against his own, motionless, aside from their heavy breathing. “Yes?” Draco asked after a momentary pause.

Potter nodded. “Yeah.” Draco walked forward a couple of paces and pushed Potter onto the desk again. He adjusted him until he was lying flat on his back with his legs bent toward his shoulders, exposing the place where their bodies were joined.

Potter’s entrance was stretched even more now, around the girth of Draco’s prick, and his own cock was leaking copious amounts of precum onto the flat plains of his belly. Disturbed by Draco’s continued fixation, he tried to close his legs a bit.

“Now, now, Harry, don’t be shy,” Draco crooned. Ignoring Potter’s glower, he wrenched his legs back open.

Playtime was over, for now.

Draco began to move, hard and fast, fucking Potter in earnest across the tabletop. The force of his thrusts sent Potter’s sweaty body slipping back and forth against the varnished wood, aiding the furious tempo of thrusts.

Potter trembled and whimpered in sync with each push and pull of their bodies, softer at first but quickly escalating whenever Draco’s length brushed against his prostate. Those sweet vocalizations weren’t forged for Draco’s sake, either, but instead, spilled out of him like water bursting through cracks in a dam.

Blunt fingernails bit into his forearms as Potter’s body seized up in orgasm, ropes of pearly-white cum spattering against his abdomen.

That was…easy.

Draco’s rhythm faltered as he watched Potter ride out the waves of pleasure tremoring through him, fascinated by the erotic expression on his face. His fascination was only amplified when he realized
that the other man hadn't lost his erection, yet.

*Interesting.*

Draco quickly scooped up Potter into his arms. He made a disgruntled noise, but otherwise didn’t protest as he was carried over to the leather couch and dropped down in a straddle over his boss’ lap.

Cum smeared between their bellies.

Unable to resist the urge, Draco’s fingers weaved into Potter’s messy hair and tugged his head down into a fierce kiss, tongue and teeth and merciless.

As if trying to prove he wasn’t ‘vanilla’, Potter’s hands cradled either side of his jaw and kissed back just as forcefully, rocking his hips all the while with a surprising amount of enthusiasm for someone who just came once already.

Clearly, Harry Potter had impressive stamina.

Planting his feet firmly on the ground, Draco bucked his hips up into Potter who met his pace with his own downward thrusts. Draco reached around to squeeze roughly at the globes of Potter’s arse, controlling most of their pace, even with Potter on top. He gave the rump bouncing against him a smart slap, the gasp of surprise enough encouragement to reward him with a second one on the opposite cheek. The flesh of his arse shook slightly beneath Draco’s palm at the force of it and Potter dropped his forehead onto Draco’s shoulder and swiveled his hips back into Draco’s touch.

*He liked it.*

Draco hummed, pleased with the discovery, and stole Potter’s mouth for another round of snogging. Draco could tell Potter was close again, if the erratic movements were anything to go by, and admittedly, he wasn’t too far from peaking either. Wanting to prolong their encounter a little longer, Draco shifted slightly, hands back on either side of the brunette’s trim waist and guided him into a slower pace while easing up on the brutality of their kissing.

Potter’s eyes rolled back for a second at a particularly spot-on jab against that sweet spot inside him. beads of sweat clung to his skin and Draco licked some of the saltiness from the base of his throat and raked his nails up tanned thighs, wanting nothing more than to conquer this young man named Harry Potter.

He restrained the urge.

Potter’s hips undulated against him sensually, chasing his own pleasure with every tilt and grind of his arse onto the cock embedded within him. He was putting on a show without actually trying to put on a show, mesmerizing in his movements. Whereas Draco was typically calculated with a lover, controlling and knowing exactly how to play a body to orgasm, Potter simply allowed himself to be lost to the sensation and let those feelings guide him in utter abandon.

*Untamed.*

*Wild.*

*Beautiful.*

Leaning forward, Draco’s mouth latched onto one of the pebbled nipples while one hand came up briefly to toy with the other, pinching and twisting it lightly for a few seconds.
“Shit—oh fuck—I’m so close, so close,” Potter groaned in response to the added stimulation, head tilting back as he raised himself up and sank back down urgently. “I’m going to—ah!”

Draco’s hand had snaked between their connected bodies; he stroked him not half a dozen times until Potter was cumming again, hard and loudly and mostly dry this time, clutching Draco as he writhed through it.

“Fuck,” hissed Draco through clenched teeth, “Fuck…”

The gyration of Potter’s arse against his groin combined with the involuntary tightening of that warm channel surrounding him triggered Draco into his own orgasm. His toes curled in his shoes, his hips stuttered in one last unforgiving drive upward, and then he was letting out more groaned expletives as he came.

Gradually, the world slid back into focus around them both and Draco reached behind the young man in his lap to hold onto the base of the condom. With a soft noise of discontent from the brunette, he pulled out. He shifted Potter’s sated body off him and deposited him on the couch so that he could dispose of the used rubber in the bathroom.

Legs heavy and tired from exertion and a general lack of rest, Draco shut the door to the loo and tossed the tied-off condom into the trashcan. He quickly washed his hands and splashed his face with some cool water. By the time he dried off and returned to his office, Potter was already up and halfway dressed.

Leaning against the door frame, Draco crossed his arms and watched as he hopped around unsteadily, shoving the shirt-tails into his trousers and zipped them. Noticing that Draco returned, Potter looked up at him shamefaced and haggard.

“Going so soon?”

Potter licked his lips that were still scarlet and puffy from overuse. “I,” he began, clearing his throat, “I’m so sorry. I don’t know what came over me—I don’t normally do this sort of thing—” he looked around frantically, shoving his sockless feet into his shoes and opting to shove his socks into his pocket instead, “—I’m—” he tapped at the down button to the lift more times than necessary until it sprang open. “I’m sorry, sir,” he repeated desperately, stumbling inside, “I shouldn’t have”— the door slid shut in Potter’s face, cutting off his inane babbling.

Bemused, Draco merely shook his head and watched as the floor indicator above the elevator dropped from level three, to two, to one.

Picking up the discarded pair of light-blue boxer-briefs from behind one of the arm chairs in his way back to his desk, Draco chuckled darkly.

This wouldn’t be the last time he had Harry Potter, he decided resolutely as he pulled up the exterior security footage on the iPad.

Judging by the way dazed eyes glanced back up at the building he’d just fled from…Potter knew it, too.

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Chapter End Notes
Welp. That escalated, quickly.

Too much?

Maybe?

BTW I made an inspiration-board-collage-thing (out of sheer boredom) for this story. If I ever can find out how to embed pictures on here, I’d post it.

*shrugs and walks off, whistling*
It had been three years, Harry realized, since his last ‘walk of shame’ home. He twisted the knob on the tub, warm water springing forth from the faucet in rivulets. It pooled in the bottom as Harry adjusted the knobs, pain spreading up his spine when he bent forward to run his hand through the falling water.

Satisfied with the temperature, Harry pulled his hand away and rubbed the wetness on his face in place of a towel. He was officially on hour twenty-five without sleep and admittedly, the coolness on his tired eyes was soothing.

“What were you thinking, Harry?” he scolded himself softly, standing up to look in the mirror over the sink, like he’d seem less crazy if he was speaking to a face instead of nothing, even if the face was his own. “What were you thinking?” he repeated. His reflection offered him no response and very little comfort; his lips were red and swollen from snogging, his throat was peppered with early signs of forming hiccups and Harry knew when he took his shirt off, there’d be more along his chest and nipples. His hair was a mess but he supposed that was the closest thing to normal about his appearance right now.

No wonder he’d been given such looks of disapproval on the way home.

Harry shed his clothing and threw them haphazardly in the direction of the laundry basket before gingerly climbing into the halfway-filled tub. He hissed in discomfort and he sank down, drew his legs up to his chest, and buried his face into his knees.

He tried unsuccessfully to silence his mind, the berating voice in his head pestering him for being a bloody fool.

The door he left ajar was nudged open by Hedwig who walked a few paces into the bathroom to investigate, sniffed at his discarded clothing on the floor nearby, and then raised her yellow eyes to stare at her master.

“Don’t judge me,” Harry mumbled.

A slow blink.

“Don’t look at me like that, Hedwig…” he leaned over slightly and propped his chin in his hands on the edge of the tub, “I don’t know whether you prefer boy cats or girl cats, but damn, Malfoy’s just so…sexy and, okay, yeah, he’s a smug jerk too, but he’s also really…charming. I couldn’t help myself…I know, I know, I’m ashamed of me too.”

He closed his eyes and sighed as Hedwig turned and walked away disinterestedly, leaving him alone.
once more. Grey eyes seemed to be etched behind his eyelids, however, and then the image panned out to reveal Malfoy in a state of partial undress: tie and jacket gone, white shirt unbuttoned showing off creamy, alabaster skin, tight and defined. Trousers opened to reveal a hard, long—he shuddered unconsciously—thick—

“No!” Harry’s eyes snapped open and he used his palm to smack the water, breaking the surface with a splash and spraying himself in the eyes. “Fuck, fuck, fuck! I’m such an idiot,” he groaned. Between his legs his prick twitched treacherously even though Malfoy had managed to wring two orgasms from it little more than an hour ago.

Draco Malfoy was his boss, for Heaven’s sake!

His boss.

His.

 Fucking.

 Boss.

Whom Harry just let fuck him on his desk (and his couch) six ways to Sunday. He slapped the water again.

“Sleep, I need sleep,” he whispered, defeated. He stood up and wrapped a towel around his waist, his gait slightly staggered as he slipped into a clean pair of underpants and a shirt. He sprawled out onto the futon face-first and was asleep before his head hit the lumpy pillow.

…

“You look like shit.”

Harry gave Ron a half-hearted scowl as he tied the apron around his waist. Ron was perched on a barstool, chewing on a bite of his sandwich.

“Thanks, mate,” Harry said sarcastically, batting his eyelashes with exaggerated flutters, “You really know how to make a bloke feel special.”

Ron snorted and took a swig of his cola. “Just being honest. Did you have trouble sleeping or something…oh.” A wide grin split his freckled face and he pinned Harry with a knowing look. “Never mind.”

Harry stared at him blankly.

“What?”

Ron leaned forward and Harry did too. “Who’d you shag?”

Harry sprang backward looking frazzled.

“What—what are you going on about,” he started, straightening up clean glasses and trying hard not to look guilty.

Ron smirked and took a bite of a pickle, crunching on it for a few seconds before responding. “We’ve been best mates for a decade Harry. I’ve been there through both years of Anthony, and then those other two blokes you rebounded with—I recognize that walk. Lord, help me, I wish I didn’t but—” another bite, mouth full, “—I do.”
Harry sputtered, face red and indignant.

“You’re nutters,” Harry mumbled gruffly.

“And you’re walking like you’ve got a broom handle up your arse,” Ron said teasingly, prompting Harry to whack him with the rag he had draped over his shoulder. The ginger broke into a round of evil snickers.

“Oh, bugger off!” Harry snapped. “Shouldn’t you be working instead of sitting like the great lump you are?”

“I’ve got ten minutes before my shift starts,” Ron answered smoothly. “Come on, Harry, give me some details! I mean, not like measurements or positions, but I mean, who was he?” he rushed to add.

“Just some bloke, okay?” Harry told him lowly. “Can we not get too deep into it?”

“Didn’t say that last night, though, eh?” Ron interjected with another snort.

Harry scoffed and braced himself against the counter to glower at him, thanking his lucky stars that no one else was around yet to hear their conversation.

“For someone who claims he is completely heterosexual, you seem to be very interested in my sex-life.”

“Hey now,” Ron protested, holding up his hands placatingly, “I’m just being a supportive friend.”

“You’re giggling like a twelve-year-old boy who got his hands on a dirty magazine,” Harry deadpanned. “Yes. I had sex. It’s really not a big deal.”

Ron sighed, looking somewhat chastised. “Okay, okay, sorry. But you’ve got to admit that you’ve been a bit of a recluse for the past few years since Goldstein. So, it is kind of a big deal! Someone finally caught your eye. It’s not a bad thing, Harry. Did you—y’know, at least have a…good time?” he added the last bit under his breath, leaning forward a little.

Resigned, Harry nodded his head and sighed. “Fine, I’ll bite. Yeah, I had a good time. Really good, honestly. But—it was just a one-time thing. Nothing’s going to come of it.”

“How come? Is he married?”

“What? No. God, no, Ron. I’m not a homewrecker,” Harry said frowning at the implication. No, he’s just my boss, from my secret part-time job. We fucked all over his office. It’s Draco Malfoy, by the way, the man you claimed to be the son of a crime lord.

Harry hushed his bothersome inner-voice with resolute severity.

“Okay.” Ron said slowly, stirring his drink with the straw causing the ice cubes to clink around. “Well, hey, at least you’re out fishing again, right? We were all worried you were going to try and become a nun, soon.”

Harry reached over and covered Ron’s face with the rag to shut him up.

... 

Five days later...
Harry pressed the button on his phone for the fifth time in as many days.

Ignoring a simple phone call from Malfoy was easy, but tonight would not be so easy to ignore the man in the flesh.

Harry wasn’t sure he was ready to face him again.

Or ever, for that matter.

He’d behaved so unprofessionally, shamelessly spreading his legs like he was an easy lay…and Harry wasn’t easy. Now he’d gone and given Malfoy the wrong impression. Would Malfoy expect sex from him again? Demand it, even? Blackmail him into putting-out if Harry wanted to keep his job?

Harry clenched his jaw.

“What do you have there—is that a phone?”

Damn it!

Ron.

“I’m going to tell Hermione to put a damn bell around your neck,” Harry growled, trying to conceal the phone from Ron before he could get a good look at it. Ron stuck out his tongue and cornered Harry between the dumpster and the brick wall of the pub. “Get your hand off my arse!”

“Let me see it!” Ron grunted, trying to pin Harry with one hand while wrestling the phone from his pocket.

“I’m pretty sure this is harassment in the work place,” Harry panted, trying to squirm out of the gangly man’s grasp. Before he managed to break free, Ron already had his hands on his target.

“Yeah, yeah,” Ron muttered flippantly. “You love me though, so you won’t sue, right?”

“I don’t love you. You’re a lousy friend,” Harry snapped, pouncing on Ron’s turned back, who stumbled slightly under the force of his impact but managed not to drop both Harry or the phone.

“Oy, give it back you oaf!”

“Blimey, this is an iPhone, isn’t it? I’m kind of jealous. And a new one; you haven’t even changed the wallpaper!” Ron said, examining the phone with Harry clinging to his back like a koala bear. “Why didn’t you give me your number?”

Harry rested his chin on Ron’s boney shoulder, hooking on for support so one hand could come around to snatch the phone. The redhead relinquished it without a fight and instead proceeded to piggy-back Harry through the backdoor of the pub before letting him drop down onto the tile of the kitchen.

“I just…” Harry tried to keep the blush from pricking his ears. “I just got it, okay?”

Ron scratched his chin, a suspicious frown settling onto his features.

“I’ve been telling you for years that you should get a phone. Even a cheap flip phone. You live by yourself—you should have a phone,” Ron began thoughtfully. Harry’s spine grew rigid with trepidation, knowing where Ron was heading with this. “…But you just went on and on about how
it was a waste of money and you didn’t need one to survive. Hell, you don’t even own a TV. You’re like the most frugal person I’ve ever met, and I grew up in a household of nine people, so I know frugal.”

“Okay, yes. I splurged. Okay? Let’s drop this, please,” Harry rushed, stepping around Ron to hang up his apron on one of the hooks.

“Harry.”

Harry slumped.

“A man called here while you were on your lunch break. I knew you ran home to feed Hedwig so I took a message for him.”

Ron reached into the pocket of his jeans and pulled out a scrap of paper. “Some bloke named Damien. Asked me to have you call him back.”

“Damien?” Harry asked, brow furrowed as he accepted the note from Ron. “Damien…” he repeated more to himself, staring blankly at Ron’s chicken scratch. Harry’s eyes grew round in realization.

He crumbled the paper in his fist angrily and shoved it into his own pocket, feeling borderline-murderous. Malfoy—bloody fucking Malfoy! Hadn’t Harry asked him not to call the pub? Arrogant, blonde, lying, prick!

“…Earth to Harry,” Ron said dryly, waving a hand in front of Harry’s face. Harry snapped back to reality with a rapid sequence of blinks.

“S-sorry, did you say something?”

“I asked if this Damien guy was the same bloke you hooked up with last week.”

“Er—yeah. Yeah he was.”

“No offense, mate, but he sounded kind of…stuck-up over the phone.”

“Oh, he…well, he kind of is sometimes,” Harry admitted, ruffling the back of his hair unconsciously, his mind wheeling.

“Oh…got it.”

Harry closed his eyes and inhaled deeply.

“What,” he asked in his exhaled breath, “do you ‘got’?”

“You’ve found yourself some sort of wealthy sugar-daddy, is that it?” Ron asked, his grin becoming wicked.

“I fucking hate you.”

“That’s why you wouldn’t give me details! Some well-off bloke is buying you presents, like that phone, and you’re being too damn proud so you didn’t tell anyone! Christ, Harry.”

“I didn’t ask for it,” Harry objected moodily. “I told him to take it back. He refused.”

“You must be good in bed. Smartphones are bloody expensive,” Ron said, his own cheeks pinking slightly as he glanced back at the phone clutched in the brunette’s slender hands.
“Don’t. *Please, Ron,*” Harry beseeched him. “It’s not like that. He got the phone before we—” he broke off and gnawed his bottom lip, hating himself and the way this all must’ve looked to an outsider. He shook his head. “He just wanted a way to reach me, okay? Simple as that. I didn’t sleep with him to get the phone and I certainly didn’t sleep with him *because* he gave me the phone.”

Ron gave him a sheepish smile. “Yeah, I know, Harry. You don’t have to prove anything to me. I know you.”

“Better than anyone,” Harry conceded, punching him lightly in the shoulder. “So don’t ever call —er—*Damien* my sugar-daddy again, or they’ll never find your body.”

Ron chuckled and shoved Harry gently in retaliation. “Yeah, yeah, go home. And shit, *text me* sometime, won’t you? If you can figure out how to, grandpa!” Harry flipped him off and burst through the door that led back into the alley, and sprinted down the street towards his flat.

Although he wasn’t thrilled Ron had found out about ‘*Damien*’, he had to admit, it was nice to come clean, even if it was just a fraction of the truth.

A very, very, small fraction.

…

“Ah, thank you, Zabini,” the pristinely-dressed blonde told the apathetic man behind Harry. Beside him, a young woman with dark-hair, made taller than him thanks to the heels she wore, gave Harry an outright look of disapproval.

Pansy Park-something, Harry recalled. The young woman Daphne lusted after.

“Pansy, this is Harry Potter. Mister Potter, this is Pansy Parkinson, my personal secretary,” Malfoy said in a smooth statement of formality. Entirely unimpressed by Harry, she gave him a quick once-over, and nodded her head once in acknowledgement before turning her attention back to the boss.

“These need your signature,” Pansy informed him, handing him a stack of papers held together with a black clip. “Would you prefer me to deliver them personally or would you rather fax them over?”

“I’ll fax them,” Malfoy replied simply. “Are we still on for lunch tomorrow?”

“Of course,” she said haughtily, “I’m the one who makes your schedule, I wouldn’t forget to include myself in it, now would I?” She smirked at Malfoy who winked back. Turning on heel, Parkinson brushed by Harry like he wasn’t even there and into the elevator that was being held open by Zabini.

Harry stared blankly at the wall behind Malfoy instead of directly at him. His stomach felt like lead and his body too hot from nerves but when he forced his gaze finally on Malfoy, he felt himself snap.

“I asked you not to call the pub,” he growled, arms crossing over his chest defensively. Malfoy observed him silently. He set the stack of papers aside.

“Another week and still no luck with that tie?” Malfoy asked with a raised brow, leaning back against the edge of his desk casually.

“I asked you not to call the pub,” he repeated through gritted teeth, ire growing at Malfoy’s disregard.

“You didn’t answer my phone calls. I don’t like being ignored.”
Harry gaped. “I didn’t answer your—” he shook his head like he was trying ward of flies. “I didn’t even want the blasted phone!”

Malfoy cocked his head but said nothing more on the matter. “Come, let me tie your tie. I don’t like my employees to be sloppy.”

Harry had to squash the desire to throw said tie in Malfoy’s face. His mouth, however, operated on its own accord. “Well, I don’t like my employers to be perverts.”

His words seemed to catch Malfoy off guard; he blinked in a flicker of surprise before his features schooled back into a mask of boredom and he pushed off the desk, slowly in Harry’s direction.

Like an animal creeping on its prey. Harry swallowed, and straightened up, more determined than ever to stand his ground against this man. His breathing spiked slightly when Malfoy stopped in front of him but he didn’t back away from his spot.

“I did not do anything you didn’t want me to,” Malfoy intoned lowly. Harry licked his lips absently, sweat beading at the base of his spine. “…That you didn’t beg me for,” he finished, glittering eyes narrowed.

“I—” feeling a bit unsettled by his shame, Harry averted his eyes briefly before raising them back up to Malfoy’s handsome face. “You’re…right. I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have called you—that. But I…it was a mistake. Like I said before, I don’t normally do this sort of thing,” he confessed awkwardly. “And I was embarrassed for behaving like…” he trailed off, scrubbing his hand down his face.

“You are an adult, Potter,” Malfoy drawled. “No need to make excuses. We had sex. Good sex, if I do say so, myself. We did not do anything wrong.”

Harry felt like he was on the verge of passing out; the blood rushed from his head down into his lower stomach, bubbling like hot lava inside his groin, simply by the way Malfoy’s smooth baritone murmured the word ‘sex’.

The image of a half-naked Malfoy flashed into the forefront of his mind and Harry’s hands shook slightly at the memory he’d been trying in vain to forget all week long.

Harry bit his lip so hard he was surprised he didn’t break skin. Malfoy eyed him through his pale blonde bangs.

“What are you thinking, Harry?” he asked softly, his voice like a gentle caress on Harry’s skin. He was using his first name again. It felt personal. It…did something to Harry, shaking him at his core and making him feel like he couldn’t keep his balance for much longer.

“I don’t…I’m not easy, Mister Malfoy and I really hope I didn’t give you the wrong impression of me by doing—that—with you.” Shit his cheeks were probably scarlet now. “I promise, it will not happen again.”

Malfoy pressed his lips together in a tight smile. “If that is what you want,” he stated plainly, and Harry let out a breath he didn’t know he was holding, “then from here on out, I shall endeavor to keep our meetings purely professional in nature. I’ll refrain from contacting your other job, as well.”


No.

Why would he be disappointed at the prospect of keeping things professional with his boss? It wasn’t
as if there was something other than physical attraction between them.

Damn, when had Harry become this shallow and brazen person?

Malfoy surveyed him with light gray eyes, tilting his head to the side in a thoughtful manner. “Though, if you still require it, I don’t mind lending my assistance with your tie. May I?”

Heart resuming its previous erratic tempo, Harry relinquished his tie to Malfoy who led him into the bathroom to stand before the mirror, much like they had on Harry’s first official day.

Nothing had changed, Harry established firmly. Nothing. Malfoy was his employer and he was Malfoy’s employee. Another hired staff member, trying to earn enough money so he could keep his friend’s family’s business from closing their doors in the next five months.

Simple as that.

Malfoy proceeded to show Harry how to tie his tie yet again, keeping enough distance between their lower halves so nothing could be mistaken for inappropriate contact. Harry tried not to think about how their bodies had been joined there before.

Malfoy’s graceful fingers moved with practiced ease, and Harry begged himself not to remember what it felt like to have them inside him.

His breathing stuttered.

Malfoy’s mouth was close to the side of his head but no, Harry would not think about how those lips claimed his own in hungry desire.

Harry had never considered himself to be particularly weak. He’d been through enough rough-patches in his twenty-one years to develop the backbone he needed to survive. And while he experienced his share of bad days, he still pushed himself forward.

He operated on pure stubbornness, Hermione had reminded Harry at least thousand times over.

So, he was stronger than this. Stronger than any situation life could throw at him.

Stronger than any lustful temptation…

*God help him,* Harry thought desperately, because one-by-one he could feel every vertebra of his once-obstinate backbone melt into liquid heat.

*He was weak.*

*He was weak,* he realized bitterly when Malfoy’s eyes landed on his in the mirror and he suddenly forgot how to breathe altogether.

*He was weak,* Harry screamed self-deprecatingly, when he pressed himself back into the other man’s body, unable to maintain the distance between them any longer.

*He was weak,* he wailed to himself as Malfoy’s hands slid from his tie, down to rest on his hips, and he was weak, when he nodded his head yes and those hands slipped around to his front, to unfasten Harry’s trousers.

*He was weak,* he knew, as he bent himself forward, one leg hiked up on the counter, and let Malfoy into his body for a second time.
He was weak…

…and the worst of it was, Harry craved every moment of that weakness.


Draco Malfoy, Harry decided, was the fucking devil in an Armani suit.

One intense romp and two toe-curling orgasms (dragged out of him through three different positions) later, Harry spent his ten-hour shift cursing the blonde man’s very existence.

His legs had felt wobbly for the first three hours of the night, and his arse tender for the entirety of his shift. It was karma, Harry told himself with scorching reproach, karma and Malfoy’s godamned voodoo penis.

Malfoy had managed to dig up a lot of personal information on Harry during his interview (if one could even call their strange encounter an interview); he couldn’t help but wonder if the other man had somehow gotten his hands on a blueprint of Harry’s erogenous zones. Honestly, at this point, it wouldn’t come as much of a surprise.

Harry shook out the paste-like cat food into Hedwig’s dish in the kitchen, refilled the water bowl next to it, and kissed her on the head lovingly.

“Enjoy girl,” he murmured tiredly. “I’m headed off to—” he was cut off by the sound of the buzzer from outside, echoing loudly and sending the white cat in a mad dash across the floor to find sanctuary beneath the futon.

“It’s nearly eight, who the bloody hell…” Harry mumbled grumpily. He pressed the intercom with a rough jab of his finger.

“Yes?”

“Delivery for a Mister Potter?” called a man’s voice.

“Oh...okay, I’ll buzz you in…” Harry replied with a furrowed brow. He answered the door just as the delivery man approached with a large bouquet of white lilies. Perplexed Harry accepted them and thanked him before slipping back into his apartment. He pulled out the attached note.

To Harry,

Thank you for all your hard work.

Yours truly,

Damien

His lips twitched slightly, itching to smile, but Harry forced them down into a scowl and threw the note on the counter. He carried the pretty arrangement out into the hallway and down to the first floor where he knew old Missus Whitman, recently widowed, lived alone. Inhaling their scent once, Harry then laid them in front of her closed door before jogging back up the steps to his own.

Sliding the deadbolt into place behind him, Harry pulled his phone off the counter and sent his very first text message.

HP (8:04 am): Do you send all your employees flowers, Mr. Malfoy?
DM (8:05 am): If it makes you feel better, then yes, yes, I do.

Harry rolled his eyes and wished he could drown the fluttering butterflies in his gut with a vat of battery acid.

DM (8:06 am): I figured roses would be too ostentatious for your tastes.

Harry glared at the text, uncertain if he should be offended or not by the statement.

Slowly, he typed his response back.

HP (8:10 am): Roses would’ve been better. Lilies are poisonous to cats. No worries, though, sir. Mrs. Whitman on the first floor doesn’t have any pets.

Chapter End Notes

Oh Harry...have a drink, sweetheart, you're too thirsty.

SO much love for all you lovelies reading this, and oodles of hugs for those leaving kudos, comments, etc. They make my day and they fuel my crazy.

No explicit scene today, folks. I'm sorry if that disappoints anyone. This chapter already hit 4,000+ words so I decided to post it rather than having y'all wait another few days for an update. (Editing smut is time-consuming for me).

xx

CJ
“Oh god,” Harry moaned into the crook of his elbow. His back arched off the dark leather of the couch that was fast becoming slick from his dampened skin. Malfoy looked up from where he was knelt between his spread legs, one planted loosely on the floor while the other was draped over the man’s shoulder. “Fuck…”

“Remind me to gag you next time,” Malfoy’s husky voice drifted to his ears, and Harry would’ve likely blushed if his entire body wasn’t already flushed. He trembled pitifully. “You’re awfully loud.”

Before he could protest, Malfoy twisted his lubed fingers, crooking them with steadfast pressure and Harry let out another weak noise.

“You told me these walls were sound-proo—ah—”

Malfoy chuckled deeply in his throat, pulled his fingers almost all the way out in a languid drag before snapping them in swiftly. Harry’s eyes rolled back into his head. The blonde kissed his inner thigh, a tender gesture at first before he bit into the flesh there and sucked his mark into it.

“Oh, they are,” Malfoy reassured him when he pulled off, “The gag would purely be for my own satisfaction.”

Harry blinked owlishly at his words. He looked down his own stomach that was rising and falling from exertion, to stare into a pair of lustful grey eyes.

“I’m…sorry, I’m not trying to be lo-oud—” he broke off in a sob when Malfoy’s thumb rubbed against his perineum, massaging his prostate both on the inside and the out. The man’s other hand grazed lightly up his torso in a featherlight caress, stopping when it reached one of Harrys nipples. “Mm…”

This is it, Harry’s brain concluded fuzzily, this is how I am going to die. He let his head drop back
against the couch.

“Stop apologizing,” Malfoy murmured with another twist of his fingers. The lube made an obscene noise. “I like that you’re vocal. You’d just look pretty with a ball gag in your mouth…or a bit gag, whichever would work,” he added as an afterthought before his mouth latched onto Harry’s other thigh to mark him there, too.

“God, you’re such a perver—oh fuck, oh fuck!” he was cut off by Malfoy’s fingers wrapping around his cock for the first time since they started, and it was a blissful relief to be stroked. It propelled him closer to orgasm, heat pulling and gathering in his balls until Malfoy’s fingers squeezed him firmly at the base. It was a jolt back to reality as his peak was staved off. “Why?” he complained with an unhappy groan.

“You shouldn’t curse so much,” Malfoy replied with a wicked smirk, “nor should you insult your boss.”

Harrys balls ached and his body drove down onto Malfoy’s two fingers fervently in desperate pursuit of his waning crest. “You’re a bloody sadist,” Harry growled at the man. The leg draped over Malfoy’s shoulder flexed as he dug his heel into the blonde’s back in revenge.

His retaliation earned him another punishing squeeze.

“Ungh.”

A dark chuckle.

“You’re a disrespectful little thing, aren’t you?” Malfoy said. “You’re in a bit of a predicament, though, my dear Harry,” he continued as casually as if he were discussing the weather and not finger-banging Harry on a couch in their workplace. He paused his movements and rotated the wrist of the hand violating Harry to look the face of his Rolex.

Harry’s eye twitched.

“…Your shift starts in twenty minutes. You’ll need at least ten of those to clean yourself up because I’m not about to let you go to work in my club looking like a debauched mess.” Thrust. “You’ll need another five minutes or so to make it downstairs to clock-in, or you’ll be marked tardy.” Thrust.

“That leaves us five minutes to get you off. However, if you continue to misbehave, I’m afraid I’ll have no choice but to leave you for the next ten hours with a nasty case of blue-balls.”

Harry’s eyes widened at the warning; he was agonizingly hard. If he didn’t get to cum, the next ten hours would be utter hell to get through. Even after his erection faded, the ache would linger longer. He looked up helplessly at the clock on the far wall behind Malfoy and then Harry’s green eyes swiveled back to the tyrant between his legs.

“Oh shit,” he moaned weakly when the pad of a thumb landed once more against the skin behind his taut balls and rubbed. He wasn’t going to survive like this.

“Shall I let you cum, then?” Malfoy purred. Harry nodded piteously, bucking onto the long digits.

“…That’s not how you ask nicely, Harry,” he chastised.

Harry grit his teeth and glared at the man situated in front of him. He warred with himself for thirty seconds or so, debating if pushing his pride aside would be worth it if he could finally get off. Eventually, his need to cum dominated his need to save face. Harry chewed on his bottom lip for a moment before begrudgingly giving his response.
“P-please?”

“Please’ what?”

Harry had suddenly yearned to knee Malfoy in his handsomely evil face, but then the man rolled his fingers against his prostate deliciously and the impulse melted away with his ego.

“Please let me cum, sir?” he whispered out, breathless and needy and nearly incoherent, but Malfoy seemed satisfied with his compliance.

“Good boy,” his boss murmured, the corners of his mouth twitching upwards a little and instead of protesting at the ‘good boy’ like he usually did, Harry found himself swept away in that hint of a smile. Malfoy’s fingers suddenly began fucking him in earnest, and Malfoy’s free hand circled around his straining prick, jerking him in time with each thrust.

It barely took any effort on Malfoy’s part; within seconds, Harry’s orgasm burst through him in earth-shattering waves. His back bowed off the couch completely and his legs seized up as his release shot onto his own belly. His vision flashed to black and he couldn’t see anything but white spots dancing. He would’ve screamed if his lungs were functioning properly, but they weren’t, so Harry couldn’t do anything but shake and vibrate as every synapse and nerve awoke inside his body, exploding like microscopic supernovas throughout his being.

He was only vaguely aware when Malfoy’s fingers withdrew from his arse, leaving him empty and drained. Malfoy stood and disappeared inside the bathroom only to return a minute later wiping his freshly washed hands on a towel. He stopped next to Harry’s limp form and used the towel to rid him of the sticky wetness he’d left on his abdomen and on his inner-thighs.

Harry gave a sated sigh, blinking rapidly to clear his head. He looked up at the Malfoy heir tiredly.

“You know what? I’m pretty convinced you’re the devil,” he mumbled, hands feebly trying to pull his pants and trousers up while he was still sprawled on the leather.

Malfoy arched an elegant brow, smirking as he surveyed the mess he made of Harry. “That is an ironic accusation considering you just spent the last thirty minutes calling me ‘God’,” he countered smoothly.

“Narcissistic—” Harry began.

He nudged Harry’s foot gently with his own. “Get your arse to work before I dock you pay,” he demanded, haughtiness creeping into his voice.

Narcissistic, manipulative, spoiled, condescending, gorgeous, evil, prat.

... 

It had been four weeks since Harry had first hooked up with Malfoy. Four weeks, and it was simultaneously killing him and giving him life.

He’d never felt so conflicted before.

Draco Malfoy, in all retrospect, was a sadist. He was domineering and possessive and Harry…Harry didn’t hate it like he thought he should. He liked the bickering, he liked the way they clashed, and although he’d never considered himself to be a particularly passive individual, he liked the way Malfoy held him down and fucked him within an inch of his life.
Sitting down on the closed toilet seat of Club Salazar’s employee restroom, Harry buried his face in his hands and sighed inaudibly. A part of him was still ashamed of himself for being so weak when it came to the blonde. He was embarrassed by the way he craved Malfoy’s touch, the way he practically threw himself at his boss before his shift or after his shift (and once last Saturday, both before and after).

Yet…Malfoy seemed to desire it just as much.

Moreover, outside of the bedroom (or rather, office), Malfoy was undeniably charming. Oh, he was arrogant too, and that grated Harry’s nerves to no end, but he was also very much a gentleman. Maybe it was because he’d never had a life of luxury like Malfoy did, but Harry could honestly say he’d never gotten flowers from an actual man before.

Once, in grade school, Seamus Finnegan gave him a carnation for Valentine’s Day, but Harry had been teased by his cousin and his gang of friends so mercilessly that he’d thrown it away in the cafeteria. Seamus had been devastated and humiliated, and Harry slipped him a red heart-shaped sucker when no one was looking, in apology. It wasn't exactly a marriage proposal but he did get a good friend out of it. (Strangely enough, no one laughed when Lavender Brown gave him a carnation exactly one year later).

Perhaps it was simply because his relationship with Anthony hadn’t made it out of high school, but his ex-boyfriend was never one to do flowers. On gift-giving occasions he sometimes would do chocolates, which never survived Dudley. His cousin had the nose of a bloodhound and the appetite of a large whale. Once they started becoming sexually-active, all romantic gestures were substituted with awkward hand-jobs in Anthony's bedroom (if they were stealthy enough) or questionable public bathrooms. Honestly, he should've known how doomed that relationship was earlier on...

Nevertheless, not twenty-four hours after the lilies had arrived and Harry bequeathed them to Widower Whitman, a dozen red roses were delivered to his door and Harry couldn’t help the godforsaken smile that spread over his face.

The first time.

After the second dozen, he had to go out and buy an actual vase because the old two-liter wasn’t cutting it anymore, and after third, Harry wrote them off as a total fiscal waste. Throwing his hands in the air, Harry decided he had no choice but to distribute a single rose to every apartment in his building, laying one on each doorstep and sneaking away.

He planned on telling Malfoy to cool it with the deliveries. Truly. However, when he returned home from the work at the pub one Wednesday evening, Harry witnessed Arabella Figg, resident cat-lady, picking the rose off the welcome-mat outside her door. He watched from a distance as she brought it to her nose, inhaled deeply, closed her eyes and smiled with heartfelt joy before disappearing into her feline-filled apartment.

She wasn’t the only one that Harry spotted reacting this way, either.

Harry didn’t have the heart to voluntarily end that joy. Still...

“You know I live in a studio apartment, right?” Harry had asked Malfoy at one point, gasped out in between heated kisses.

“Sounds ghastly,” Malfoy muttered into his mouth while he shoved Harry against the wall.

“Oh, bugger off, you snob,” Harry scoffed as he unbuckled Malfoy’s belt with urgent fingers. “All
"I'm saying is that I ran out of room for all those roses pretty quickly."

"Hmm," Malfoy hummed, ridding Harry's lower half of his clothing and tossed them to the side, "I suppose that means you'd like me to stop sending them, then?"

"No need," Harry breathed out, stroking Malfoy's cock, hot and thick in his grip, and watching as his eyes darkened with a predatorial desire. "I've found a solution."

Malfoy pulled his mouth away from its attack on Harry's arched neck. "You're giving the flowers away to little old ladies again, aren't you?"

Harry grinned cheekily up at the man even though his chest was heaving and he was leaking already, "It makes them happy. Isn't that the whole point of sending flowers, anyway? To bring people joy?" Malfoy scoffed softly but Harry could see that the blonde wasn't angry or even remotely annoyed by him giving away his roses. Instead, he kissed Harry on the lips once more, tongue flicking against his teasingly. When he retreated for air, Harry managed to pant, "Are you going to stop sending them?"

"No…" Malfoy said, hands reaching down to cup the backs of his thighs. He hoisted him up into his arms in an (admittedly) impressive show of strength. Harry's legs wrapped around his waist and then he was pressed firmly into the wall. "…but I am going to make you scream—"

"What are you so happy about?" Daphne questioned, drawing Harry out of his thoughts. He wagged his head quickly.

"Nothing!" he said, clearing his throat. She eyed him suspiciously but grinned anyway and poked him in the side.

"If you say so, sweetness," she replied lightly. Daphne handed Harry the jigger she was holding like she was 'passing the torch' unto him. He took it with a raised eyebrow which prompted the girl gesticulate with a jerk of her head. "Thing one and thing two are headed this way. Probably dry martinis—one with a lemon twist and the other prefers an olive—do you have it?"

Harry nodded his head at her as he smiled at the approaching Patil twins. "Yeah, I've got it. Go ahead and take your break. Is Justin in the back?"

"Getting more napkins and probably flirting with Susan but he really should be back any second. By the way, you should stop helping the kitchen staff so much, I think they're getting lazy. I saw Chang filing her nails earlier."

"Was she on her break?" he pressed dryly. Daphne pursed her lips. "Mayyy-be…"

"Don't be mean, Daphne," he admonished her. She rolled her eyes.

"You don't even like Chang."

"That's not true," Harry objected. "She's…nice."

Daphne pinned him with a knowing look as she slowly backed out of the narrow opening in the circle of the counter.

"Okay, okay, fine. So, she's not my favorite person. Happy, now?"
Daphne blew him a kiss and scooted out of sight.

... 

Harry hauled a garbage bag from the wheeled receptacle and shoved it into one of the dumpsters behind Club Salazar.

It was early yet; just two hours before sunrise, so the overhead lights surrounding the building made the alley glow a green in the otherwise pitch-black. It must’ve down-poured sometime during the night, Harry noted, when his shoe dipped into a puddle of water. The earthy smell of rain and worms filled his nose as he flung in the last bag.

Harry didn’t see the figure watching him in the shadows where the green didn’t reach.

He didn’t hear the quiet breathing over the noise of the rolling cart against gravel and the rustling of the plastic bags within.

He didn’t notice a presence other than his own, until he found himself pressed up against the side of the building.

He cried out in shock and reflexively tried to push away when a voice murmured lowly in his ear, “Shhh, it’s okay, I’m not going to hurt you, Harry.”

The sound of his name caught Harry off-guard and it was enough to still him briefly. The other person took advantage of his hesitation and he was suddenly forced down onto the ground before he could fully regain his faculties. A larger weight settled on top of him, a heavy press of a man’s body stretched over the length of his back.

Harry’s instincts kicked back in just as a forearm pressed across his shoulder blades to pin him down. Harry kicked out in all directions, struggling with everything he had, like a bull trying futilely to buck off its rider.

He opened his mouth to scream but was cut short by the gruff voice in his ear. Harry tensed.

“Oh, I knew you’d be a feisty one. You look so lovely beneath me,” the man whispered, “You’ll like this, I swear.”

Harry’s insides shook with terror, fear chilling him down to the bone, and there was pain in his chest where his heart was a battering ram against his sternum, because he knew that voice.

“A-Avery?” Harry croaked out in disbelief.

“I’m going to give you what exactly you’ve been wanting, Harry,” Avery crooned in his ear. “I was planning on taking you in a nice hotel bed, but I just can’t wait any longer.”

“No—no, I don’t want this!” Harry yelled. “Get off me, let me go!” He bucked again, but Avery pressed his face down onto the dampness of the pavement, irritated by Harry’s resistance.

“Don’t think I haven’t noticed the way you look at me with those pretty green eyes of yours! The way you smile and talk so sweetly to me, the way you bend over to get a glass from underneath the bar so I can get a nice view of that tight little—”

“You’re fucking insane!” Harry shrieked, trying in vain to twist out of the man’s hold. “HEL—” he began to shout but then Avery shoved his head again. The side of his face bounce against the ground, stinging as stone bit into his skin. His vision swam from being jarred and having his glasses
“You’re a fucking tease,” Avery growled angrily, grinding his arousal against Harry’s arse, mere layers of clothing separating them, but for how long—? “…and I’m going to teach you a lesson you’ll never forget.”

Harry opened his mouth to scream again but before he could make a sound, the bulk trapping him was ripped away from him altogether and Harry’s lungs discovered air again. Behind him, he heard sounds of a struggle and the furious expletives leaving his attacker.

“Harry.”

His eyes flew open and he turned timidly to face a pair of polished shoes, shoes he recognized and he nearly sobbed in relief.

Malfoy crouched beside him and gently guided him to his feet. Stumbling, Harry gripped onto Malfoy’s sleeve, unable to stop his body’s trembling from the heady mixture of fear and rage coursing through him. One of Malfoy’s arms swept down around his waist, holding him upright as Harry’s blurred vision took in the scene around him.

The two massive bouncers, Crabbe and Goyle, were restraining a sputtering Avery. The man was trying to break out of their combined grasp with ferocious effort. Zabini stood directly in front of him, arms crossed over his chest and he was busy looking down his nose in disgust.

Malfoy suddenly pressed a white handkerchief to the side of Harry’s face and Harry batted it away in frustration, “I’m fine, I’m fine,” he told Malfoy.

“You’re bleeding,” the blonde insisted severely.

“I’m okay,” Harry repeated, eyes falling onto the struggling Avery.

“Tell them you wanted it!” Avery bellowed at him. “For weeks, you’ve practically been begging me to fuc—” Zabini’s arm drew back and he punched Avery in the face before he could get the rest of the words out. A sickening crack echoed in the alley. The force of it snapped Avery’s head back and when he lifted his face again, blood was pouring from his nose and mouth like a faucet.

Harry felt stupefied, detached, like he was a spectator and not the very cause of the scene before him… because this sort of thing didn’t happen in his world. This sort of thing happened in books or on TV and in the movies, and not in real life; not to random, insignificant people like Harry Potter.

He didn’t even notice Malfoy had left his side until his boss approached Avery slowly, “Tell me, Avery, do you understand what the word ‘no’ means?” Malfoy quiet voice asked.

“Yes,” the man choked, blood dribbling down his chin. Harry watched as Avery shook slightly in Crabbe and Goyle’s hold.

“You see?” Malfoy stated icily, “That little faux pas is exactly what’s landed you in this deplorable situation.”

The sound of a car had Harry turning around, the headlights brightly illuminated the alley and then Malfoy appeared at his elbow once more.

“Come. I’m taking you home, Harry.”

His hand pressed itself to Harry’s lower back and steered him to the BMW. Nott had since stepped
out of the driver’s side and opened the car door for the pair of them. Harry was at a loss for words, so he simply climbed into the back and scooted along the seat so that Malfoy could come in beside him. The door shut and Harry let out a breath he must’ve been holding onto.

They sat in silence in the motionless car while Nott got in the front, the partition separating him from Malfoy and Harry. Harry drew his knees up to his chest, absentely guilty for getting his wet shoes on the leather seats of the car, but he wrapped his arms around them in a hug because the overwhelming reality of what nearly happened made him feel more vulnerable than he wanted to admit to anyone. Especially Malfoy.

The blonde lifted his hand to tilt Harry’s chin up and to the side, so that he could survey Harry closely.

“Are you okay?”

Harry nodded against Malfoy’s grip tiredly. “I’ll be fine…I just want to go home and get some rest.”

Malfoy’s hand left Harry’s chin to stroke along his jaw and up the side of his cheek. Harry’s savored the gentleness from his touch; unused to such affectionate contact with the man.

A rap at the window had Malfoy withdrawing and the tinted glass was rolled down halfway to reveal Zabini’s serious face.

“Your orders, sir?”

Malfoy paused and looked back at the two large men restraining Avery; Avery’s arms were bent painfully behind him and he was babbling something incoherently. The blonde’s head was turned away from him but Harry didn’t miss the words he spoke with unsympathetic, severe finality.

“Break his hands.”

The window rolled up.

Harry felt the weight of Malfoy’s command hit him with the force of a speeding train and it broke him out of the bleakness of his own mind. In the next moment, he was lunging over Malfoy’s body to scrabble for the door handle—the window—anything he could reach, to get to the group outside. “No!” Harry gasped out in horror, yanking the handle uselessly, “You—you can’t be serious!” The door wouldn’t budge, the window button did nothing either. “You can’t—”

“Why can’t I be?” Malfoy interjected evenly, not shoving Harry off his lap, but instead reaching out with one hand to capture Harry’s flailing wrists.

“Let-let go! You can’t hurt him! Call the police, have him arrested—” he tried to tug his wrists away, his feet kicking at the other end of the door like a child having a tantrum. Harry’s heart was beating rapidly as panic swept through him. This was wrong, he thought wildly as he fought against Malfoy’s clutch on his hands and the arm that was wrapped around his waist, pinning him down against that hard body. The car began to pull away from the curb and Harry twisted wildly, kicked harder—

Whap!

The slap to his arse knocked the air from his lungs, more from surprise than discomfort.

“Enough.”
Harry froze.

Other than the soft whirr of the engine, the car fell to silence again. Harry stared blankly at the door he’d been pounding on and he let his hand drop from the handle. Awareness seeped in around him: the way he was positioned over Malfoy’s knees, the way Malfoy was holding onto him, the fact Malfoy hand was now resting on his back after it had just…

“Listen to me,” Malfoy spoke so sternly that it sent an honest-to-god shiver up Harry’s spine, “That man out there was going to rape you, Harry. He was going to take what he wanted from you, and then he was going to leave you bloodied and bruised or worse, had my men and I not shown up in time. He does not deserve your help.”

“This is wrong,” Harry whispered, looking wretchedly at the door even though he knew they were long gone from the club where Avery was getting his hands…

*Broken.*

He felt sick.

“You should’ve had him arrested.”

“It wouldn’t have made any difference,” Malfoy told him, “Like it or not, Baxter Avery comes from a well-respected family. He’s got more lawyers than you can imagine on speed-dial. The police can arrest him all they want; but in the long-run, Avery wouldn’t so much as have to spend a night in a jail cell.”

Harry absorbed Malfoy’s words, knowing full-well that they were truthful despite the injustice of it all, but *morally*, Harry couldn’t just lay there and let—

“This is so fucked-up,” he protested in a miserable hush and he dropped his head down heavily against the leather seat. He was nauseous and unsettled, but he made no move to get up and he wasn’t sure why.

“This world is fucked-up, Harry,” Malfoy said bluntly, the thumb on his hand moving back-and-forth in small little strokes along the brunette’s spine, and it soothed Harry, and he didn’t. know. why. “You’ve had to take care of yourself for a long time…” he continued as the hand moved up to brush Harry’s fluffy hair back. “It would not hurt, you know, to let someone else take care of you every now and then.”

Harry remained quiet but he could feel himself sinking into Malfoy’s body, falling into his warmth, drowning in his scent and he didn’t know what to make of it all. He was straddling the line of wanting this man, and wanting to leave and never look back.

At first, it were the Weasley’s faces that crossed his mind, the pub, their livelihood; if Harry were to walk away, they didn’t stand a chance of staying open.

Then, he thought of Malfoy, the exhilaration Harry felt every time he was near, the toe-curling sex, the passion ignited in Harry for the first time in *years*...the mystery, the uncertainty; the fact he actually *felt* something within himself for once that wasn't simply the need to get by from day-to-day, existing only for the sake of existing...but instead, the drive to chase his own satisfaction, to discover pleasure and excitement...

It was foreign to Harry.

Was it wrong to be so selfish?
Harry slowly reached up and placed his hand on the one Malfoy was stroking his hair with. There was a beat of hesitation, a moment in time and space where Harry knew he had to make the decision whether or not to push the man away.

He wrapped his hand around long fingers and didn't let go the rest of the way home.

Three days later...

Harry ran his fingers along the spines of the books lined along the shelf. He’d spent the last twenty minutes perusing the aisles one-by-one. Oscar Warren’s Literature Shop wasn’t Harry’s favorite bookshop, but after his nasty breakup with Anthony, he hadn’t been able to bring himself to go back into Flourish and Blotts.

It was modest shop, though, quaint, and rarely ever booming with business.

The owners’ daughter, Myrtle, wasn’t exactly a ray of sunshine either, but she was nice enough once he’d gotten to know her a bit more. He was pretty sure she had a crush on him, too, but Harry didn’t want to open that can of worms. She wasn’t the type of girl to handle rejection well, if the many times Harry caught her coming from her bathroom breaks in tears was an indication.

“Boys, are so cruel, Harry,” she sniffled to him once. “I met this one boy online and one day he just stops talking to me! For no reason at all. You’re such a nice boy, why can’t I find someone like you?” she pouted and eyed him through the round lenses of her glasses longingly. His cue to leave.

Harry suppressed a shudder and glanced around to see if Myrtle was working today, typically lurking somewhere nearby.

She wasn’t, though; her co-worker, Olive, appeared to be minding the shop instead. She was a pretty girl whom Myrtle despised with a passion.

“Hello,” said a cheerful voice behind him. Harry jumped slightly and turned to find a man, early forties, with golden blonde hair and a bright white grin beaming at him.

“Um, hello,” Harry said kindly but tentatively. His attack a few days before had left him more skittish around strangers than usual. For the most part, Harry spent his time volleying between his job at the pub and his flat without reason to go much of anywhere else. He didn’t know what awaited him when Friday came and he had to return to the club, but he was trying not to stress out about it.

“That book in you have there,” the man said, gesturing to Harry’s hand. Harry’s eyes read the title of the book he held, not even remembering when he pulled it out.

“Oh, sorry,” Harry apologized. “Did you want it?” he offered it to the man who looked disappointed for a moment as he shook his head. The broad smile reappeared with ease.

“No, no,” he said, leaning against the bookshelf in what he must’ve imagined was a casual pose, but he looked more peculiar than anything. “I am the author of that book. I’d love to sign it for you—after you purchase it, of course!” he winked.

“I—” he glanced back down at the book.
“Gilderoy Lockhart,” the man said with pride, stretching his hand out for Harry to shake.

**END OF ARC ONE**

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Chapter End Notes

Yay! We finished Arc One! Now the stage is set for some more darker stuff ahead. Also, what the fuck is silly old Gilderoy doing here? How random...

;)

Hope to see you lovelies in Arc Two!

xx

CJ
ARC TWO: Small World

Chapter Summary

Draco makes an interesting proposition. Harry meets a familiar face.

Chapter Notes

ARC TWO! Yay.

Some NSFW stuff...but, really, are any of you surprised at this point?

A little more time jumping in this chapter, so hopefully no one is too confused. If it's unclear, here's a basic recap:

At the start of this arc, it's been roughly 3 months since Harry first met Draco at the pub.

It's been 2.5 months since he's found out about the pub closing and started his job at Salazar.

They've been sleeping together for about 6 weeks. Harry only works at the club Friday and Saturday nights (hence the need for time jumps right now).

Carry on!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Two weeks later…

“…can't anymore,” Harry heard himself saying, his voice distant to his own ears like he was having an out-of-body experience but he wasn’t. Far from it, because if anything, he was having a very in-body experience. “…can't…”

“One more, I think.”

“I've already--I can't again,” Harry whined pitifully. His head was fuzzy and the muscles of his mouth were having trouble forming the words coherently, so they came out a jumbled mess.

Malfoy merely smirked at him as he popped open the tube of lubricant and slicked himself up once more. He wiped the remnants along the crack of Harry’s arse, slippery fingers grazing over his tender hole in a gentle caress. Malfoy then tugged Harry back down the blanket that was spread on the office floor like a makeshift bed so that his arse was presented to him once more.

"That was just a warm up,” he stated before he pushed forward and Harry groaned deliriously as his boss slid back inside him, easily, like his body was made to take whatever the other man gave him.

Malfoy wasted no time grinding his hips between Harry’s spread legs, cock long and hard and thick
as it stroked within his arse. In between furious thrusts, Malfoy’s pelvis would undulate in every now and then like a cork screw, to the hilt, so intensely that Harry could almost feel that cock in his throat and he wondered if Malfoy was trying to disappear inside his body because of the very depth of it all.

“One more,” Malfoy repeated, his voice liquid heat coursing through Harry’s bloodstream. For Harry, it was an almost daunting promise; there was no way he’d be able to cum again no matter how fucking good Malfoy was at this.

The blonde surged up on his toes suddenly and Harry was almost certain that squeal left his mouth and he mentally resolved to deny it forever. The brunt of Malfoy’s weight forced Harry in half so that his legs were braced over the blonde’s shoulders and despite the discomfort of feeling like he was going to snap in two, Harry’s head spun as the angle supplied Malfoy with direct access to his prostate.

Amidst the loud slapping sounds of skin-on-skin, tears of nearly unbearable pleasure pricked the corners of his eyes, streaming down on either side of his face and dribbling onto the small pillow beneath his head. His erection twitched weakly between the slide of their sweat-soaked bodies and his balls ached from cumming already, but they still treacherously drew up from the overstimulation and it hurt so good. Harry’s fingers scrambled for purchase on Malfoy’s tense biceps and he dug his blunt fingernails into the muscle there in some inexplicable mix of bitterness and adoration.

“Just cum already,” Harry begged him, “I can’t anymore—oh fuck, oh, oh, ah—” and then his godforsaken boss proceeded to make a liar of him because suddenly Harry broke off in a desperate sob and shook from the force of one final orgasm, utterly dry but washing over him like a waning tide of once-crashing waves, not as powerful but still there, still dragging him down to drown in the abyss.

“Good boy,” Malfoy murmured, pleased with Harry’s undoing. When Harry went slack from completion, Malfoy resumed his thrusting and he fucked into Harry not a minute more before he was pushed to his own limit, releasing into Harry’s wrung out body with a ruthless stuttering of his hips. He hung over Harry for a moment, eyes closed and breathing working to even itself out from exertion.

Harry tremored with the aftershocks beneath Malfoy’s planked form, and then grey eyes fluttered open and he lowered himself down in a push-up to kiss Harry briefly on the lips before shifting off—and out—of Harry.

Immediately, Harry groaned as his sore legs dropped down in relief, stiff from having been constrained for so long and he rolled over onto his belly to stretch out along the blanket, not bothering to care that he was getting cum all over the soft material. Harry gave a sated sigh and tiredly lifted his head to look at the clock on the wall. It was half-past seven in the morning. He closed his eyes and exhaled again from the sheer relief of not having to work on Sundays.

“You’re not going to fall asleep on me, are you?” came Malfoy’s smooth timbre from the bathroom door. How the man could remain as composed as ever after sex was beyond him. Harry kept his eyes closed as Malfoy strolled back into the office and crouched beside him, one cool hand against the hot skin of Harry’s back. He shuddered at the contact. “If you’re going to doze off in my office, at least utilize the couch, you Neanderthal.”

Harry couldn’t summon the energy to so much as give the other man a dirty look.

There was a pause of silence between and then Malfoy sighed and Harry found himself heaved up into a pair of arms, then deposited on the leather couch. Being manhandled had Harry sputtering in
discontent and his eyes finally opened fueled by aggravation.

“Hey!” he grumbled. Malfoy raised an eyebrow at him and pinned him with an unimpressed look as he wedged a throw pillow beneath Harry’s head.

“Rest, if you must,” Malfoy muttered lowly before retreating into the bathroom once more and bringing back a warm washcloth. Harry’s eyes had just begun to shut but flew open again at the sensation of being wiped down. His abdomen trembled as Malfoy dragged it down the expanse of skin, cleaning up the tacky cum that was plastered on him. One hand nudged Harry’s leg up to access between his thighs, and Malfoy quietly wiped away the slick lube the best he could. “When is the last time you’ve gotten a decent nights’ sleep, Potter?” he asked conversationally.

“When’s the last time you did?” Harry shot back.

“Touché,” Malfoy said. Harry watched as Malfoy stood up and gathered the soiled blanket from the floor. Through hooded eyes, Harry marveled at the man’s physique. Malfoy’s upper half was completely bare for the first time since they’d begun hooking up. His chest and stomach and arms were all hard lines and pale, firm skin. He was fit, broader shoulders and a trim waist that tapered off into his suit trousers which were now fastened and buckled with a belt.

Harry’s brow furrowed as Malfoy turned his back to him, eyes landing at expanse of his back. “Is that a tattoo?” Harry asked, sitting up a bit and grimacing slightly at his body’s protest from the action.

Malfoy’s head twisted to glance over at him with a hint of a sneer curling upper lip. “No, it’s a birthmark.” Ignoring the sarcastic remark only because his annoyance was overridden by intrigue, Harry peeled himself off the couch. He shimmied into his boxer-briefs before making his way to the other man on still-numb legs.

“You have a tattoo,” Harry observed, grinning widely as he poked at the ink infused into flesh, “of a bloody dragon on your back.” The dragon was simplistic, tribal in design, and a solid black that contrasted drastically with Malfoy’s lighter skin tone. Its head was turned to the side, mouth open in a silent roar, and its wings were open wide and spread across his shoulder blades, while the length of its body and tail traveled down Malfoy’s spine. Harry trailed his fingers down it in fascination.

“I do,” Malfoy stated simply. “Why does this amuse you so much?”

“Because,” Harry whispered in wonder, “the biggest ponce I’ve ever met, has a bad-arse back tattoo.”

Malfoy simply slipped on his dress shirt, effectively concealing the mark on his skin. “You have a rather nasty habit of name-calling the one who signs your check every week,” the blonde mused.

“Sorry,” Harry offered, cheeks tingeing pink as he was reminded once again that this man was his superior and not just his…fuck-buddy. He licked his lips distractedly. “I like it, though,” he added honestly, “Why a dragon?”

“…for my name,” Malfoy settled on after a beat.

“You’re name?” Harry repeated dumbly. “Malfoy?”

“My first name. I do have one, you realize,” the Malfoy heir stated wryly.

“Dray-co,” Malfoy told him, drawing each syllable out like Harry was slow on the uptake.

“Right. And that means…”

“Dragon. Honestly, I thought you were a bit brighter than this.”

“You…you’re such a—”

“Sympathetic, striking, and generous boss?”

Harry swallowed down the insult with heartfelt reluctance. “Right. That’s exactly what I was going to say,” he deadpanned.

“Indeed.”

Harry bit back a snort and grabbed his trousers off the back of the couch. Malfoy leaned against his desk, arms crossed as he observed him wordlessly.

“I’ll see you Friday, then,” Harry said as he fastened the last button on his uniform vest.

“Thursday.”

Harry frowned and looked up at the other man. “Thursday?”

“Dinner.”

“Dinner?”

Malfoy arched an eyebrow and gave him an exasperated look. “Yes. The meal that generally comes after lunch.”

“I know what din—! What about dinner?”

“I am asking you to join me for dinner. On Thursday,” Malfoy drawled, taking the tie away out of Harry’s hands to tie it properly.

Harry stared at him. “Like a—like a date?”

“Call it what you will.”

“You’re asking me on a date?”

“I am capable of more than just screwing you, you know,” Malfoy stated, folding the collar of Harry’s shirt down after adjusting the knot of his tie. Harry flushed red at Malfoy’s blunt words but he lowered his eyes downcast.

“What is it?” Malfoy asked aghast.

“I work late on Thursdays,” Harry mumbled. “My friend has an early class on Friday mornings, so I try to give him an extra hand closing the pub and I—”

“You’re starting to babble again. Relax,” Malfoy interrupted with a small quirk of his mouth.

“I—” Harry broke off, baffled, and fuck those fucking butterflies that made his stomach feel… “Some other time, though? Please?” he asked, twisting his hands nervously and fuck. Why was this happening? What was Harry letting this happen?
“Some other time,” Malfoy murmured in agreement and then Harry was in Malfoy’s personal space, tugging on his belt buckle with a hooked finger.

“One more?” Harry asked, because the inevitable heat pooled south and his arousal slowly reawakened in his trousers. At this rate, his prick was due to fall off any day now from pure exhaustion.

“Is that a challenge?” Malfoy whispered throatily, sending goosebumps down Harry’s neck and spine.

“Are you up for it?” Harry asked, teeth chewing on his bottom lip. Malfoy’s eyes gleamed dangerously and he raised his hand to capture Harry’s jaw between his thumb and forefinger. He lowered his head and brushed his lips against Harry’s in a ghost of a kiss.

“You just came twice times. Do you think you’ve got anything left for me?” Harry’s groaned softly as Malfoy drew him closer to his solid body.

“I don’t know. Probably not,” Harry admitted. He tugged again on Malfoy’s belt for good measure, "…but willing to find out.”

“And you say I am insatiable.”


Malfoy chuckled darkly against his mouth before devouring him.

…

Two days later…

Harry handed Mundungus Fletcher his beer.

“Las’ one,” the scraggily man slurred to Harry with a lopsided grin. Harry inclined his head once in acknowledgement, not believing the man for a second. Fletcher was one of his regular customers, coming in at least twice a day for a drink (or seven) but he was harmless, so Harry gave the man his alcohol and gave the man’s liver his silent but sincerest apologies.

“Proud of you, Harry,” Fletcher mumbled, raising his drink in cheers. Harry smiled back at him.

“Thanks, Fletch,” Harry responded as Ron walked in and clapped Harry on the shoulder in hello.

“Hey, Dung!” Ron quipped. “Long time no see.” Harry discreetly kicked his best mate in the shin in reprimand.

“Ouch, fine, sorry,” the redhead grumbled under his breath. Although he wasn’t exactly friends with Fletcher, Harry had always felt slightly overprotective. He wasn’t sure if it was sympathy or gratitude, or most likely a combination of both; but during the couple of weeks Harry had spent living on the streets as a teenager, Fletcher was the only one who looked after him without expecting anything sexual in return. He wasn’t a predator. A bit of a kleptomaniac, certainly, but not a sexual predator.

Whenever Fletcher was remotely lucid enough, he always made it a point to remind Harry that he
was proud of him.

“For what, Fletcher?” The man rubbed his scruffy jaw thoughtfully.

“You’ve pulled yourself up by the bootstraps kid,” he said gruffly. “You work ‘arder than an’body I’ve ever met and you pay your bills an’ put a roof o’er your head an’ you’re all by yourself. That’s not nothing, y’know?”

Harry handed the man the hot coffee he brought him from The Elixer of Life, “I haven’t been all by myself. Not really. I’ve had a lot of help along the way.”

The man wrapped his dry, calloused hands around the cup to warm them. He was silent for a while before he finally said, “That’s not nothin’ either, kiddo.”

“You’ve helped too, Fletch,” Harry added quietly, hands shoved deep in the pockets of his denim jacket and he toed at the crack in the pavement. Fletcher squinted up at him from his spot on the ground, back propped against the brick building of the laundromat he hung around often.

“Yeah?” he asked, puzzled.

Harry grinned, “Yeah.”

“Ah, Harry!” came a chipper voice approaching from Harry’s left. Ron had disappeared in the back just as Harry looked up and over at the man who climbed onto the barstool aside the counter. “Small world, small world. Just came in for a pint!”

“Oh! Hi, erm, Mister—”

“Gilderoy, please, Harry, no need for the formalities from my number one fan, eh?” Lockhart said enthusiastically and Harry’s strained smile probably should’ve said it all, but the other man didn’t seem to catch on. “How are you liking the book? Now that’s only the first installment, so don’t worry about getting through it too quickly, there’s much more where that came from! There’s eight books in the series, and two auto-biographies, and one self-help book, to boot. You’re going to love them all!”

Harry stared at him, perplexed. “…Er, yeah, yeah of course,” he assured the man as he accepted the money for his drink.

“Keep the change, Harry,” Lockhart added with a wink, “You can use it to buy book two, ‘Gadding with Ghouls’. Great fun! So delightfully written, you’ll believe it’s all real.” He laughed loudly as Harry took a deep breath. “…So, tell me, tell me, what chapter are you on?”

Harry’s stomach flopped a little at the question. “I—uh, well, I’ve been busy with work lately so I’m still on chapter one, to be honest.”

The smile slid from Lockhart’s face and he eyed Harry over his pint with piercing amber eyes. They weren’t piercing in the way Malfoy’s were whatsoever, but piercing in a way that unsettled him. He smiled apologetically and hurried to add, “But I’ve finally got some free time tonight, so I, uh, I’ll be able to finally sit down and read.”

The man beamed at him again. “Fantastic! Glad to hear it, Harry. I look forward to hearing what you think! Well, look at the time, I must be going. Book signing at two o’clock!” With that, the jovial man slid from the stool he’d been perched on and waltzed out of Weasley’s Pub, carrying himself like he was royalty.
“Please tell me that’s not your Damien bloke, mate,” Ron asked him, returning to the bar after delivering an older couple in the back their food.

Harry rolled his eyes. “No. That’s not —Damien.”

“Good,” Ron said, turning his head to the side with wide yawn, “because that man is way too old for you and I don’t trust anyone who wastes perfectly good ale.”

Harry’s laugh died on his lips as his eyes drifted to the pint left untouched on the counter. “Hey, Ron?” he called over his shoulder as the ginger made to head back into the kitchen, “what time is it?”

“Er...nearly half-past three. Why? You alright there, Harry?”

“Yeah,” Harry replied, eyes settling back on the tall glass of ale. “Yeah, I’m fine, Ron.”

Chapter End Notes

So, I kind of feel like this chapter is a little random but...it's not. Mehhh...okay, so it is not my favorite chapter, tbh, but it serves its purpose. Right now, I'm just setting the stage for ARC TWO's main plot, so I'm sorry if it feels more like a filler chapter? But hey, at least this leaves me more time to crank out some of the next chapter today since Wednesdays are my main writing days. Next chapter is more fun, I think. :)

xx

CJ
Draco bit back a groan as Harry rocked on top of him, circling his hips, canting them forward, backward, moaning deliriously into the crook of Draco’s neck. The young man’s hands were bound behind him with his own tie; a loose knot, but tight enough to hold his wrists together as he moved.

He’d only had to ask once, only had to whisper the suggestion in Harry’s ear and watch as his body trembled slightly at the proposal, not from fear, but intrigue, excitement, want.

“You like this, don’t you?” Draco asked huskily, dragging his fingernails along firm thighs, eliciting a small noise from the brunette. “Being forced to chase your own pleasure the best you can but it’s not enough, Harry, is it?” Harry huffed and shook his head desperately.

“T-touch me,” he gasped, “please, please, I can’t—my hands.”

“Shh,” Draco hushed, “I know, I know, your hands are tied and you just need a little help, is that right?”

“Please, I’m so close,” he groaned pitifully, trying to bring his hips closer so he could find friction between their stomachs. The head of Draco’s prick nearly slipped out and he felt the tight muscles of Harry’s sphincter clench, trying to keep him inside. With a smile, the blonde reached up and cupped his hand around the back of his head. He threaded his fingers through thick hair that was surprisingly soft to the touch, and tugged him in for a deep kiss.

It proved to be enough distraction for Potter.

Draco quickly pulled out of him.

“What the—” Potter panted out, breaking away from Draco’s mouth to try and fix the problem, but Draco’s arm merely swept around Harry’s waist and tugged him to his chest and consequently, away from Draco’s prick.

“Ask for it,” Draco purred, tilting his head to the side as Harry growled angrily, shoving his hips backward.

“You’ve got to be kidding me, just put it back—put it back in,” Harry snapped, trying to tug his hands free half-heartedly. “…Untie me, then.”

“Do you really want me to?”

“No, I don’t,” Potter gritted out through his teeth, bucking forward to grind his erection against Draco’s belly with a vengeance. “I want you to finish what you started, you bloody—” Draco smacked Potter’s arse lightly in reprimand and observed as his body gave a tell-tale twitch, muscles
jumping slightly, prick dribbling out precum, all because Potter, despite his poor attempts at denial, enjoyed having his backside slapped during sex.

A kink that boded well, for Draco.

“Now, now,” Draco chastised him, hands squeezing twin globes of bronzed flesh, “If you want me to put it back, all you have to do is ask for it. Nicely.” Harry’s cheekbones were tinged red, and he swore under his breath.

“Pervert.”

“I think you like that, too.”

Green eyes, darkened with hungry desire, narrowed at him but then Potter leaned against him and muttered in his ear, “Put it back in me. P-please.” Teeth nipped his lobe lightly.

Draco smirked dangerously. “Now, was that so hard?” He guided Potter back onto his prick, pushing against the ring of muscle he’d worked open earlier with his fingers, into the tight channel that wrapped around him like a hot vice.

A relieved moan.

A rise and fall eagerly into his lap.

Taking pity on the other man’s overworked quads, Draco wound his arm back around Harry’s waist and pumped his hips upward into him, meeting him thrust for thrust.

A ding had them both stilling once again as the doors to the lift sprang open into the office.

“Oh, shit, fuck—” Harry choked, making to dive off Draco’s lap but before he could, Draco held him steady and snatched the cashmere blanket laying nearby. He draped it over Potter’s heaving shoulders to cover them both.

“Really, Draco?” Pansy sniped, walking into his office with one hand propped on her hip. “I’ve been trying to reach you for nearly an hour.”

Mortified, Harry buried his face in Draco’s shoulder, trying hard to make himself seem smaller. Taking pity, Draco pulled the blanket over the black head of hair so Potter was out of sight. It wasn’t exactly the first time Pansy had walked right into this kind of scene, but judging by the other man’s reaction, it was a first time being caught-in-the-act for him.

“I’ve been a little preoccupied, Parkinson,” Draco drawled, “What is it that’s so urgent?”

“Your father has been calling all morning while you’ve been preoccupied,” she stated unamused.

“Damn it.” Draco cursed. Most people he could shrug off but his father was never one to take kindly to such negligence. “…Very well. I will call him in ten minutes. Now leave us.”

“I’ll let him know,” Pansy spoke dryly, retreating into the elevator. Really, he should’ve interviewed other contesters to be his secretary. Best friend or not, Pansy was the biggest thorn in Draco’s side.

…”

“Draco.”

“Father,” Draco replied smoothly. He pushed the protective headgear from his ears and let it hang
around his neck.

“Your shirt is wrinkled.”

“I had a busy morning.” Draco holstered his left handgun as his father approached him, upright and proud, with his hands clasped behind his back. Behind him, flanking the doors of the empty room were two of Lucius’s men.

“I am sure you did,” Lucius stated, his tone telling Draco he wasn’t impressed whatsoever. Draco watched as a new target sheet slid into place down the length of the shooting range, some thirty meters away.

“How was your trip?”

“Productive,” Lucius said briskly, “However, I would prefer to discuss business in the comfort of our own home.”

“Then what is it that compelled you to interrupt my own…business this morning?” Draco asked with a sneer. Lucius gave him a severe look and Draco was forced to lower his gaze contritely. “Forgive me, Father.”

“I am willing to overlook your insolence right now only because I am more hard-pressed to discuss something else. More specifically, your reasoning behind breaking the hands and nose of Arcturus Avery’s eldest son,” Lucius elaborated coolly.

Draco pursed his lips.

“Baxter Avery attempted to sexually assault one of my employees at Salazar. I am well aware of his history of being unable to keep his hands to himself. I figured the punishment fit the crime.”

“The employee who’s honor you defended is the same one who has been…occupying much of your time while I’ve been overseas, yes?”

Draco stared at his father prompting Lucius to arch an eyebrow. “Pansy?” Draco asked.

“Your friends may serve you but they ultimately all work for me, my son. Do not forget that.”

“How could I not?” Draco muttered stiffly.

Lucius ignored him in favor of accepting his personal headset from one of his men.

“Are the Avery’s going to be a problem?”

“No,” his father said calmly, “Avery’s son might be a nuisance but Arcturus will reign him back in. They know better than to retaliate against mine.”

Placing the headgear over his ears, he indicated to the target with a curt wave of his hand. Draco put his own back into place and stepped in between the ballistic glass of the shooting stall. He retrieved one of the handguns at his side and his feet slid into fighting stance instinctively, both arms raising and he leveled with his target; a black silhouette of man with a red X in the center.

He pulled the trigger.

...
supposed to be experts at this sort of thing?”

“Okay, first, that’s stereotyping, second, after a decade do you not know me at all?” Harry sighed in exasperation. “And thirdly, ‘Mione is your girlfriend…it shouldn’t be this difficult to buy an anniversary gift after dating her for five years.” Ron scowled at him.

“I know, I know. But…five years is kind of a big deal, yeah?” Ron asked, rubbing a hand down his face defeatedly. “I don’t think a few flowers and a gift certificate to Flourish and Blotts is going to cut it this time. Besides, I gave her that for Valentine’s Day, so…” he shrugged and shoved his fists onto his pocket.

Harry groaned, tired of their shopping excursion.

They stopped in front of a lady’s boutique. “Maybe lingerie?” Ron asked dreamily. Harry wrinkled his nose.

“No offence, mate, but I’d rather not help pick out my two best friends’ sex clothes. That’s more in Seamus’s realm of expertise.”

Ron had the decency to look sheepish. “You’re right about that one.”

“Plus, you and I both know that’s more of a gift for you, and not Hermione.” The redhead slumped.

“Right about that one, too. Fine…” they strolled past a few more shops, having to dodge around a gang of mall-dwelling teenagers headed their way, swinging shopping bags and laughing obnoxiously loud.

“I hate teenagers,” Ron muttered.

“We’re just barely out of our teens, Ron.”

“Yeah, but we were cooler at that age. And you were never a teenager, Harry. You’ve been a seventy-year-old man since the day we met.”

“We were never cool. Oh, and you’re an arsehole by the way.”

Ron snickered, causing Harry to punch him in the arm.

“Bugger off. Wait—are you okay?” Harry said, halting in his tracks again as Ron came to a standstill in front of a jewelry store. Ron’s eyes stared up at the store front, a distant look settling on his freckled face.

“Yeah. Let’s go in here a minute?”

Harry followed Ron into the store, quietly concerned by his sudden change of behavior.

“Hello, sirs. Is there anything I can help you with, today?” A female sales’ clerk asked politely but her smile didn’t quite meet her eyes and Harry knew it was because he and Ron weren’t exactly the portrayal of a wealthy customer. He was used to that look.

Harry forced a smile back at her when Ron remained in silent, staring along the rows of glass-encased jewelry in a daze.

“We’re just looking, thanks,” Harry told the woman kindly. When she disappeared, Harry nudged Ron with his elbow. “Ron.”
Ron made a soft nose in his throat and walked over to one of the cases.

Of engagement rings.

Harry’s eyebrows rose into his hair line. “Hey, mate, are you…thinking of proposing to Hermione?” he asked him carefully.

“I think about it a lot,” Ron confessed, one hand pressed against the glass as he leaned in for a closer look.

“Why haven’t you, then?”

Ron’s brown eyes widened and his head swiveled around so he could gape at Harry. “Are you kidding? Every time I so much as think about it, all I can hear is people telling us we’re too young, or that we should finish uni first, or…”

“Oh, what?” Harry questioned when Ron trailed off, looking slightly green.

“Or…that I’m not good enough for Hermione,” he finished woefully.

Oh.

Harry frowned. “Why on earth would you not be good enough?”

“Her parents are dentists, Harry. Doctor and Doctor Granger. Not to mention, Hermione’s brilliant and she’s really going places.”

“And you aren’t?” Harry countered, crossing his arms. “Because last I checked, you were in school to become an architect.”

“What if I fail. What if I can’t give her the life she deserves?”

“You’re not going to fail, Ron. You’re trying, and if you’re trying, then that’s never a failure. Give yourself more credit. Hermione’s folks are good people and they like you. You guys will make the life that you both deserve, together.”

“You don’t think we’re too young?” Harry shrugged one shoulder.

“I don’t know, mate. Some people might say so, but then again, others might tell you they got married young and they’re the ones who are celebrating fifty years of a happy marriage. Trust your instincts and trust your heart. If you feel it’s the right time, then don’t let what other people might think stop you from chasing what makes you happy.”

Slowly, Ron cracked a grin, weak, but there. “See? That’s exactly why you’re a seventy-year-old man, Harry…” Harry elbowed him again and Ron just snorted and clapped Harry on the back, his smile growing. “…and my platonic soulmate.”

Harry rolled his eyes again. “I bet you say that to all the boys.”

…”

One week later…

Harry whistled to himself as he unlocked the door to his loft with the hand not carrying his bag of groceries. “Hedwig, I’m home,” he called to the cat who was likely lurking in the closet or beneath the futon once he pushed the door open. He felt a crinkle beneath his trainer and Harry looked down
to find a manila envelope someone must’ve slid beneath his door.

His brow furrowed as he shut the door with his back and set the bag down the counter to put away. He wasn’t behind on any bills that he could think of, Harry thought with the usual dread he got whenever he got mail.

He picked the envelope off the floor. It was blank, completely void of any address or name or stamp, so Harry turned it and used his finger to rip open the seal on the top. Tipping it over, Harry watched as a five or six cards slipped onto the counter, face down.

Not cards.

Pictures?

“What the heck are—” he flipped over the stack of pictures with interest and then he froze entirely, blood turning frigid and heart seizing tight within his chest.

Harry pressed a shaking hand to his mouth because he didn’t trust himself not to cry out.

…

Draco’s eyes stared at the building where Harry Potter lived. Planted in the grass was a peeling grey sign labeled ‘Grimmauld Place’ which wasn’t exactly the most inviting names for an apartment complex, but considering the state of the rundown brick building, it suited it quite well. He’d been here before; outside but never inside, and Draco couldn’t help the slight reluctance he felt at the thought of going inside. Yet, his hand still reached for the phone in his pocket and he pressed Harry’s name on his list of contacts, letting the number dial.

He picked up almost immediately.

“Hello?” The hushed voice of his employee mumbled. He sounded…frightened. Draco’s eyebrows knit together.

“I’m outside. Let me in.”

“Gimme a minute…” was all Potter mumbled before he hung. The buzzer rang and the heavy main door clicked open. Draco pulled it open, and, motioning for Zabini to remain in the BMW, he stepped inside. He let the door slam shut behind him.

The lighting was abysmal within the building and it smelled faintly like mothballs and litterboxes and stewed beef with onions. The mauve carpeting was ratty and old, with rips and dirt too stained to be removed with any success, but Draco walked up to the second floor, to number twelve, and knocked anyway. There was a small commotion on the other side of the door to Harry’s flat, a stumble, a rustling of a chain and a deadbolt and Draco watched as Potter appeared, bright green eyes wide with worry.

“Come in, you can come in,” the brunette said, stepping aside and appearing a smidgen more relaxed and equally as embarrassed. “I’m sorry it’s kind of a mess,” he continued, bending down to pick up some clothing off the floor. “I just got home and I haven’t had much time lately to tidy up…” he disappeared into another room, the bathroom, Draco figured, to conceal his dirty laundry.

The apartment was small and a bit dingy, but Draco had expected that much. Potter had told him he lived in a studio, and the neighborhood wasn’t exactly a luxurious one. The kitchen was tiny; one stool propped beside the counter where he envisioned a sleepy Harry barefoot and messy-haired scarfing down a bowl of cereal before a long shift at the pub. The curtains were drawn tightly shut,
and the lights were off aside from the one over the sink.

There was an old futon to one side that seemed convenient enough, doubling as a couch or a bed, but right now he had it pushed flat into the latter. Potter didn’t seem to have a lot of possessions either, but he did have a decent collection of books stuffed on a bookshelf, wedged in so tightly for the sake of fitting. On the very top sat a stuffed deer with antlers, looking well-loved by a child. There was also an old guitar, he noted, propped against the wall between the bed and a side table.

And that was it.

A couple of closets, probably with a modest amount of clothing. A vase with a single rose in it, kept from Draco’s last delivery before Harry undoubtedly gave the rest away.

“Don’t worry about it,” Draco told him, halting his scrambling efforts to clear the clutter by taking his arm gently. “What’s going on? You sounded upset in your message.”

Harry stopped his nervous fidgeting and tensed up, snatching an envelope off the counter and handing it to Draco.

“I got home from the store and found this slipped beneath my door.”

Draco opened the broken seal and removed a small stack of photos. He shuffled through them. Each photo featured Harry: one had Harry behind the bar at work, zoomed in on a cheap camera through the windows at Weasley’s Pub. Another showed Harry walking through the mall with a gangly looking redhead. Another was of him in the frozen section of a grocery store, reaching for an item out of one of the coolers. The most unnerving though, were the few pictures taken of the other man in his own flat, one of him with that guitar in his lap, one of him just out of the shower with a towel around his waist, and another curled up on the futon reading a book—the last picture was drawn on, a large X crossed over it in red marker.

Draco set the pictures back on the counter and looked at Potter who was busy chewing on a fingernail.

“Do you have any idea who might have slipped these under your door?” Potter shook his head.

“No,” he whispered, looking at his covered window like he was waiting for someone to burst through it. “But they—in my own home. I’m on the second floor—how?” he whispered uneasily.

“The building across the street. What is it?” Draco asked.

“A laundromat.”

“One story?”


Draco paused. “Winky?”

“Frances Winkle…she goes by Winky.” Harry elaborated.

“Okay,” Draco murmured, spreading the six pictures on the counter to survey them again as a whole. “So, the rooftop or fire escape would likely bring a person level to your window. This one,” he added, pressing his finger on the one with the red X on it and sliding it over to Potter. “What about this picture do you think someone would find upsetting?”
“I’m not sure. I’m not-not doing anything in it!” the shorter man muttered, shaking his head slowly. “What do I do? Should I call the police?”

“No,” Draco murmured, playing with the marked photo between his fingers. “…I’ll station Nott outside your building. He can alert me of any suspicious activity without drawing attention to himself like an officer would. We want to catch this person, not scare them off so they can come back in craftier ways.”

Potter walked over and dropped heavily down onto the futon, burying his face in his hands. Draco gathered the pictures and place them back in the envelope discreetly. He rounded the counter after a few seconds, to sit down by his side, the wad of blankets lumpy beneath his backside but he ignored it and placed a hand on the other man’s shoulder.

“I’m freaked out,” Harry muttered, scrubbing his face with his hands in frustration before looking up. He straightened the glasses that sat perched on his nose and stared dolefully at the wall instead of looking at Draco. “I know that sounds childish, but I am. Someone has been fucking following me. How could I not have noticed that?”

“Well, most people don’t notice what they aren’t looking for. I imagine you don’t normally walk around life looking for potential stalkers.”

The brunette snorted miserably and Draco squeezed his shoulder.

“I’m sorry. You’re probably busy enough without me ringing you up at random times.”

“No need for apologies. Although, I am surprised you chose to call me and not the police.”

 “…So am I,” Harry whispered after a long pause and Draco had to struggle to hear his words. “So am I…” Draco’s hand came up gingerly to hold Potter’s chin and pull him into a firm kiss.

“Don’t worry. I will not let anything happen to you.”

Chapter End Notes

I think the past three chapters have started with these two banging.

CALM DOWN BOYS.

Tbh, I think in the outline for the next chapter I have them going at it on two different occasions.

Maybe I’m the one who needs to calm down?

xx

CJ
Harry’s eyes widened in horror and he immediately attempted to shift away, peeling his back off the desk to sit up at an awkward forty-five-degree angle. He put his weight on his hands to push up and turned his pelvis to dislodge Malfoy. Clearly, the other man wasn’t having that though, because the hand that wasn’t holding onto his phone slid to Harry’s chest and guided him back down onto the desk. Harry’s legs were brought back up, one-at-a-time, toward his own shoulders.

“Ah, Mister Petrov. Kak vy pozhivayete?” Malfoy said politely into the phone.

Harry swatted wildly at Malfoy, his arm extending out to rest his palm against the flat plains of his lower abdomen to cease his thrusts.

To no avail.

Somehow, this was worse than Malfoy’s personal secretary catching them in the act the week before. At least that time, Malfoy stopped screwing him when he talked to Parkinson.

Malfoy spoke in seemingly fluent Russian, smooth and composed as he continued his languorous pace, each drag of his cock forcing Harry to swallow a moan because for whatever reason, he was still hard. When his boss stopped speaking, likely because whoever was on the other line was having a turn, Malfoy took the pause to angle himself just right into Harry’s prostate. He let out a choked sound and received a warning look in return, light eyes challenging him when he nailed him again in that same spot.

It elicited another muffled cry from Harry, prompting Harry to lash out with his foot, bringing his heel down to shove the man square in his shoulder. It was a half-hearted gesture really; Malfoy barely stumbled from the kick. Instead, he grabbed Harry’s leg, wrapped his free arm around and trapped the limb against his body.

He gave a punishing thrust.

Harry gasped loudly in pained pleasure. Heat surged into his lower half, arousal burning hot and he
could tell he was getting close and he didn’t know why, because Malfoy was speaking on the phone once more in that foreign tongue while fucking Harry on his desk and it…

_Shit_, he shouldn’t have liked this weird voyeuristic stuff as much as he did. He shouldn’t be getting off on a taboo.

Malfoy’s thrusts shifted into a slower rhythm as he conversed with the other person, never becoming too winded to continue. An unhurried drive in, from tip to hilt, and Harry squirmed as he felt every inch of that impressive length stretch him open. As good as it felt, as much as Harry loved the burn, the push and pull of being fucked…it wasn’t enough. It was a sweet, prolonged torture, nudging him closer to the edge but never quite enough to let him fall over it.

His patience was dwindling.

He _craved_ that fall.

Harry’s hand finally floated down to grab his own cock, because if Malfoy insisted on continuing exploiting him throughout his business dealings (or whatever the fuck this was), he was at least going to get some satiation. However, Harry’s fingers barely had chance to wrap around his prick before the blonde batted his hand away from it.

Harry growled unhappily, glaring at the other man.

“_Izvinite,_” Malfoy said suddenly, and another string of Russian words followed fluidly before Malfoy pulled the phone away from his ear, pressed a button and then he set it down onto the desk. He arched an unimpressed eyebrow at Harry.

“We really need to work on your patience,” the other man stated wryly, manipulating Harry’s position more comfortably on his desk.

“You’re kidding me! This, what—what the hell was that, anyway?” he sputtered, head turning to look at the iPhone an arm’s length away. The screen was still lit up like it was in use.

Malfoy followed Harry’s horrified gaze. “Relax. I put him on hold,” he reassured, adjusting his own stance a little. Pale fingers, long and cool, wrapped around Harry’s cock and then he began to fuck Harry in earnest, jerking him in time with his thrusts.

“Oh fuck,” Harry managed to mumble, hands curling against the wood of Malfoy’s desk futilely as the man hammered against Harry’s arse, punching into him _deep_ and _rough_ and _finally_ enough to spur him nearer his orgasm. His lower back was slipping against the desk, dampened with sweat accumulated as heat flowed south. His balls drew up and his arse tightened hungrily around the span of his boss’s cock, and Harry’s release spilled onto his own belly.

Harry was still amid his crest when Malfoy met his orgasm. He gathered his awareness in time to see the man close his eyes and felt him grind his hips through it. The years his boss must’ve spent to develop such a stellar poker-face was a wonder to Harry, who’d always worn his heart on his sleeve; easy to read as an open book. However, during those few second of bliss, Malfoy’s face relaxed a touch, a moment of peace, and Harry was left to marvel at the beauty of it.

Seconds later, Malfoy was pulling out of him and disposing of the used condom in the bin near the desk. He adjusted his clothing quickly and sat back into his desk chair, crossing one leg over the other with his cell phone back in hand.

“Mister Petrov?” the Malfoy heir asked, resuming his conversation like he _hadn’t_ just fucked his employee on his desk. Being wholly unmotivated to move yet, Harry simply stayed sprawled on his
back. If Malfoy was bothered by the new centerpiece on his desk, he didn’t acknowledge it. The conversation lasted a mere few minutes more, though. Malfoy’s fluid Russian lulling him into relaxation until it ended.

“…You’re incredibly lazy after sex,” Malfoy drawled from his seat. Harry raised a leg with a great amount of effort from his sated body to kick at the man again, who caught him by the shin with ease.

“You’re unbelievable,” Harry mumbled, his voice not sounding as cross as he had hoped as he raised himself up onto his hands to look at the smirking man.

“Thank you.”

“I don’t mean that in a good—” Harry broke off, tugging his bare leg away from the other man’s grip. “I can’t believe you did that! Who even was that?” he huffed, consciously aware of the semen dried onto his stomach and his lack of clothing altogether.

“Business associate in Moscow,” Malfoy told him, standing up. He stepped up to the desk to lean over Harry, bracketing his body with his hands on either side of his hips.

“You speak Russian?”

“I speak half a dozen languages.”

Harry stared at him, baffled, but the other man stole his lips in a thorough kiss until Harry had to pull away to ask, “What languages?”

Malfoy glanced at him strangely, like he was surprised by Harry’s interest in something other than his penis.

“I’m fluent in English, French, Russian, and Spanish. I also speak some Japanese and Mandarin.”

“That’s really…” Harry began thoughtfully, “impressive, actually,” he settled on somewhat reluctantly, not too keen on stroking the man’s already inflated ego. “I took French in high school but I was really terrible at it. I only remember the curse words, to be honest.”

“Charming,” Malfoy said, a small smile threatening to twitch on his lips.

“You think so?” Harry asked cheekily, hands suddenly raising to lace together behind Malfoy’s neck. Malfoy’s eyes glimmered with amusement as Harry pulled him closer.

“Yes. About as charming as a skunk at a summer wedding,” Malfoy teased.

“Casse-toi!” Harry countered with a laugh. “Did I get that right?” he added, leaning his mouth against Malfoy’s. The featherlight caress of his lips to the blonde’s made Harry’s body yearn for something more damning than a quick fuck on a desk.

…Intimacy…tenderness…lo—no!

Jerking away suddenly, Harry hopped off the desk and slithered around a startled Malfoy. He stumbled a bit from the rush of anxiety blooming in his gut. He pulled his discarded briefs from the top off the PC (how it landed on the computer was a mystery to him). In his hastiness, Harry’s hand bumped into Malfoy’s wireless computer mouse and that was sent skidding across the top and crashed to the floor, the back snapping off in the upheaval.

“Shit, I’m sorry!” Harry rushed, pulling on his underpants haphazardly before picking up the pieces
and the battery that was rolling away.

“What has gotten into you?” Malfoy asked, his head tilting to the side and he watched Harry have his mild panic attack in mystified silence.

Harry spun around the other side of the desk in search of his shirt until he found it and he slipped that on too, fingers sweaty as he buttoned it up. He ignored the uncomfortable stick of the fabric on his soiled skin.

“Harry.”

“I’m sorry—I have to go home and—and feed Hedwig.” he finished lamely, his cheeks flushing pink at his stupidity.

“Harry.” Malfoy repeated his name, more firmly now.

Harry stopped and turned to his superior, his hands fidgeting with his trousers as he lowered his gaze because he didn’t trust himself to stare into the other man’s eyes and survive it.

“What is going on in that head of yours?”

Harry chewed on his lip roughly, his head glancing around the room at anywhere but Draco Malfoy, until his eyes landed on the computer screen not a meter away from Malfoy’s right, shaken out hibernation-mode, probably by Harry’s abuse of the mouse.

Harry stilled.

“What is that?” Harry asked, pointing at the computer. Malfoy regarded him carefully.

“Don’t change the subject.”

“No—no, seriously,” Harry stated, eyes wide behind his glasses, approaching the desk once more. “Who are those people?”

“Applicants for potential club membership,” Malfoy replied.

“So…they don’t all get in?”

“They do not. Why do you ask?”

“No…I just…that man,” Harry fumbled for words as he drew closer.

“Which?”

“The blonde guy, third down. I just—I know him.”

Malfoy leaned a hand onto the desk to read the name adjacent to the picture. “‘Lockhart, Gilderoy. Thirty-seven…author of popular book series...’ Malfoy read. He glimpsed over at Harry’s furrowed brow. “Not one I’ve heard of, evidently.”

“Are you going to let him in?”

“The look on your face is telling me I shouldn’t,” Malfoy concluded with a frown. “What is he to you?”

“I met him a few weeks ago,” Harry elaborated, giving a half-shrug.
“You’re unsettled.”

“He’s just a bit…odd, really. Overly-enthusiastic, I suppose.”

Malfoy sat back in his chair and drew a cigarette out of the top drawer. He lit it and took a drag, not surveying the computer but rather, Harry’s face. “Do you think he could be the one behind those pictures from the other day?” Malfoy inquired. Harry shrugged again.

“I don’t…I don’t know. I’ve only ever spoken to him twice, for maybe, like, ten minutes each.” Malfoy nodded his head, flicked the ashes of his Dunhill into an ashtray, and then typed pressed a few keys on the keyboard with one hand. Lockhart’s picture was deleted from sight.

Harry didn’t realize how rigidly he’d been standing until the man’s beaming profile blinked away and his shoulders relaxed a bit.

“Are you alright?” Malfoy’s voice floated in his ears, comforting in the face of Harry’s wariness.

“Yeah, I’m okay,” Harry lied, finally meeting the grey eyes of Draco Malfoy, which only confirmed one thing to him: He was falling…

…and he wasn’t sure how he felt about that.

Harry slammed the cupboard above the counter shut with a little more fervor than necessary. Hedwig gave him a reproachful glower from beside the dish of food, her fur bristled along the length of her spine in discontent.

“Sorry, girl,” Harry apologized, scratching the back of his head wearily. He untwisted the jar of peanut butter and used a knife to spread it on his toast. He plopped onto the stool at the counter, the dull ache lingering in his backside but three months of getting physical with his boss had gotten him used to it. He kind of loved it.

Fuck, what was wrong with him these days?

Harry shoved the plate away moodily, taking a swig of water instead.

“What’s wrong with me Hedwig?” he asked her softly. “There’s nothing wrong with casual sex, I can have sex and not let feelings get involved, right?”

He looked back to discover that Hedwig had disappeared completely. “Thanks for nothing, Hedwig!” he called out.

“...”

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“...”

“This isn’t necessary, you know?” Harry mumbled, slumping into the back seat of the BMW. The partition between the front and back was open so that Harry could glare holes into the back of Zabini’s skull.

“I am following the boss’s orders.” Zabini said, his voice holding no room for argument.

Still…

“There haven’t been any more pictures or anything else out of the ordinary. Honestly, it could’ve
been my cousin or something, playing a trick on me…granted, I haven’t seen him in couple of years, but I still wouldn’t put it past him.” Harry babbled, scratching his fingernail at the leather interior. “I think this security detail is a little but much. Not that I don’t appreciate you guys, but it’s really unnecessary.”

“I agree.”

*Well, that certainly was a first.*

“…You do?”

“Yes. I agree,” Zabini repeated crisply, driving the vehicle around the corner. The aviator sunglasses he wore made him seem even more like a character out of a spy film. “I agree that this is a waste of time, money, and resources. I agree that you don’t need a security detail because if it were up to me, your stalker would have unobstructed access to get you out of my hair.”

Harry blinked, dumbfounded by Zabini’s harshness.

“Well, you’re just a ray of sunshine,” Harry muttered under his breath, slouching further down the seat. The black partition slid back up.

Harry flipped it two fingers.

Ten minutes later, Zabini still opened the door for him gratuitously, and together they walked into *Salazar.*

“You know…I’m not trying to cause any problems for you. Honestly. I told Mister Malfoy this is a bit excessive but he insists—”

“Then,” Zabini interjected smoothly, holding the door open for Harry to enter the building first, “perhaps you should expend your energy on some gratitude instead of moping and whining like a brat?”

Harry blinked. “I—”

“Are you going to make me hold this door open for you all day, princess?” Zabini continued sharply. Harry jumped and practically ran through the threshold like someone lit a fire under his arse.

“Now, now, Blaise,” a silky voice rang out from one of the frontmost alcoves within the building. “I dare say he’s more the pauper than the princess.” Zabini stiffened a bit and bowed tightly with his hands clasped behind his back.

“Forgive me Master Malfoy. It was not my intention to interrupt.” Harry spun around, coming face to face with an incredible likeness of his boss.

*Lucius Malfoy,* Harry thought as his heart rate kicked into high gear. He’d seen the man before, on the fronts of newspapers and even a few magazines. He’d been named one of Britain’s ‘Top Ten Most Influential People’ more years than not. He was tall, broad shouldered and fit, much like his son. However, his hair was longer; the same pale blonde, but gathered in the back in a low ponytail, giving him a regal appearance, like a king in times’ past.

Same jaw and cheekbones, all defined and graceful in their edges and slopes. His eyes were grey, albeit slightly darker than Draco’s, and colder as well.

Behind him sitting around a small table in one of the luxurious armchairs was the younger Malfoy,
glass of champagne in hand and not a hair out of place as he glanced up at Harry. Draco set the flute down, stood up and buttoned the single button on his suit jacket. Beside him, another man, closer to Lucius in age or maybe a little older, mimicked his actions.

“My apologies, Father, Mister Riddle. This is Harry Potter, Club Salazar’s newest employee,” the Malfoy heir introduced briskly, “Harry, this is my father, Lucius Malfoy and a friend of the family, Mister Tom Riddle.”

Harry, despite feeling rattled and abashed, shook Lucius’s hand when it was offered to him courteously; he could feel the man’s scrutiny upon him, from head to toe, assessing him, judging him—a bloody pauper, the Malfoy patriarch had said.

The apple didn’t fall from the tree, apparently.

Malfoy men and their superiority complexes…Yet, Draco Malfoy, at any rate had given Harry a chance earlier in the year, regardless of his occupation, status, and appearance. Lucius didn’t seem so inclined, and at least this time Harry was in his uniform. What would he say, Harry wondered, if he’d walked in with the sweatpants and tee he wore earlier in the day?

Nevertheless, Harry put on a polite smile. The other man, Riddle, came closer then, and stretched a hand toward Harry after he’d let go of the Malfoy patriarch’s. He had dark brown hair and eyes that were copper and brooding in contrast to a paler face. His hair was cut short, parted to one side and for an older man, he had a certain appeal about him.

“How do you do Mister…Potter, is it?” Riddle asked him, a suave half-smile pulling his lips at Harry’s jerky little nod. “You mustn’t mind Lucius. These Malfoys are all cut from the same expensive, hedonistic cloth.” He winked, his hand slowly slipping away from Harry’s and Harry could feel a shiver from the tracks his fingers left along his palm. “Born with a silver spoon, no?” he teased the two blondes and he oozed charisma so much so, that Harry was left slightly effected by his charm. He couldn’t stop the small grin from splitting his face.

“Nice to meet you, Mister Riddle,” Harry said, previously-squashed confidence rising in him.

“Well,” Riddle continued, eyes lingering on Harry for a split second longer and then he turned to Lucius who looked stiff, “As always, Lucius, Draco, it was nice to see you both. I’ll be in touch, of course.” With that the man walked away from the group of them, Zabini rushing to open the door for the man. Seemingly out of nowhere, three other men appeared from darkened corners of the room, following Tom Riddle out dutifully.

Feeling like he was still being inspected, Harry’s eyes drifted back over to Malfoy’s father who was staring at him stony-faced. “Please excuse us, Father,” Draco interrupted the strange silence with a bored drawl.

“You are excused…” Lucius allowed, tearing his eyes away finally. He gave an unimpressed sniff and dusted imaginary specs of dirt off his posh suit jacket. He leaned in briefly to murmur something in his son's ear, who set his jaw and nodded once. “Mister Potter,” Lucius said with a terse inclination of his head before he too, disappeared through the main entrance. The sun was fading quickly outside but it was enough light to briefly flood the front of the club before the doors snapped shut once more. He heard Malfoy exhale sharply through his nose.

Harry looked at him.

“I’m sorry?”
“Whatever are you sorry for?”

“I didn’t mean to interrupt,” Harry told him, following the other man to the private lift. The blonde scanned his thumbprint and the elevator doors sprung open for them to walk inside.

“No matter. My meeting was supposed to be finished by six o’clock, but it ran a bit late. There was no way you or Zabini could’ve known that.”

“Speaking of Zabini…” Harry began nervously, watching as his boss sat down at his desk and lit a cigarette. “I—it’s not that I don’t appreciate him and Nott looking out for me after those pictures turned up but…”

“Speak your mind, I haven’t got all day, Harry.”

“It’s a bit much. Smothering, honestly. Everywhere I turn they’re there, and one of these days one of my friends are going to see and then they’ll find out about…” he trailed off, ruffling the back of his hair apprehensively.

“…About?”

“About this job, and I…can’t have that.”

Malfoy blew out a puff of smoke. The large air purifier in the corner of the room kept most of the smoke at bay.

“Why the secrecy?”

Harry’s fiddled with the tie in his hands, winding it around his hands and twisting it. He’d still hadn’t perfected the art of tying.

Oh rather, he’d stopped bothering to learn.

“…I grew up with the Weasley’s youngest son, Ron. He’s been my best friend since I was eleven,” he started eventually. “They—they’ve helped me out a lot over the years, looked after me when…”

“When what?”

“Doesn’t matter,” Harry shrugged, stomach twisting unpleasantly. He wasn’t in the business of spilling his life’s story on his boss. He preferred to keep his private life just that: private. “All that matters to me right now is that—the pub, they’re in danger of going out of business in a few months so I’m…” he twisted the tie around his hands more tightly. “I’m going to help them. With the wages and tips I earn from working here.”

“So, that’s why you came here. Originally, you weren’t going to, but when you got this news of foreclosure, you decided to show up, yes? You’re trying to save the day because you’re noble. But that doesn’t tell me why you insist on keeping this job a secret.”

Harry shook his head violently. “They’d kill me. The Weasleys. All nine of them. They’d never accept the money if they knew I’ve been working a second job for it. I was going to pay the money they owe on the mortgage anonymously.”

“You wouldn’t get any credit for your good deed, then.”

“I’m not doing it for—for credit or—or praise, I’m doing this to help them,” Harry told him, his brows knitted together in confusion.
Malfoy studied him silently.

“What?” Harry asked him aghast as the other man smothered his cigarette in the crystalline tray on the desk. Malfoy leaned back in his chair, stroking his chin thoughtfully.

“You really are just trying to help, aren’t you? It doesn’t matter if you get to be the hero, so as long as your friend’s family gets to keep their business afloat.”

“Why does that surprise you so much?”

“I suppose it shouldn’t. You’re just so…”

“So, what?” Malfoy stood up gracelessly and rounded the desk as he searched for the right word.

“Cute.”

Harry bristled.

“I’m not—kids are ‘cute’, puppies and kittens are ‘cute’. I’m a grown man—don’t, don’t you come over here looking like you’re going to—oh…” Harry broke off in a breathy moan as Malfoy tugged him flush against his body. The blonde had a very prominent erection stirring and all it took was their pelvises connecting for blood to start filling Harry’s own prick. It was as if his body was trained to respond to this man.

Malfoy’s mouth slid to the juncture between his neck and shoulder, kissing flaming trails along it and sending goosebumps and trills of pleasure down Harry’s body.

“Stay with me.”

“Hmm?” Harry hummed distractedly, tilting his head to give him better access.

“Stay. With. Me.” he punctuated each word with an open mouth kiss against Harry’s clavicle. “Until we find the person behind those pictures.”

Harry’s eyes snapped open and he pulled away to gawp at Malfoy. “Wait, stay here?”

He got an exasperated look in exchange.

“You do realize I do not live in this office, right?”

“Oh. Right.” Harry blinked hard.

“I am not proposing here, Potter. I am simply offering a roof, a bed. I have a guest room. I do not expect anything from you in return. All I’m saying, is if you dislike having Zabini and Nott hovering over you so much, stay with me…let me keep you safe.”

Chapter End Notes

Hello loves! It's been a long week, and unfortunately I haven't had much time to write, so it's been a bit more difficult to produce this chapter.
I'm truly sorry for the wait, but I hope this will do for now. Was it too bland of a chapter? I hope it wasn't too drab...next couple of chapters will be a bit more eventful. :) Sorry for any errors, my proofreading skills aren't the best!

Until next time!!

xx

CJ
Harry gathered up his clothing into the old backpack. He was grateful that he’d thought to save it from his high school days, although those days didn’t invoke the best of memories for him. Nevertheless, it served its purpose as he stuffed it to capacity. There wasn’t much he cared to bring with him; this wasn’t a permanent arrangement, after all.

His guitar, he decided, would be left behind. As much as he treasured it, despite the months and months he’d spent stashing away a few notes between an endless torrent of bills to save up for the instrument, bringing it along seemed impractical. There’d be no place for him making noise in someone else’s home, where he’d be a guest.

Yet, he couldn’t fathom leaving behind his stuffed deer—the only remaining thing from his childhood before the Dursleys, as well as the only toy he’d ever had, period. So, with the limited space left, Harry shoved it in the second, shallower pocket and told himself it’d stay there lest Draco Malfoy ever lay eyes on such a childish keepsake.

Slinging the lumpy bag over his shoulder, Harry scooped Hedwig up into his arms and scratched lovingly between her ears. Upon agreeing to Malfoy’s proposal (after nearly a week of deliberation and constantly looking over his shoulder), the cat had ended up being Harry’s only stipulation. If Harry went, Hedwig had to come with him. He couldn’t fathom leaving his pet behind. Luckily for Harry, his boss didn’t seem to care much either way.

Harry gave his flat one last fleeting glance around to make sure nothing of importance was forgotten.

“Alright, girl?” Harry murmured to her, nuzzling white fur. “We shouldn’t be gone long, Hedwig. Just until we find out who’s…” Stalking him? No, that term was too surreal. “…behind those pictures.”

With that, Harry closed the door and locked it with his free hand, the feline cradled in his other arm. While Hedwig was now an indoor cat, Harry had found her abandoned on the street several years prior and she’d been loyal to him ever since. She wasn’t the friendliest of felines to others but Harry was an exception.

“Ready to go?” Zabini asked, impatience obvious in his tone.

“Yeah,” was all Harry trusted himself to say in response.

…
“Why Amori?”

“Yoon is threatened by Amori’s influence in the east.”

“Which makes his attempts at an alliance even more asinine,” Draco scoffed, propping an elbow on the armrest of his chair. “Yoon is hardly a better ally than Amori Hajime. They’re not even on the same level. The yakuza are far more prevalent in Japan compared to Yoon’s impact in Korea. Not to mention, Yoon Chang-woo is a bloody rodent…What did he offer in return for our help?”

“Primary control over one of his key routes in the Southeast of Asia,” Lucius stated mildly, sipping his glass of scotch. Draco raised an eyebrow in surprise.

“That’s a rather generous offer.”

“A desperate offer,” Lucius corrected. “A pitiful man fumbling for his last semblance of control who makes such a steep offer out of desperation will seldom uphold his word.”

“You will make an enemy of Yoon Chang-woo.”

Lucius smirked humorlessly.

“If you are trying to rid yourself of a rodent, all you need is an exterminator. If you’re trying to rid yourself of a hundred-thousand yakuza…you would need an honest-to-God miracle.”

“True,” Draco agreed quietly. “Is this really why you called me here, Father? To discuss increasing tensions between a Japanese yakuza and a Korean gangster?”

“Why wouldn’t it be?”

“Because it is unlike you to discuss things with me when it’s obvious you’ve already made your decision on the matter. Not that it was even remotely a difficult choice…”

“Perceptive as ever, my son,” his father acknowledged coolly as he set his glass on the small, round table beside his chair. “I wanted to talk to you about your newest conquest. The Potter boy.”

“Here we go…” Draco muttered under his breath.

“Mind your tone, Draco.”

“Since when do you care who I sleep with?”

“Tone, Draco.”

The younger blond deflated slightly at the icy reprimand but he jutted his chin out, refusing to be cowed.

“I do not care whom you choose to bed. As your father, I am merely curious. How are things going with young Mister Potter?”

Draco eyed his father skeptically.

... 

Harry stood, gaping at the layout in front of him. Draco Malfoy lived in an extravagant condo, top floor of a colossal building in a flourishing part of London.
Harry had expected this.

He’d expected the spacious home, the lavish décor and expensive taste. He had anticipated the cashmere throws, the leather couches, the rich colors, the chandeliers and the massive, open-floorplan. It shouldn’t have stunned him this much.

Clearly, *imagining* it all in his head and *seeing* it all with his eyes, were two very different things, because the moment he’d stepped foot inside, Harry was left looking around in wonder.

“There you are,” came that familiar voice, a smooth, liquid caress on his ears. Harry schooled his features, praying for an expression of aloofness instead of the dopey one he knew he was wearing.

“Um, yeah. Sorry! We stopped for a new litter box and litter and cat food,” Harry said sheepishly.

“I am aware. Zabini messaged me after the issue at the check-out.”

Harry’s cheeks flushed in irritation. “I can buy what I need for Hedwig. He didn’t have to—”

“I gave Zabini orders to purchase what we needed for your cat. He was simply obeying them. Really, you shouldn’t make such a scene, especially in public.”

“He called me an ‘irksonic little twink’ in front of everyone!” Harry snarled. In his arms, Hedwig squirmed in discontent.

Malfroy’s lips twitched.

“Did he now?”

“Yes!”

“Don’t let Blaise get to you.”

“He hates me,” Harry defended, petting Hedwig lightly to soothe her. “Before I even said two words to him, he’s had it out for me. What did I do?”

The blonde man came closer and brushed a lock of Harry’s fringe out of his eyes.

“Pay him no mind. Come, let me show you around. You can put your cat down whenever you want, by the way.” Harry set Hedwig on the ground, feeling like he was out of place and about to part with his security blanket.

Harry was all too aware he was straddling a dangerous line between physical attraction and emotional connection to his boss... nonetheless, even knowing where his head was at, he’d still agreed to stay with Malfroy.

This wasn’t an office.

This was Malfroy’s *home*.

As he followed the other man further into the condo for a courtesy tour, a flurry of damming truths echoed in the back of his mind, ricocheting painfully before rooting itself into Harry’s brain. *Perhaps he was simply unbefitting of Draco’s Malfroy world.*

Perhaps... perhaps he should’ve thought things through better, before agreeing to become a part of it.

...
“Hey, Harry,” Daphne greeted him that same night, leaning onto the counter casually as he walked into work. The hour he had spent at Malfoy’s flat (just prior to his afternoon shift at the pub), had been decidedly awkward. He and Malfoy were at a disconnect and for the life of him, Harry couldn’t find it in himself to relax.

Draco Malfoy was not his boyfriend. He was his boss and his…well, his fuck-buddy, but they weren’t in a relationship. Staying with him, regardless of it being a temporary solution, sent Harry flopping around like a fish out of water. He didn’t know what to do.

For the most part, Malfoy didn’t seem unsettled by Harry’s presence. Although their vibe was obviously off, Malfoy didn’t force anything or acknowledge it. He merely offered Harry tea before taking a business call in his office and Harry was left sitting on the couch in a home much too large for one person.

“Hi, Daphne,” he said, rubbing his eyes to wake them up for a ten-hour shift. Whether he was living there now or not, he had an apartment to pay for, bills to pay, and a pub to bail out of debt. That much hadn’t changed, at the very least. “Did you have a nice vacation?”

“Greece was nice…spending a week with my parents and Astoria was not,” she intoned, rolling her eyes. “My mother gossiped incessantly, my father scorned everything, and Astoria kept whining about Boss-Man not wanting her back, the entire time. I had to slip away three times to restock my liquor supply just to survive the trip.”

Harry gave a sympathetic chuckle. “I’m sorry you had a rough time.”

“C’est la vie,” Daphne said with a shrug. “Are you ready for next Friday?”

“What’s next Friday?” he asked with a furrowed brow.

“June sixth.”

“Okay? And the significance of June sixth, is…?”

“The first Friday night in June is always one of our busiest nights of the year,” Daphne said, staring at Harry like he had three heads.

“I’m not following here, Daph,” Harry told her, exasperated by the runaround.

“It’s Draco Malfoy’s birthday. There’s always a massive party thrown in his honor. It’s literal hell, for us employees, but the tips are great so it balances out.” Harry stared at the black counter. He honestly had no idea it was Malfoy’s birthday. Why hadn’t the man mentioned it to him?

“I can’t believe you didn’t know this. Man, I was so tempted to tell Astoria about you and Draco just to shut her up.” Harry stilled.

“What do you mean?”

Daphne smiled, amused, and leaned in to peck him on the cheek.

“I’m not an idiot, Harry.”

“There’s nothing going on,” Harry lied half-heartedly, fiddling with the metal jigger in his hands.

“Oh really?” the girl asked disbelievingly, “So, whenever Boss-Man Malfoy walks by, I’m just imagining you staring lustily after him?” Harry turned beet red and Daphne let out a light laugh.
“Don’t be embarrassed Harry. For what it’s worth, he can’t take his eyes off of you, either.”

...  

Harry groaned into the kiss, half from enjoyment and half from sheer frustration. He put a hand on Malfoy’s chest and pulled back marginally.

“What is this easier?” Harry asked helplessly.

“What do you mean?” Malfoy asked with a frown.

“This,” Harry gestured between their bodies wildly. “Why is this easier in your office?”

The blonde stared at him blankly.

“What are you on about?”

Harry buried his head in his hands for a minute and let out a long breath, shoulders slumping in defeat. “I can’t stay with you at your house,” he finally said when he looked back up. “I’m sorry. I appreciate the offer but I can’t.”

“Why can’t you?”

“Because I—I like this,” he said, gesturing between them again with a feeble wave of his hand. “But now. In your home. It just…it’s different.”

“How is it different?”

“Because it’s...this is mutual ground,” he finally stated, “I mean, it’s your club, but I work here. So, I don’t feel like I’m imposing when we’re together—**here**.”

“Ah, I see,” Malfoy said, a small smile pulling on his lips. “I suppose I can understand where you’re coming from.” He retrieved his jacket from the back of the arm chair and slipped it on briskly.

“Come along, Harry,” he added as the pressed the button for the lift.

“Where are we going?” Harry asked, his stomach in knots as he followed.

“We are going to put you to work,” Malfoy stated simply, dialing a number in his phone. “Pansy. Do me a favor and contact Doris and Horace and tell them that until further notice, they’ll be receiving paid leave.”

...  

“Do you cook?” Malfoy asked when they walked into the penthouse twenty minutes later. He shrugged his coat off and hung it on a hanger from the closet next to the main doors.

“Er...a little? I mean, I haven’t made much in the past few years but growing up I used to cook meals for my relatives. Not gourmet, mind you, but it was...edible?”

“Lovely,” Malfoy said wryly. “I imagine you can clean as well, since that’s hardly a skill that requires much expertise. Although, you do tend to leave clothes lying about, if your own flat is any indication...”

Harry blinked several times, trying to comprehend where Malfoy was prattling on about. “Wait,” Harry began slowly, “Are you saying you want me to be your...maid?”
“Well, I wouldn’t call you the maid, per say,” Malfoy said, lighting a cigarette and taking a drag as he leaned against the back of the couch. “Cook some meals if we’re together, tidy up every now and then. I own this place; you do some housework. I’m simply offering you a *quid pro quo* in turn for your staying here. Mutual ground, and therefore, no need to feel like an imposition.”

For whatever reason, Malfoy’s suggestion made Harry breathe easier. He smiled a little.

“That…that I can do,” he decided with a small nod, looking around at the massive flat. “I’ll try really hard not to give you food poisoning, while I’m at it.”

“How generous,” Malfoy drawled. He rounded the chair he was propped against to snuff out his cigarette in the ashtray on the coffee table.

Harry’s smile broadened. “Really, though…thank you. I appreciate everything you’ve done for me.” Malfoy slinked over to him, grey eyes piercing but with their own brand of warmth that Harry was growing accustom to spotting.

“Sleep?” the blonde advised softly.

“We *have* both been up for nearly twenty-four hours,” Harry conceded as their lips drew closer, centimeters apart. Malfoy smelled faintly like *Dunhills*, posh cologne, and expensive scotch. Harry found it comforting, familiar, *pleasing* to his senses.

Their lips met, gently. “Goodnight, Harry,” his boss whispered when they separated again. The man loosened his tie as he headed in the direction of the master bedroom.

“…Wait,” Harry said abruptly. Malfoy looked back over his shoulder at him with a raised brow.

“What is it?”

“I heard your birthday is coming up?” he asked, shuffling his feet lightly.

“You heard correctly.”

“So…”

“Yes?” Malfoy prompted with a tilt of his head as he turned to face Harry once more, though this time he was standing further away.

“Would you, um, maybe like to go to dinner with me…sometime?” Harry questioned uncertainly. He clasped his hands behind his back so the Malfoy heir didn’t see him twisting them in his nervousness. His boss observed him wordlessly for a few beats, but the silence was deafening to Harry.

“Thursday,” Malfoy said eventually. “You told me you work until seven or so at the pub, so let’s say eight-thirty. You will let me treat *you* without protest.”

Harry scowled.

“Fine. You get one complaint for the entirety of the evening. I will still ignore it wholeheartedly *and* I get to call my personal stylist to fit you in a suit.”

He glared daggers at his boss, who simply stared back with a haughty smirk on his face.

“Take it or leave it, Potter.”
Harry crossed his arms grumpily. “…Deal.”

... 

Three days later…

The next few days past quickly for Harry. Even though he and his boss were technically living together, Harry rarely saw the other man. Aside from some thirty minutes for breakfast, Malfoy was out the door not long after, attending meeting after meeting and that seemed to take him away all day. Harry worked his shifts at the pub, usually staying late to help out.

Their first official evening as cohabitating individuals had ended with Harry passed out on Malfoy’s couch, waiting for the man to get home. That night he discovered that Malfoy typically didn’t get in until after midnight so Harry wasn’t expected to prepare dinner unless Malfoy told him ahead of time.

That had yet to happen.

In some ways, he was honestly relieved that they still lived their separate lives. With their date tomorrow, Harry was growing more and more apprehensive. It shouldn’t have been a big deal. It didn’t even mean anything. Friends could have dinner together without the implication that there was anything between them, after all.

“Hiya, Harry!” Harry’s head snapped up at the sound of the Irish brogue to grin at Seamus Finnegan.

“Hi, Seamus!” he said, reaching one arm out to give his friend a quick hug over the counter.

“You look good,” Seamus observed, giving him a once over. “I’ll have a pint by the way. How’ve you been?”

“Coming right up…I’ve been good,” Harry told him, pouring Guinness from the tap. “How are you? And Dean? You two set a date yet?” he added as he glanced at the plain gold band the man wore on his left hand as said hand wrapped around the pint.

“Sometime next spring. We’re not in any rush. Plus, both our mums are being right pains-in-the-arse. You’d think they were the ones gettin’ married by the way they’ve been carrying on.”

“That bad, huh?”

“You’ve got no idea. It’ll be worth it in the long run, I wager…So, how about you, Harry? Lil’ red birdy told me you had a secret new beau.” Harry suppressed a groan but he threw the closed doors to the kitchen a filthy look. Seamus snickered into his drink.

“He’s got such a big mouth,” Harry muttered darkly.

“Eh, secret’s safe with me, mate.”

Harry paused, a thought drifting into his mind. “Say, Seamus…what would you get a guy you’re…not technically dating, for his birthday?”

Seamus scratched his jaw. “‘Not technically dating’? So, what, you’re like, friends-with-benefits?”

“I guess so…?”

“You askin’ me or telling me?”
“Telling.”

Seamus shook his head fondly, “Well, if you’re only fuck-buddies, then I’d just…fuck him for his birthday.” Harry snorted.

“That seems kind of impersonal, don’t you think? Cheap?”

“Spruce it up, then. Put on something sexy and rock his world, y’know?”

“That’s actually…not a bad idea,” Harry confessed, combing his fingers through his hair distractedly.

Seamus gave him a wicked leer. “Please tell me we’re going to do what I think we’re going to do.”

Harry eyed Seamus warily.

“Yeah, yeah. Alright.”

The Irishman whooped.

...  

“Mum wants us to get married in Ireland, Dean’s mum wants us here. Shit, all I really need is Dean, an open bar, and a nice long honeymoon to get shagged as a married man.” Seamus winked roguishly. “And here we are! It’s a lot harder to find lingerie for guys in-store, which honestly is a crime, but this place has a decent selection in the back.”

Harry gazed up at the storefront inside the mall. “Noted…” he stated weakly. Seamus grabbed him by the forearm and dragged him inside, down several aisles, and closer to the back of the store. “I’m not going to lie, this is really, really awkward, for me.”

“Blimey, don’t be so shy, mate. Sex shouldn’t be something you’re ashamed of. How is he, by the way?” Seamus asked, shifting through hangers on a rack of…things. Honestly, the material clipped to the hangers hardly constituted as underwear. Most was lace or too tiny to cover anything, but he supposed that was the point...

“How is who?”

“Damien, was it?”

“Er, yeah…fine, I think? I haven’t talked to him today. He’s working…” Harry said, shaking his head fervently at a G-string presented to him.

“I mean, in bed, Harry, how is he in bed?” Seamus clarified, sounding amused. Harry made a strangled noise in the back of his throat at the inquiry. “Oh, come on, spill!”

“He’s—good.” Harry forced out, averting his eyes on a pair of mesh shorts.

Seamus scoffed at his lack of detail. “Big?”

Harry palmed his heated face.

“Y-yeah.”

“How big?”

“Good—God, Shay, I haven’t measured the thing!” he squeaked, horrified at the turn their
Seamus shrugged noncommittally before holding his hands a suggestive distance apart and Harry wondered how man security cameras would catch him if he strangled his friend with a garter. Harry glanced around to make sure they were alone. Quickly, he seized Seamus by his left wrist and pulled his hands further away from each other.

Seamus let out a low whistle.

“Nice.”

“Yeah,” Harry managed to get out, before turning back to another rack.

“Relax, Harry…here, these are nice. Basic, like you’re not trying too hard, but very sexy. Coy.” Harry frowned at the pair Seamus suggested.

“Why a G-string? I’ve never in my life…”

“You’ve got a great arse and you should show it off. Why do you think I tried to get you to be my Valentine back in the ol’ days?”

“My—? We were eight, Seamus.”

“We were eight. We weren’t blind,” his friend muttered under his breath.

“I have a whole new respect for Dean, right now.”

“Dean?” Seamus repeated, looking mildly offended. “It’s me who deserves the praise. I own two-thirds of what are on these racks and he reaps the benefits…”

Thirty-seven pounds, two G-strings, and one very mortified Harry Potter later, the two of them sat in the food court sharing a basket of fries and drinking a milkshake. The incriminating bag was down by his foot, dwarfed by Seamus’ own shopping bags.

“So when’s Damien’s birthday?”

Harry paused his absentminded stirring of a clump in his chocolate milkshake. He’d never asked Daphne or Malfoy a specific day. He suddenly felt guilty.

“I don’t know the exact day, honestly. We’re going out tomorrow night, for dinner, though. Blimey, not knowing makes me look like a rubbish person, doesn’t it?”

Seamus shook his head as he dipped a french-fry into his shake, “Nah, not if you’re—wait, you’re going on a date with this bloke?”

“Not a date…just, dinner. As…friends.” Harry fumbled.

Seamus gave him a disbelieving look. “You’re going out to dinner to celebrate the birthday of the guy you’ve been buggering for the past few months,” the Irishman surmised. “Hate to tell you, Harry, but it sounds awfully like a date to me…” he trailed off, as Harry choked on a fry.

“It’s…”

“…a date,” Seamus repeated unhelpfully. “Christ, mate, when’s the last time you’ve been on an actual date with someone?”
“Anthony,” Harry mumbled, rubbing restlessly at his forehead, fingers skimming over the small, faded scar there that was usually concealed by his fringe.

“Antho—Goldstein?” Seamus sputtered. “From high school?” Harry nodded feebly. “That was three years ago! Damn, Harry... If I had known you weren’t seeing anyone for this long, I would’ve introduced you to some of the blokes I know. You’re a catch! Remember Zacharias Smith? Haven’t seen him since we graduated but I bumped into him at Fortescue’s a while back. Still pretty fit...”

Harry pinned Seamus with a sardonic stare. “Zacharias Smith? You mean, the same guy that Anthony cheated on me with?”

“Oh, fuck me! That’s right. Bad example... sorry ‘bout that...” Harry chuckled.

“Don’t worry about it. It’s in the past. I don’t know, I guess no one’s really caught my eye these last few years? I’ve had plenty of other things to focus on besides relationships.”

“Until now.” Seamus teased him good-naturedly. Harry nudged him with his toe under the table in a half-hearted reprimand. Finishing the last bit of his shake, Harry set it to the side and stood up.

“I’ll be right back, I need the loo before we get going. Watch my bag, will you?”

“Sure thing.”

Harry made his way to the nearby restrooms. He deliberately shut all thoughts of Draco Malfoy out of his head as he relieved himself and then washed his hands, scrubbing a little more intensely than normal. He tried not to acknowledge the elephant in the room: that maybe, just maybe, the idea of going on a real date with the other man wasn’t something Harry was... completely opposed to.

“Hello there...” came a quiet voice from the corner. When he’d come in, the bathroom had been empty, and Harry had been too absorbed in his own mind that he hadn’t noticed anyone else enter the loo. “...Harry.”

Harry’s head jerked up at the sound of his name. Heart clenching tightly, Harry spun around.

“Mister Lockhart!” Harry said in surprise. He leaned back against the counter where the sinks were, trying to press himself a bit further from where the man was standing without making his unease seem obvious.

The golden-haired Lockhart gazed at him unblinkingly, a small smile on his lips that didn’t meet his eyes.

“You disappoint me. I told you to call me Gilderoy. My friends call me Gilderoy, and we’re friends, aren’t we, Harry?”

Nothing felt right; the disconcerting air around them was palpable. Harry gripped onto the counter behind him for support.

“Y-yeah,” Harry assured him, forcing a grin of his own. “Of course, we are, Gilderoy.”

Lockhart’s eyes bulged slightly but the twisted smile never fell from his face. “No we aren’t.”

Harry’s stomach dropped and he shuffled a tiny step to the left, toward the bathroom door. The man took a step closer, standing not two meters from Harry.

“Friends keep promises. You promised to read my book. But you didn’t, Harry.”
Harry swallowed the bile in his throat. “Sure, I did; I’m on chapter—”

“Don’t lie to me!” Lockhart bellowed, and Harry physically jumped and darted in the direction of the door before a blunt force knocked him onto the floor. Harry’s hands scrambled for purchase against the cool tile, trying to scoot himself away as Lockhart loomed over him, pointing an accusing finger in his face. He looked demented.

Harry shook his head, tearfully, at the older man. “I’m—I’m not lying!” Harry cried out.

“All those times I saw you. Playing a stupid guitar! Shopping here. With friends. Taking bloody naps with that filthy animal of yours—and the worst betrayal of them all is that you had the audacity to read some other book when you-you promised me you were going to read mine! And you called yourself my number one fan!” the man bit out, voice trembling from rage as he closed in and effectively caged Harry into the corner. The door was so close, yet so far, because Lockhart was incensed and he had the upper hand. “You’re a liar, Harry. And liars need to be punished.”

Harry shook in a cold, harsh fear unlike anything he’d ever experienced in his lifetime. It was Avery all over again, but worse somehow, because this man looked crazed enough to actually…kill him.

His stalker…He should’ve realized: the red X scratched over the picture of him reading a book, a book that didn’t belong to Lockhart. It wasn’t just a ‘small world’ or whatever the man had said. Lockhart had been following him this whole time…Over a fucking book.

“HEL—!” Harry’s scream was cut off when Lockhart landed a kick into his solar plexus. He let out pained gasp, hacking to refill his lungs. “Please,” he begged. “Please…I promise…let me go…I’ll go home right now…and read your…book…” he panted out in fragmented whispers, trying to brace himself better against the wall.

If he could just stand up...

Harry let out another hacking cough, his chest burning in pain and terror and the desperate longing to flee. His eyes met Lockhart’s straight on; he could see the insanity glimmering on the surface where it once had been successfully buried.

“Okay. Okay! I-I won’t lie anymore! I’ll tell the truth, okay? The truth...the truth is...” He braced his weight on his hands behind him. “…Your book fucking sucks!” Harry spat at him and Lockhart’s expression turned from malevolence to one of abashed shock, buying Harry time to sweep his leg out with all his might, planting his own foot behind his stalker’s knee.

He sent the man buckling to the floor, the back of Lockhart’s skull whacking against the large garbage bin as he went down. It wasn’t sufficient force to kill a man or even knock him out, but it proved to be effective enough; Harry pushed himself up off the ground, wrenched open the bathroom door and ran.

Although the bathrooms were in a predominantly secluded hallway, it was only seconds before he was back in the open space of the food court. Populated. Safer. Harry kept his eyes on the bathroom. Even if he had witnesses now, it wouldn’t do to turn his back on Lockhart.

Harry steeled himself as best he could, not wanting to alarm Seamus as he approached him at their table briskly. “Hey,” Harry said, “I’ve got to get going. I forgot—I had to stop at the bank before it closes.” It wasn’t the best excuse but Seamus nodded his head and stood up. Handing Harry his small bag, Seamus walked beside him out of the mall, slurping on his milkshake. It was dark outside now that it was evening, which did nothing to help ease Harry’s anxiety.
“You want a ride?” Seamus offered. Harry shook his head.

“No, I’m just going to get a taxi, I think. You go on and get home to Dean. Thanks though, Shay, for everything.” Seamus wrapped his arms around him in a quick hug, clapping his back affectionately.

“No problem. If you ever need my services again, you know how to reach me,” the Irishman said cheerfully as Harry hailed a cab. “Have fun on your date!” he added playfully with a wave. Harry got in the back of the taxi and waved back to Seamus as the young man slipped into his own car. Good, Harry thought, he’s safe, too.

Harry barely remembered giving the driver Malfoy’s address as he wilted into the musty seat of the cab. His body shivered violently, and more tears threatened to break free from his will to hold them at bay. He hardly recalled paying the driver on his way out, and reckoned he’d overpaid him as the guy thanked him excitedly and sped out of sight but he didn’t care, he couldn’t care. He couldn’t seem to breathe properly. Every inhale and exhale made no difference; his head still spun and his heart still beat erratically.

The doorman opened the door for Harry to enter the building and Harry might’ve expressed his gratitude along the way, but he’d never know for certain because his world narrowed down to him getting into that elevator, to him reaching that top floor—every single step that he took that would bring him closer to Malfoy—Draco.

Draco, Draco, Draco.

He didn’t know at what point that man became his refuge, but as soon as Harry entered the penthouse, he collapsed into his boss’s arms and discovered that he could breathe a little easier once more.

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Chapter End Notes

This chapter is over 5,000 words long and I wrote it unnaturally fast. Seriously, I’ve never had such ease cranking out a chapter. I guess it’s because this one has just been demanding to be written for a while.

With that being said, I am sorry if there are any errors! There’s a lot that went on in this chapter, so I hope it wasn't confusing. Next chappy will pick up where this one left off.

;)

xx

CJ
ARC TWO: Firestorm

Chapter Summary

Harry and Draco have their first date.

Chapter Notes

HI, lovely people! Sorry for the longer wait again, for this chapter. It has been a long week. But here it is! Enjoy :)

WARNING: Somewhat awkward first-dates and unprotected sex.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I should have considered Lockhart when you mentioned knowing him,” Malfoy murmured quietly from where he sat perched on the edge of the couch beside where Harry lay. “That was a poor lapse of judgement on my part.”

Harry shook his head wearily. “I didn’t really think it was him. I’d only met him twice before, for just a few minutes. I never saw him lurking around. He did seem a little eccentric but I didn’t peg him as the-stalker type. He seemed harmless. Just...kind of lonely, honestly—” Harry broke off with a hiss of pain when Malfoy’s fingers pressed harder.

Malfoy continued along another one of his ribs with a gentler touch, gradually increasing the pressure when Harry didn’t flinch. “Of course, you would go into a bookstore and leave with a bloody stalker.” Harry glowered at the blonde man and batted his probing fingertips away from his chest.

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

His boss finished his examination and carefully slid his worn T-shirt back into place. He gave Harry’s hip a light pat but instead of pulling it away afterward, he kept it there, and Harry found comfort in the contact.

“It means, that you’re entirely too soft when you need to be hard. You’re a nice young man who’d give a stranger the shirt off your back without question. There are people in this world that will take advantage of that trait, Harry, or mistake your kindness for invitation.”

Harry bristled, hands clenching tightly into fists. “So, you reckon I’d be better off being an aloof jerk, then, yeah?” He said roughly. “That I shouldn’t give a damn about other people or have faith that not everyone is out to get me?” Malfoy stared evenly at him.

“Did I say that?” he countered sternly. “All I meant, was that you need to be vigilant. You need to watch your back. In the span of three months, you’ve been assaulted by Avery and then pursued and attacked by Lockhart. I can keep you safe—when you are here. When you need to leave, make sure Zabini or Nott are nearby. You have their numbers in your phone. Use them, Harry.”
Harry sank into the couch cushions moodily. “I was with a friend. Safety in numbers.”

“But in the restrooms, though.”

“I didn’t think using the loo was a two-person job!” he protested. Malfoy sighed, his fingers ghosting over Harry’s clothed chest.

“Nothing is broken. There aren’t any signs of bruising yet, either. You will likely be a little sore for a few days, so just take it easy.”

“I don’t bruise easily,” Harry shrugged. “I can take it.” he sat up on the couch, his face closer to Malfoy’s.

The man arched an eyebrow quizzically.

“So, tell me, what did you need so desperately, that you had to run off to the mall right after work to buy it?” he asked, leaning over to retrieve the tiny black bag with red tissue paper sitting on the floor. The bag in which Harry had his newest…clothing purchase in. Harry seized Malfoy by sleeve of his button-down shirt to keep him from picking it up.

“No—you—can’t,” Harry told him hurriedly, his face starting to redden. Malfoy retracted his hand and opened his mouth, whether to question why, or apologize, Harry didn’t know because suddenly he caught sight of a white ball of fur rubbed against Malfoy’s pantleg.

They both looked down at Hedwig, who was nuzzling and bumping against him.

“She’s been doing that nonstop today. Do you realize how terribly difficult white hair is to remove from black trousers?” the blonde drawled.

Surprisingly he didn’t seem as annoyed as Harry would’ve imagined. Instead of shooing Hedwig away, Malfoy reached down and patted the cat a few times on the head in acknowledgement.

“Holy shit…She actually likes you!” Harry said in amazement. Malfoy threw him a dry look. “No,” he continued with a short laugh, “I didn’t mean it like that. It’s just that—aside from me, Hedwig hates people. She’d probably hate me too if I hadn’t been the one to rescue her from an alley a few years back.”

“Why am I not surprised you take in strays? Nevertheless, your pet does have exceptional taste,” Malfoy stated with a haughty smirk. Harry rolled his eyes and scooped the cat up, burrowing, his face into her fur for a moment. A hand found Harry’s shoulder, causing him to look back up at his boss. He leveled Harry with a scrutinizing stare.

“Perhaps you should call off tomorrow. Utilize a personal day, to rest and take care of yourself.”

Harry wagged his head, allowing Hedwig to squirm out of his arms and trot off down the hallway. “No, I’ll be fine,” Harry told him. “It’s only until seven. And then we have dinner plans after.”

“You were attacked tonight, you have no obligation to—”

“No, no, I want to,” Harry assured him. “It’s for your birthday, after all. Plus,” he added with a cheeky grin and a jerk of his head toward the lingerie bag. Before he could tell himself not to, Harry’s hand reached forward and gripped Malfoy by the front of the shirt and kissed him soundly on the mouth. “…then you’ll get to see what’s in that bag.”

...
“This is ridiculous,” Harry mumbled as a pair of hands adjusted the suit jacket. “This suit looks exactly like the last three I’ve tried on.”

The pretty woman in front of him chuckled lightheartedly. “To the untrained eye, maybe,” she told him, fastening its button and taking a step back to study him. “These are the suits Draco selected from our collection for you to try on. Be grateful, kid, if we had more time you’d be getting your inseam measured right now instead of just playing dress-up.”

Harry sighed.

“Not much of a fashionista, are you?”

“Nope,” Harry said, his lips giving a little pop on the ‘P’.

“I’ve got to admit, you’re much different than the boys and girls that usually hang on my cousin’s arm.”

At that, Harry’s eyebrows darted up into his hairline. He took in the woman’s dark brown-to-teal ombre hair, long and loosely curled. Her eyes were dark brown. In her ears were several piercings and there was one in her right eyebrow.

While Tonks was stylishly dressed, she was not flashy, not like Malfoy in his Armani suits and diamond-studded cuff-links. She was pretty, yes, but she didn’t resemble Malfoy in the slightest. Nor did she carry herself like one. From the moment Harry was introduced to ‘Tonks’, she’d been easy-going and nice and expressive.

Very un-Malfoyish.

“Cousin?” he repeated curiously. Tonks held up a deep red-colored tie against his chest, shook her head at it, and selected a sapphire one instead. Finding it sufficient, she draped it around his neck and began to tie it for him.

It wasn’t sensual in the slightest when Malfoy wasn’t the one doing it.

“My mother is Draco’s mother’s older sister,” she clarified.

“Oh, okay,” Harry said.

“You seemed surprised for a minute, there.”

Harry shook his head hurriedly as she folded down his collar. “I didn’t mean to offend—”

“You didn’t,” she said, chortling. She smoothed out invisible wrinkles in the jacket. “Did I offend you when I said you weren’t like Draco’s other arm-candy?”

“No…actually, I took that as a compliment.”

“As do I,” she winked. “Truth is, our mothers have been estranged for like, thirty years. I started working for Malkin’s and encountered Draco there one day. We get on well enough…Not exactly invited for Christmas supper, mind you.”

Harry chewed on his bottom lip. “I’m sorry…”

“Nah,” she waved off, handing him a pair of shoes to try on. He sat in the nearest chair to do so as Tonks put away the rejected articles of clothing.
“It’s better this way. All these…politics of the rich and famous give me a headache. Sorry, I’m prattling on way too much. I tend to do that sometimes—well goddamn, Harry Potter, you clean up nicely.”

...

Harry squinted at the clock in the back of Weasley’s Pub for the hundredth time. His shift had been dragging on in the worst of ways; he was constantly shooting glances at the door, half expecting Lockhart to come in, even though he could see the black BMW with its tinted windows just across the street keeping watch.

The other part of him wanted to get out of here, because he had a dinner…thing, with Malfoy.

He didn’t know yet, whether he was excited or nervous for their evening together.

By the time seven o’clock rolled around, Lockhart hadn’t made an appearance and Harry’s stomach was fluttering and twisting with a swarm of pesky butterflies. Harry dashed across the street, ducked behind the side of the car, and tumbled into the back seat of the vehicle.

“What the hell was that, Potter?” Zabini scoffed in exasperation. He pressed the button to start the engine while Harry floundered around to sit up.

“I don’t want anyone to see me in this car,” Harry said, peering out the window to make sure no one had caught him. Zabini muttered something under his breath about an ‘ungrateful brats’ before the partition rolled up and separated their compartments.

“Love you too, arsehole,” Harry snapped.

Twenty minutes later, Harry walked into Malfoy’s flat. For the most part, the living room in the penthouse was dark. If it weren’t for the hundreds of tiny lights glowing from the balcony outside, it would’ve been near impossible to see anything. There was a light on around the corner, emitting from the kitchen and Harry inhaled deeply as the scent of cooking filled his nostrils.

Harry paused and looked out the window that covered most the far wall, giving Malfoy a breathtaking view of the city. The balcony had been cleared of most of its furniture, leaving a small round table and two chairs facing each other. There was a candle lit in the middle, and the table was set for two.

“Well, don’t just stand there. Go on and get dressed up for me.”

Harry jerked around to see Malfoy leaning against the wall, watching him closely.

“What is this?” Harry asked, gesturing to the balcony with a bewildered wave of his hand.

“I believe we made plans for dinner,” Malfoy told him casually, pushing off from the wall to meet Harry in the middle of the living room. Harry blinked owlishly. “Is there something wrong?”

“No. No, not at all! I just—I just thought you’d wanted to go out to a restaurant, or something.”

“That was the original plan. That is, until you were attacked last night. Ultimately, I figured you would feel less anxious if we stayed out of the public eye. Plus, I didn’t think you were the sort that would appreciate having your face plastered over tabloids by the weekend. That tends to happen whenever I go on dates. The media does love their gossip.”

Harry’s heart skipped a beat at the man’s words.
And just as well, the word didn’t seem quite as intimidating.

Harry obediently scooted off after that to don his new suit. It had been hanging on the back of the guestroom door all day, waiting for this. He couldn’t deny the designer suit was quite nice, soft and elegant, and (though it hadn’t been tailored for him, like Tonks had mentioned earlier), the size and fit seemed perfect, to him.

Harry looked at himself in the mirror as he buttoned the jacket.

It was jet black, as was the shirt beneath it, but the vest and matching tie were a brilliant shade of deep blue, just enough color to pop without being too loud.

He would’ve hardly recognized himself if it hadn’t been for his unkempt hair and his glasses. Nonetheless, clothing did not make the man, and he was fundamentally still Harry, just Harry, whether he wore a designer suit or a sweat-suit.

He fiddled with the tie in his hands. Really, he should’ve paid more attention during his ‘lessons’ with Malfoy, but he would only willingly deem himself partially culpable for his lack of devotion to learning.

Running his fingers through his hair in one last attempt at taming his wild locks, Harry left the room in search of Malfoy who he found standing on the balcony, back to him, facing the lit streets of London.

It was a warm night but fortunately not humid. Harry watched from a temporary distance as Malfoy stared absently down the many stories separating him and the ground below. He took a drag from his cigarette, a single deep inhale followed by a slow release of smoke.

Smoking was bad practice, especially in this millennium, when people knew full-well the repercussions. His Uncle Vernon used to smoke cigars often when Harry was growing up. It gave him an unappealing stench whenever he got too close to the man, or whenever his uncle got in his face to shout. It had yellowed his teeth eventually, and dried his tongue, but Malfoy’s teeth seemed bloody perfect and that, Harry supposed, was the difference between the rich and the ordinary.

Malfoy’s smell was always pleasant to Harry’s nose, despite the faint smell of smoke from his Dunhills. There were enough air-purifiers kept around to assist and Harry never minded at all, when the blonde-haired business-man got in his face.

As if he’d felt Harry’s eyes on him, Malfoy turned to look at him and promptly smothered the butt into the ashtray he had sitting on the ledge. For a fraction of a millisecond, the other man faltered as his eyes surveyed Harry from top to bottom.

Harry smiled and approached him. He held out the tie.

“Do you mind tying this for me? My boss tried to teach me before, but to be honest, he was a lousy teacher.” Malfoy rewarded him with a leer and took the tie, looking down at Harry mockingly.

“Perhaps your boss just wasn’t a strict enough teacher. Or maybe it is the student who was too preoccupied with wicked thoughts that he has failed to pay adequate attention to the lesson,” came the sultry response as Malfoy’s hands tied the tie slowly, smoothly, skillfully, and yes, Harry thought as the knot was adjusted against his throat, *Draco Malfoy should be the only one allowed to do this.*

Harry suppressed the shudder that threatened to run down his spine and spread heat into his lower
body. He cleared his throat to end the silence between them that was thick with the desire from having been in close quarters for so long and not really touching each other.

Before he could counter with a witty comeback, Harry realized they were no longer alone.

Both their playful bantering and sex would inevitably have to wait, because their meal was being pushed onto the balcony on a metal cart by a woman in a server’s outfit. Malfoy was pulling out his seat for him, a gesture someone would do in films but certainly not something any of the people Harry knew would bother doing. Once he was seated, Draco moved to sit and they thanked their server after she presented their entrees and poured their wine.

Their dynamic shifted again and Harry was all too aware of it. Sex, Harry could do. Bantering with Malfoy he could also do…but the formality of a dinner date seemed far more intimate.

“This looks nice,” he said, biting his lower lip restlessly.

“Harry.”

Harry’s eyes slid up to meet the slate grey eyes of his boss. “Relax,” the man told him, “There is no need to be worried. I assure you, Horace is a phenomenal chef with an impressive list of credentials. Calm yourself, would you? You're getting fidgety. Is dinner with me really so nerve-wracking?”

“No,” Harry rushed, “No. Sorry…I just haven’t done this in a long time?”

“You haven’t done what in a while? Eaten a meal?” Malfoy teased.

Harry wrinkled his nose. “You know what I mean. Plus, I’m kind of afraid I’m going to get this suit dirty if I start eating.”

“Suits can be cleaned or even replaced. Place your napkin on your lap if that helps put you at ease, and take a deep breath. Eat.” Harry followed Malfoy’s advice and as soon as he took a bite of his food, Harry’s eyes closed as a blend of enticing flavors danced across his taste buds.

“Damn, that’s good,” Harry mumbled after he swallowed, sounding remarkably like Ron, who was the biggest foodie he’d ever met. He was sure the redhead would marry this dish if he’d tasted it. And Harry, aside from Sunday dinner at the Weasley’s, was unused to a balanced, homecooked meal.

He was more a toast-and-soup kind of bloke on his own.

“Do you cook at all?” he asked conversationally, determined to fill the air between them.

“Occasionally,” Malfoy said. “And not as expertly as Horace in there, I’m afraid. I did dabble in French cuisine, however, when I spent a few summers with my grandparents in Nice.”

“Oh, wow…is that where you learned to speak French?”

“Mostly. They had a condo along the French Riviera.”

“And all the other languages?” Harry inquired as he took a sip of his wine. The earthiness mixed with berries was bitter and warm on his tongue. “What made you want to learn so many? Hell, I can hardly master English sometimes.”

Malfoy paused momentarily while he pondered. “My father had me tutored in multiple languages growing up. He believed it would improve business ventures outside of English-speaking countries
“Was he right?” Harry questioned, his mind bringing forth the condescending and stony face of Lucius Malfoy. The man across from him arched and eyebrow at him over his own glass of red.

“Father usually is,” he divulged eventually and then he added, “What about you?”

Harry shook his head, ‘No. Just English and naughty French words, remember?’

“I remember. I meant, what of your youth? Tell me about yourself.” Harry’s stomach knotted uncomfortably as the discussion was swayed onto him. He gave a small shrug, fiddling with the corner of the napkin in his lap.

“You know that stuff. My job interview proved that much.”

“Yes, I know you were raised by your aunt and uncle, correct?”

“Yeah.”

The blonde eyed him shrewdly. “Am I bringing up an uncomfortable topic for you?”

Harry shrugged again, averting his gaze to his plate. “Okay,” Malfoy continued mildly, “Well, about your school days? What were those like?”

“Uneventful,” Harry told him.

“You’re not giving much for me to go off here, Potter,” Malfoy sighed. “Any boyfriends? Girlfriends?”

“Hmm…one boyfriend,” Harry gave in finally as he gulped down the rest of his wine. He contemplated before adding, “No real girlfriends. I tried once, when I was fifteen, to convince myself I had a crush on my best friend’s sister. We went out for about a week. She was pretty and friendly but she did nothing for me. I think she knew I was gay before I even did,” he finished with a grin, absentmindedly twirling linguine on his fork.

“Two years is quite a long time for teenage romance,” Malfoy acknowledged. Harry braced an elbow on the table and leaned his chin into the palm of his hand. It wasn’t the best of manners, that much he knew, but he didn’t really care. Malfoy didn’t say anything about it, even though he looked the epitome of propriety at the dinner table.

“Yeah. He was my first everything. First kiss, first—time, first heartbreak…” he rolled his eyes.

“What about you?”

“I’ve had my share of girlfriends and boyfriends. None that have lasted two years, mind you.”

“Your…father doesn’t care that you like guys, too?”

“My father…doesn’t really concern himself with those things. I wouldn’t say he was particularly delighted by the field day the press had when they first caught me with another man, and I’m sure he’d prefer me with a female socialite because that would make things easier. He’s aware there are other options, though.”

“Options?” Harry asked, tilting his head to the side.

“His biggest concern would be an heir.”
“Oh,” Harry said understandingly. “Yeah, that makes…sense. So, you could adopt, you mean.”

“Surrogacy,” Malfoy amended. “As an only child, it is my duty to continue the Malfoy bloodline. What about you? Have you given that sort of thing any consideration?”

“I’d adopt.” Harry said crisply, staring down blankly at his plate, trying to force his bitterness away. *He was too old,* he told himself firmly, *to get affronted over something so trivial.*

“Have I insulted you?”

“No, no. Sorry. I didn’t mean to snap like that, I just—I’d adopt, given the choice. My parents died when I was a baby. In a car accident. I survived, but…I don’t know. Growing up, part of me always wondered if I’d just been adopted instead of sent off to my aunt and uncle…that maybe I would’ve been better off.”

“Your relatives are a sore subject for you, aren’t they?”

“They don’t exactly incite the best of memories for me,” Harry stated, exhaling slowly. “Don’t get me wrong, they weren’t monsters, or anything. They just didn’t want me but they got saddled with me anyway, because I had no other family left. They tolerated me until my cousin ratted me out for being gay when we were sixteen.” he scratched the back of his head absently. “That was the final straw for them, I guess.”

Malfoy regarded him quietly before asking, “What did they do after discovering your sexuality?”

“They kicked me out.” Harry's gaze lingered distractedly on the sunset in the distance. The streaks of oranges, pinks, yellows, and purples were something out of a watercolor painting.

“Where did you go?”

“I…hung around. Eventually, the Weasleys found out what happened and they gave me a place to stay until I could get a job and a place of my own.”

“That explains your loyalty to them and their family business.”

“They’re amazing people,” Harry murmured honestly, a fond smile spreading.

He took one last bite, his plate mostly cleared. “…By the way, um…when is your actual birthday?”


“That’s today.”

“Well, aren’t you astute?” Malfoy mused drolly, removing his napkin from his lap and setting it on the table. Harry scowled at him halfheartedly but before he could retort, Malfoy stood and rounded the small table, propped his arm on the back of Harry’s chair. “You look rather handsome in your new suit,” he added as he gripped Harry’s chin in the other hand and pulled him in for a warm kiss.

…

“W-wait,” Harry said, breaking his mouth away from Malfoy’s as he was steered backwards from the balcony into the loft.

“Is there a problem?”
“No. But I did promise to show you what was in that bag from the mall,” Harry said, trying hard to seem nonchalant as he looked up through his lashes at the taller man. “Just give me a minute? Wait here?” Malfoy nodded indulgently and settled into a chair in the living room, a small smile playing on his lips.

Harry slipped off into the bathroom attached to the guestroom. Beneath the sink was the cupboard he’d stashed the bag in the night before. He pulled out both pairs of lingerie; the pair Seamus had suggested and another one that had managed to fascinate Harry, but he wasn’t sure he was confident enough to pull off lace. He shoved it back into the bag and returned it to the cupboard resolutely.

He spent a few minutes freshening up before he slipped into the undergarments. It was the first in his lifetime that Harry had ever worn a thong or anything so skimpy. For another man, no less. It was made from a black, leathery material, with a triangle-shaped cup in the front and four thin straps that wrapped around his sides, accentuating his rear and meeting the string that ran down his crack.

It wasn’t…bad.

While being on display like this was a bit awkward, the lingerie also made him feel, strangely enough…sexy? There was something sensual about wearing it. He only hoped Malfoy felt the same way.

Fortifying his resolve, Harry forced himself to exit the bathroom and then he was standing before the closed bedroom door, one hand on the knob. He inhaled deeply again and opened it. He crept shyly down the hall to where it expanded into the living room. To Malfoy, who waited expectantly for his arrival.

For a minute, there was nothing but silence. Harry could feel the blush in his cheeks rising rapidly as Malfoy stilled, eyes raking up and down his body. In another beat, Malfoy was striding over to him much like he had not twenty minutes ago, determined, eyes darkened with intent.

He stopped in front of Harry, in his personal space but not right up against him. His hand found Harry’s left hip and one of Malfoy’s long fingers hooked into one of the straps there. He stroked along the line of it contemplatively, a gentle caress with his knuckle that ignited a spread of goosebumps across Harry’s skin.

He felt himself stir within the confines of the scant, opaque material. Harry’s breathing was loud to his own ears. His boss’s hands then slid around to his arse and he finally did pull Harry against his body, fingernails raking up the curved flesh.

Harry shivered and brought his hand up to cup the back of Malfoy’s neck to tug him in for another impassioned snog.

…

It was a firestorm of kisses, lips against lips, nipping and sucking avidly. Hands roamed around, squeezing, clawing, possessing. Harry was rock hard, erection straining and poking free from the top of his lingerie. Malfoy steered him into the master bedroom and practically threw him on his bed; Harry bounced a bit from the force of it and scooting backward onto the pillows. His legs spread so Malfoy could crawl between them and connect their lips once more.

Harry shoved the man’s jacket from his shoulders and his tie was loosened and discarded. The vest was removed so roughly that Harry swore a button was torn in the process. There would be time to apologize for that later, when Draco Malfoy wasn’t half-naked on top of him.
Harry’s fingers scrambled to unclasp the man’s belt, the fastening on his trousers, and then those too were pushed down. Malfoy’s mouth was powerful and devouring as he crawled out of his bottoms and kicked them to the floor. He was left hard and straining in dark Calvin Klein boxer-briefs, form fitting in all the right places. He pressed his body down onto Harry’s, grinding their erections together as they kissed.

Malfoy broke off abruptly, panting against Harry’s own gasping mouth. He held himself on pale but muscular arms as he pressed their foreheads together. “Turn on your stomach for me,” the blonde told him huskily and Harry nodded against him and then Malfoy’s weight disappeared so he could roll over onto his belly. He rested his cheek on one of the pillows and opened his legs once more, eagerly.

Malfoy settled down between them, pressing open mouth kisses to the back of Harry’s shoulders, trailing them down the length of Harry’s vertebrae to the base of his spine. The brunette’s eyes fluttered closed in satisfaction when Malfoy wriggled a digit behind the string along his crack and tugged upwards, providing an entirely new kind of friction against Harry’s hole.

Harry moaned softly.

Malfoy repeated the action a few more times for good measure and then shifted the thong to the side, to expose him to Malfoy’s scrutiny. Harry waited for the snick of a tube of lubricant opening, or even a brush of a finger teasingly.

Neither came.

The bed shifted beneath them as Malfoy moved. He felt a puff of warm air fanning against him and then something slick and persistent flicked over his entrance. His eyes flew open and Harry raised his head to crane for a look behind him. From his position, he caught a glimpse of Malfoy laying between his thighs mouth right…

Holy fuck.

The man smirked, his eyes glinting dangerously before he brought his mouth back down…

Holy fuck-fuck-fuck—!

“What are you doing?” Harry choked out and he bucked his hips against the mattress to dislodge the other man’s tongue from his arse.

“Have you never been rimmed before?” Malfoy asked as he steadied Harry’s lower half, mere centimeters from that…area. Harry’s throat closed and his mouth went dry, so all he could do was to give him a fervent shake of his head. “Well,” came the smug conclusion, “I believe that ex-boyfriend of yours wasn’t your first everything, then.”

Another stroke of his tongue had Harry whimpering pitifully because he wanted it to stop, but he really, really didn’t want it to stop, and he didn’t know what to do with that.

“You…” Harry began, his voice a hoarse whisper, “can’t possibly like doing that.”

“On the contrary, I quite enjoy doing this.” Malfoy’s thumbs spread him further for better access, and his tongue toyed with the outside of Harry’s pucker before it speared into him.

Harry gave a dry sob and his hips rocked back against that mouth and then forward into the duvet. He didn’t have it in him to feel remorseful over soiling his employer’s bedding with precum, because his world had tapered down to nothing but Malfoy and Malfoy’s mouth.
Malfoy’s hands squeezed the globes of his arse as he fucked Harry with his tongue, languidly at first and gradually becoming more insistent, increasing with a sense of urgency.

Harry could feel the saliva wetting him, dripping down his crevice like a thin, makeshift lube. It should’ve been horrifying to have this done to him; he wasn’t so naïve. He knew what a rim-job was, but he and Anthony had always been very basic.

Vanilla.

This was so much more intimate than anything he’d ever done before...and, fuck...how had he gone his entire sex-life never having this? He was only vaguely aware of his surroundings; his vision was blurry whenever his eyes weren’t rolling back into his head and Harry gripped the sheets in his hands and cried out deliriously in the pillow as Malfoy lathed at his rim with skill and vigor.

Malfoy pulled off and slid the tip of a lone slick finger into him, to the first knuckle, before resuming his oral attention. Together, his finger and tongue worked in correlation with one another, working Harry up and pulling him apart.

Harry’s toes curled and his knees dug into the mattress as he pressed into Malfoy, the crown of his cock pressing into the bed at the backward shove. Malfoy smacked his arse with his free hand warningly.

Another greased finger breached him.

Harry bit Malfoy’s pillow to muffle his cry. The fullness he craved, as much of it as he could get. Malfoy fingered him open; driving in, scissoring apart with every pull back, and his tongue filling whatever space between them, waking up every single nerve ending.

Malfoy rotated his wrist and crooked his digits down to rub along his prostate. Harry released the fabric of the pillow.

“Oh, fuck, right there!”

He tried to wedge his own hand beneath his body so he could free his cock completely of the constriction of the G-string. It was only in the way now, Harry decided, and he needed them off. However, before he could do so, Malfoy’s mouth left him and his fingers retreated to yank Harry’s arm away from its journey south.

Malfoy crawled up and caged Harry’s body with his own. Harry growled in discontent and twisted to turn around but Malfoy guided him back onto his belly with a firm push of his hand in between Harry’s shoulder blades.

His boss’s breathing was ragged as he leaned in to speak directly in Harry’s ears. “My turn,” Malfoy whispered, grinding his erection along the valley Harry’s crevice, rubbing the leathery material of the thong against his loosened hole.

“Do it, do it now.” Harry whispered feverishly. “No need for any more lube, don’t need it just—just fuck me, fuck me—please,” he whimpered, bucking his hips back to offer his arse to Malfoy and he was too far gone to even comprehend the words pouring from his mouth.

Malfoy let out a low groan, roughened with lust. He felt the string pulled to the side again, and the blunt head of Malfoy’s cock was against him. Harry’s eyes grew wide in recognition of what he’d done as he was penetrated with little slick to ease his passage.

Malfoy must’ve felt him tense because he went motionless instantly, just the tip of his erection inside
Harry.

“Don’t stop,” he heard himself mumble and then he inhaled deeply, forcing his body to expand, to relax and accept the intrusion, despite it hurting.

_God, did it burn and sting something awful and…_

“Don’t stop, don’t stop,” he repeated like a mantra until Malfoy was buried deep inside him, reaching deeper than any lover Harry had ever been with. This felt different somehow, hotter, closer—

“Oh shit,” Harry whispered, stiffening. “We forgot a condom, didn’t we?”

Draco froze behind him.

“Damn it.”

“I’m clean,” Harry said, reaching behind him to put a hand on the hard muscle of Malfoy’s thigh. “You saw my results from testing, remember? Plus, you just—with-with your tongue, so of course you must know that.”

“Yes.”

“And it’s not like I can get pregnant, here, right?” he added with a short, wavering laugh that held no humor.

“Right.”

“So,” Harry finished, clearing his throat nervously. “So, that just leaves…you?”

“I’m clean,” Malfoy stated quietly.

“And,” Harry continued, “and you’re not the type of guy to lie about that, right?” There was a note of hysterics brimming below the surface of his voice, because _fuck_, it wouldn’t do him any good to start panicking when he had his boss’s dick lodged inside him.

“I am not. But how much faith can you put in another’s word, these days? You’re trembling, Harry.”

Was he?

“I just. I always use a condom. Always.”

“As do I,” Malfoy muttered, sounding oddly strained. “Forgive me. I’ve forgotten myself…”

“You weren’t the only one,” Harry breathed out. “I don’t want to stop. How bad is that? Even now, I don’t want to stop.” His voice caught in his throat, because he was being so, so _foolish_.

“Nor do I.”

“Then…” Harry decided, exhaling slowly, and he tilted his hips back against Malfoy’s pelvis. He was being beyond irresponsible, he knew. Still, Harry bit his lip and braced himself, “_Fuck me, Draco._”

Malfoy made a strangled noise in the base of his throat and then he was over Harry once more, pulling out and fucking into him in a leisurely pace, not too fast and not too slow, and the drag of the thick cock within him still ached a bit. Harry straddled the line of pain and pleasure for several minutes, his breathy moans wafting from him into the air to mingle with Malfoy’s own occasional
sighs and guttural groans.

It was rare for the other man to make much noise during sex, but for whatever reason, his control was slipping and Harry relished in the sounds filling the atmosphere; the ones from his own mouth that he couldn’t contain, the ones elicited from Malfoy’s…the slapping of flesh on flesh, the hammering of the headboard into the wall as their pace sped up.

More precum spilled from the other man, Harry could tell that much, simply due to the ease of their bodies slipping together.

“Yes, yes, yes…Oh, oh, fuck, yes…”

The pain was beautiful, the pleasure beyond compare, and Harry wasn’t sure if sex was supposed to be a blend of conflicting sensations…but his body yearned for it that way.

It demanded it.

The blonde rode against him like a jockey on a horse, unrelentingly pounding him into the bed and then Malfoy’s hands found the backs of his and laced them together, whether for the closeness or to hold him down and dominate him, Harry didn’t know, nor did he care.

Harry’s vision blurred unexpectedly as Malfoy shifted behind him on his knees, released his hands in favor of seizing his waist and tugged Harry up and back onto his lap and against his chest. Harry let out another keening cry at the deeper penetration sending a shockwave of discomfort intermixed bliss down his spine.

Malfoy moved up into him, unyielding in his guiding of Harry’s body in time with his thrusts. Harry felt a bit like a rag doll, so he reached an arm up and bent it behind him, behind Malfoy’s head for stability. His hair was so soft.

It threw off their rhythm, turning long thrusts into a shallow grinding, swiveling of his arse against Malfoy’s thighs but neither of them minded.

The other man relinquished his hold on one of Harry’s hips to scope around and take Harry’s weeping arousal in hand, thumbing the tip, smearing the fluid around the head and using it to slick the way as he jerked him off.

His orgasm had been building since Malfoy had first touched him: with his hands, his tongue, his cock. Harry felt like he was floating, his head was dizzy, his body stimulated to heights only Malfoy seemed capable of bringing him to.

It took mere seconds of his boss fondling his cock, brushing against this prostate before Harry was dragged to the point of no return. He opened his mouth one last time.

“Cum in me, please cum in me. I want it, I want it—”

Harry’s sobbed pleas broke off as litany of curses interrupted them, animalistic in nature, and Malfoy bucked up against him. It sent him face-first back toward the bed. Harry managed to catch himself on his hands and knees just as Malfoy took him from behind, pounding into him once twice, maybe a dozen more times.

A broken shout elicited from Harry’s throat as he came, spilling himself onto the duvet below him and then there was more warmth inside him, flooding him, trailing down his leg as nails and teeth bit into him…
Draco flicked the ashes of his cigarette into the ashtray as he stared out into the vast, darkened sky encasing London. Potter had passed out rather quickly after their impassioned encounter, and Draco forevermore wished to claim the other man as his.

He had called him ‘Draco’.

It had been a first in all the time they’d known each other and he wasn’t positive if it had simply been uttered in the heat-of-the-moment or if Harry was finally allowing himself to be a touch more familiar with him.

After all, hadn’t Harry been the one to ask Draco to dinner this week? As uneasy as Harry been during their shared meal, he still managed to divulge some aspects of himself.

The lingerie too, had been particularly revealing.

Admittedly, it wasn't entirely fair for him to want to know everything about Harry Potter without giving much of himself up in return. It would always be slightly one-sided.

Circumstances required it to be.

The unprotected sex didn’t bother Draco. Not when he was certain that they were both clean. No… what disconcerted him with that faux pas was that he hadn’t even realized what he was doing.

Amidst his lust for Potter, his powerful desire, he’d lost control, lost all and any semblance of restraint, and that, that was something that went against Draco’s very nature.

Buzz.

Buzz.

Buzz.

Buzz.

...Incoming call from Zabini.

Draco answered quickly.

“We’ve found him, Sir,” Blaise’s deep voice stated as soon as he picked up.

“Are you absolutely certain?” Draco asked quietly, glancing over his shoulder to make sure Potter hadn’t woken and made his way out of the bedroom.

“Yes. He had ID on him and the picture you provided to verify. It is unmistakably him.”

“Well done,” Draco murmured.

“How would you like us to proceed?”

“Take care of it.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And, Blaise…” Draco’s nostrils flared in contempt. “…Do make it look like an accident.”
"Of course, sir."

Draco ended the call and placed his phone back into the pocket of his robe. He flicked the excess from his burning smoke once more. Weariness swiftly slotted through Draco’s body as he took another drag of his cigarette and exhaled into the night.

Insp. for Harry's lingerie here (NSFW).

Chapter End Notes

Whew...this chapter was pushing 7k words, which is long (for me, at least)! Usually I end each chapter around 4k.

Originally, this was suppose to be the last installment of this arc, but that would've added at least 2,000 more words and I didn't have it in me. O__O

Editing is probably very half-assed but my eyes were crossing and I couldn't go on anymore. Have I mentioned, yet, how much I hate proofreading??

Plus, this seemed like a good place to stop.

Next chapter will inevitably be shorter, but at least it should be out Wednesday (eveningish)! :)

Then there's Arc 3.

(cue ominous music)

xx

CJ
ARC TWO: River

Chapter Summary

Dinner at the Weasley's is a bit revealing.

Chapter Notes

I meant to take a quick poll last chapter to see if anyone would care about me upping Draco's age. I could've kept him the same age as Harry, but I didn't think it'd be realistic, considering everything he's accomplished. Then today one lovely commenter gave me their own opinion on the matter (thanks, wenchofthewest!), so I went with it. Hopefully no one is bothered by that.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Harry yawned widely into his hand and plopped onto the couch in a disheveled heap of messy hair and sweaty limbs.

Daphne hadn’t been kidding when she declared Malfoy’s birthday celebration to be one of the most hellish (but rewarding) nights of the year, at Salazar. With aching hips and a twinge in his lower back from his tryst with the birthday-boy the night before, Harry had to summon all the energy he had to get through the hours of cocktail-serving, small talk, longer-than-usual clean-up, and ebbing sanity.

It helped that he worked in a place that stocked energy drinks.

They had all staff on-deck for the event. There was nothing out of the ordinary occurring, but everything was amplified for the occasion. The stages were filled with dancers, both male and female, dancing seductively for patrons' entertainment. The number of customers doubled. More people were utilizing the back rooms (Harry tried not to dwell on that one). The most unusual occurrence, though, was Malfoy’s presence. While the man often came around to meet with people or check on the flow of business, he rarely stayed around for long, preferring to keep to his office.

On Friday night, Malfoy was the center of attention. He was suave and charming and moved around with a grace Harry could have never possessed himself. Women and men alike hung off him, crowding around whatever lounge he sat on, flirting shamelessly. Harry watched him socialize from the ring of the bar whenever he had a second to breathe. With his stomach clenching restlessly, he’d turn away to serve another customer. Harry told himself it was just from the copious amounts of caffeine pumping through him.

Perhaps it was the billionaire status, or the fact Malfoy inherited (and successfully conducted) businesses, but Malfoy seemed older than his twenty-eight years. Harry was no stranger to having responsibilities in his youth, but he’d also never had to contend with multi-million-pound corporations.
If Lucius Malfoy had started grooming his heir into a business mogul at such a young age, Harry couldn’t help but wonder, what kind of childhood did Malfoy—Draco, have? Harry rubbed his eyes tiredly, and rolled over onto his stomach, resting his cheek on one of the soft throw pillows.

Instead of staying until six, Draco (who’d left sometime around three-thirty in the morning) had ordered Zabini to drag Harry out of the club, stuff him into the BMW parked on the side of the street, and bring him back to the apartment an hour before his shift was through.

Really, the manhandling hadn’t even been necessary; Harry was more than willing to curl up in a ball in the rear seat and pass out, drooling freely on the leather the entire way to Draco’s home without argument. He didn’t even know how he ended up in his bed in the guestroom, but Harry woke up twelve hours later, to a single red rose beside his pillow. He felt more refreshed than he had in months.

Luckily, by the time Saturday night rolled around, Salazar had returned to its normal routine. Now it was Sunday, and Harry had slept his typical five hours before setting to task. It’d been just over week since he’d arrived at Draco’s home, and while he did his best to keep up on chores in his spare time, he hadn’t had the opportunity to be thorough.

Spending the last three hours scrubbing the penthouse from top to bottom was no easy feat but Harry was always thorough when it came to upholding his end of an arrangement.

Suppressing a second yawn, Harry set the alarm on his phone for two hours in the future. A little nap was all he needed before dinner at the Weasley’s; Malfoy was gone for the day doing whatever Malfoy did to keep his pockets deep and his friends in high places.

He drifted off to sleep there on the couch, too exhausted to make the journey to the guestroom.

...  

“Vous deux êtes des hommes grown men! Settle down before you break something!”

“Mum! Ron just broke a plate—”

“Oye! You’re the one who bumped into me—!”

“GET A BROOM, YOU LAZY TOAD!”

“Ginny stop arguing with—”

“Really, Mother, this is getting a bit—”

“Hush, Perce.”

“FRED DON’T PLAY WITH THAT IN THE HOUSE!”

“Can I help you with that?”

“THAT’S HOT, GEORGE, USE THE MITT! Yes, thank you, Harry, dear.”

“Victoire, no sweets until after supper—don’t you cry now, you’ll wake up the baby.”

A shrill wail came from the baby monitor nearby.

...
“So, Harry, what have you been up to?” Bill Weasley called to him from down from the other end of the table. The circles beneath his eyes were dark in contrast to his pale, freckled skin as he bounced his youngest daughter, Dominique on his knee. The little girl, blonde like her mum, chomped on her fist with her two bottom teeth in between bites of mashed potatoes scooped into her mouth by her father.

“Not as much as you, I bet,” Harry said grinning at the baby.

“I heard you’ve got a new boyfriend!” Charlie spoke. Harry grimaced and kicked Ron’s leg beneath the table beside him.

“Ouch, Haw-ee! It wadn’t me!”

“Don’t talk with your mouth full, Ron,” Hermione sighed.

“Fred told me,” Charlie said after swallowing a bite of his own food. Harry frowned over at Fred.

“Well, George told me,” Fred told him, causing his twin to wince as Harry’s eyes swiveled onto him.

“Ginny told me?” George defended, hands in the air placatingly.

“Hey! Ron told me—”

“Ouch! Stop kicking me, would you?! You know I bruise easily…” Ron grumbled miserably, reaching down to rub his leg.

“You do have a big mouth, Ron,” Arthur said mildly. “You blurted it out to me a couple weeks ago, and all I asked you for was the time.”

“And me,” Angelina, George’s girlfriend piped up.

“Me too.”

“Me too! Uncle Won said it’s a sec’et!” Bill and Fleur’s three-year-old, Victoire, chirped as she swung her legs back and forth in her chair.

“Ron!” Hermione admonished with a deep frown. “That was not your news to share! I’m sorry, Harry—”

“I was told Harry had a ‘sugar daddy’,” Bill Weasley added, chuckling as he shoveled another mouthful of potatoes into Dominique’s mouth.

Harry groaned and buried his face in his hands, mortified.

Ron carefully shifted his legs out of Harry’s range and turned red as a radish.

“That’s enough, now!” Molly Weasley’s voice rose above the din. “Leave the poor boy alone. No wonder he wanted to keep it a secret from you nosey lot! Really, I raised you all better than this—”

Considering how close the Weasley’s Pub was to closing its doors for good, Harry was genuinely surprised that Molly and Arthur had yet to tell their large brood. Harry figured it was a parent-thing, to wish to spare their offspring from the harsh truths of life. He’d seen it enough growing up; on the many occasions his Aunt Petunia told Dudley he was a handsome and smart boy, when in reality his cousin resembled a pig and had a lower IQ than one.
If Harry worked hard enough, perhaps he could spare them all from the heartbreak.

“Quiet down, you three! I’m trying to watch the evening news!”

“You’re such a wet blanket, Perce,” Fred teased, but he and George and Ron quieted down a bit, if only to preserve the peace lest Molly Weasley storm from the kitchen brandishing a wooden spoon. It wouldn’t have been the first time Harry witnessed such an occurrence in the Weasley household.

Percy glowered at the trio over his horn-rimmed glasses from the worn couch. He turned up the volume on the television with the remote in his hand.

“Police have positively identified the body pulled from River Thames early this morning as young-adult author Gilderoy Lockhart—”

Harry inhaled sharply, sending a piece of the biscuit he’d been munching on to the back of his throat. He choked. He bent over, hacking roughly into the crook of his elbow to clear his airway. Charlie came around and whacked him on the back unhelpfully. By the time his coughing fit ended, the anchorwoman had moved on to talk about two people arrested for trespassing.

Eyes watering, Harry straightened up and leaned over the back of the couch to speak to Percy.

“Hey—that author guy. What did they say killed him?” Harry asked him quietly.

The third-eldest Weasley male glanced at him distractedly. “They said he fell into the river. He must’ve hit his head on the rocks on the way down and drowned. Why do you ask?”

Harry’s hands gripped into the cushioning on the back of the sofa. “No reason. I just…I own one of his books, that’s all.”

“Oh,” Percy said uninterestedly, eyes never leaving the next headline on the telly, “was it any good?”

“No idea,” Harry replied, heart sinking in his chest. “I never really read it.”

Harry stuffed the remainder of his clothing into his backpack and zipped it. He set it beside the open door. Since he had cleaned the penthouse that morning, the guestroom was left the way it had been when Harry first arrived a little over a week ago, but he still did one last sweep around the guestroom and connected bathroom, to make sure everything was in order.

Suddenly remembering the bag below the sink, Harry opened the cupboard and snatched it up. He gave a sigh of relief that he didn’t leave something like *that* behind for someone else to find. He walked back into the bedroom.

Draco was still gone, and would probably be for a couple hours, yet. He hooked his bag over his shoulders. It took Harry a minute to locate Hedwig and wrestle her into his arms. She bit the sleeve of his denim jacket angrily but settled down when she realized Harry wasn’t about to let her free.

“It’s time to go, girl.” He mumbled apologetically. “Looks like we don’t have to worry about Lockhart anymore…”

His stomach twisted uneasily and he shook his head to clear his wayward thoughts. When he’d returned to the loft after dinner at the Weasley’s, Harry had done an impromptu *Google* search on Gilderoy Lockhart’s demise. Although there would be a routine police-investigation of his death, no
foul play was suspected. Just a tragic accident. Reportedly, Lockhart had last been seen Thursday evening at the building his Publisher worked out of near the river. His body was discovered just a couple blocks away, early Sunday morning.

Thursday…

He and Draco had dinner together Thursday evening. They had mind-blowing sex after that. They fell asleep together.

‘Your orders, Sir?’

‘Break his hands.’

Harry shivered and then shook his head again, firmly, as he rode the lift all the way down to the ground floor. He would take a taxi home.

Friday had been Malfoy's party, and Saturday he'd also been at the club until early into Sunday when Lockhart's body was discovered. He had meetings both days.

Business meetings.

He hugged Hedwig tighter.

A gun holster…

He thought of grey eyes piercing into him like they could see through to Harry’s very soul. He thought of the small smiles, the soft sound of amused laughter. He thought of a million kisses and touches, some gentle and some rough, but always feeling right.

‘Are you a business man?’

‘Something like that.’

Draco Malfoy was a lot of things, but he wasn’t… no, he wasn’t a killer.

Gilderoy Lockhart had gone missing on Thursday evening when Draco was celebrating his twenty-eighth birthday. With Harry. They’d woken up together, for the first time ever, in the massive bed that smelled like his boss and fresh linen...

He couldn’t possibly be responsible.

END OF ARC TWO

Chapter End Notes

RIP Lockhart, you crazy-ass bastard.

Told you it'd be a short one! And super bland to boot, so, I'm sorry about that. It also reads a little choppy, but it's suppose to be that way. Poor Harry's brain is all over the place.
Next chapter...definitely won't be so bland. Hope to see you lovely readers for the third installment of this little ditty. (:}
One Month Later…

“Are condoms a thing we just don’t do anymore?” Harry asked Draco quietly.

It had been a question that had been pressing in his mind for a month now. Since that first time on the older man’s birthday, condoms had become an optional thing. If they were hooking up at Draco’s flat, they never used one. Before work was different; condoms meant for easy clean up so that Harry could get through his shift. After work, Draco usually went in raw.

He never asked the blonde to put one on, either. He knew if he did request one, Draco would have instantly. Still, he had to know...

Draco’s hand stilled from its trajectory down Harry’s back, the cloth he held was soft and soapy against his wet skin. He shifted in the tub slightly behind Harry.

“I know we’re both clean,” Harry continued, matter-of-fact. He purposefully did not look back at the man who’s legs he was nestled between. “But, I mean, who else…” he swallowed with some difficulty. Just ask, just ask, he mentally urged himself. Why was this such a hard topic for him to discuss?

His subconscious niggled at him in the back of his mind, suggesting that maybe Harry, on some level, feared what the answer may be. He didn't hasten to agree with it, because his subconscious was an obnoxious know-it-all, and he didn't want to give it the satisfaction. He'd learnt years ago, however, that it was better to be safe than sorry.

Draco leaned forward and pressed a button on the side of the tub to turn off the pulsating jets and the low hum that went with them. The room was filled with silence then, and Harry’s heart sped up because of it. “Are you trying to ask me if I’m sleeping with anyone else?” he asked smoothly. He draped the washrag over the edge of the tub and guided Harry gently back against his chest, into his arms.

Harry’s eyes fluttered closed at the press of their bodies. His arse was soothed in the warmth of the
water from their rendezvous in the bedroom. His boss’s own wet body was solid and comfortable beneath his, that prick, though sated, was still long and thick against Harry’s lower back.

Harry rested his head on Draco’s shoulder but still turned his head to the side, so he didn’t have to meet his eyes. For some reason, bathing together after sex seemed more intimate than the act itself. He didn’t know what to make of that.

But...he didn’t hate it. At all.

Harry didn’t know what to make of that, either.

“Er...yeah?” he mumbled.

“I wouldn’t shag you without a condom, if I was sleeping with anyone else. I’m not like that,” Draco said firmly. There was an edge to his voice that made Harry feel guilty.

“I’m sorry,” Harry told him and the other man sighed, the motion of his chest moved Harry along with it.

“No need to apologize. I understand.”

“So, I’m the...”

“Only one? Yes. You are.”

“Oh. So—so are you.”

Draco gave a little huff of laughter that blew against his neck.

“No kidding,” he deadpanned.

Harry scowled and finally tilted his head to look at him. The man’s hair was still dry but the white-blonde locks were tousled more than usual and fell into his eyes. He still managed to look composed as ever, even when naked and wet and in the bathtub.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Harry shot at him, “I could have a guy on the side, for all you know!”

Draco smirked at him and he looked so smug Harry was tempted to ‘accidentally’ squash the man’s testicles beneath him.

“Hmm,” Draco hummed his skepticism. Harry bristled and sat up, physically twisting his body with some difficulty through the water, to straddle the man underneath him. He braced his hands on the tops of Draco’s wet shoulders.

The lights were dim and a few candles were lit on the counter, their flickering glow doubling with their reflection in the mirror. There was soft music coming from somewhere Harry couldn’t see, a classically orchestrated trill of sound floating in the room.

“You know what? There is another man. Real good-looking, too,” he told him wryly.

“Is there, now?” Draco feigned curiosity, running his hands lightly up and down Harry’s thighs that were only halfway submerged in the bath. “Is he better looking than myself?”

Harry pretended to ponder the question. “Eh, I’d say you two are pretty neck and neck,” he said finally. One of Draco’s arms wound around his back and the man rolled them over suddenly,
sloshing water over the side of the big tub from the force of it.

He didn’t seem to notice or care.

“Does he fuck you like I do?” the older man purred. Harry’s breathing hitched, and he opened his legs up so the man could settle between them. They were both too slippery, so Harry was unable to enfold his legs around Draco’s waist. Instead, he hooked them loosely against the backs of firm thighs as Draco grinded their groins together.

Harry moaned softly as his body reawakened under the other’s administration. He laced his fingers behind Draco’s fair, sinewy neck and brought the man in for a bruising kiss. “No one’s ever fucked me like you do,” he whispered hotly against Malfoy’s mouth.

Harry climbed each stair with a small wince of discomfort. Multiple rounds of sex he was now accustomed to, but doing it in a tub, as it turned out, took a lot more strength and dexterity than Harry was prepared for.

That wasn’t to say he hadn’t had a damn good time.

Tempted as he was to take Draco up on his offer to stay the night, Harry ultimately declined. He had wanted to stop at the market on his way home, to grab the few groceries he’d been putting off, because he’d been spending more and more of his free time away from home.

He shifted the bags he carried into one hand, his pointer finger adeptly holding onto the half-gallon of milk by itself. He fumbled for his door key and jammed it into the lock. The knob twisted easier than it should’ve, as if Harry had left it unlocked. With a puzzled frown, he shoved open the door, the bags getting too heavy to be on a single arm for any longer.

He dropped them as soon as he walked into his flat.

It was like a tornado had blasted through his small apartment. Every cupboard was open, every piece of furniture upturned, each book he owned strewn on the floor in a mountain of paperback and tattered pages.

Plates, mugs, pots, pans, silverware, drinking glasses, all pulled from their designated cupboard. Most hadn’t survived the fall and were left shattered on the floor of his kitchen in hundreds of jagged pieces.

Harry’s knees felt weak where he stood; beads of sweat gathered at the base of his spine out of sheer anxiety as Harry’s eyes caught red along the dingy beige-color of his carpeting. He followed the trail of it to the wall.

Written across the one wall in that same deep red, was a message.

WHERE IS THE MAP?

Harry took a few steps closer to the wall.

Blood, Harry realized in horror: the words were written in blood. Harry staggered backward, foot slipping on a paperback book behind him, and he slid to the floor. He landed hard on his bum.
“Hedwig?” he called out, his voice shaking and tears welled up in his eyes as he traced the blood to the corner, behind the inverted futon and saw the familiar white ball of fur partially hidden behind it.

Stained.

With red.

Harry let out a strangled scream as he crawled over to her and pushed the furniture out of his way to get to the feline.

Hedwig laid there, dead on the ground, eyes closed and belly—belly cut open in one long slit—

Harry surged back, turned. His stomach lurched, heaving forcefully as he threw up bile mixed with the glass of champagne he had when he’d been with his boss. When his stomach stopped contracting, Harry dropped down beside the mess.

Tears flooded from his eyes as he swiveled his head back to where his beloved cat lay. From this angle, only her whiskered little face was visible, and for a moment she could’ve simply been sleeping.

More wetness dripped down his face as he stared at her, specks of water on his glasses like a rainfall.

“Hedwig,” he gasped out between shuddering sobs, “I’m so sorry, my sweet girl…I’m so sorry!” He choked again, on the phlegm built up in his throat and he turned away again, to gaze up at the message on the wall.

**WHERE IS THE**

**MAP?**

“‘Where is the map?’” Harry read aloud, his voice thick and nose running. “What map? What map?! Who would...why...?”

Harry rolled over onto his front and crawled to the door. He used the doorknob to pull himself up and then he slammed his door shut, concealing the destruction within, and bolted from the building like there were hellhounds on his heels.

As he ran, Harry retrieved his phone from his pocket along the way and pulled up Draco’s name from his contact list with a shaking thumb.

*Ring.*

*Ring.*

*Ring.*

*Ring.*

“Miss me already, did you?” came the familiar, arrogant drawl and then there was a pause before Draco’s voice grew wearier. “Harry? What’s wrong?”

“Hedwig!” he managed, panting for breath, trying to reign in the sobs threatening to wrack through his body. It was no easy task to do either as he jogged down the street. He received a few strange looks from passerbys and Harry knew he must’ve looked mental.
Several blocks away, Harry finally slowed his pace down because he couldn’t get air into his lungs anymore and he didn't quite know where he was going, anyway.

“What about Hedwig?”

“Dead! She’s dead,” Harry groaned into the phone as he slipped next to a dumpster outside a hair salon and crouched down beside it. He rested his sweaty forehead onto the brick building.

“What happened to her?” wondered the soft voice on the other end.

“Someone broke into my flat—”

“Pardon me?”

“Someone broke into my home,” Harry snarled into the phone. His free hand came out and punched the dumpster, the metal banging ricocheting loudly in the alleyway. Harry swore sharply as pain shot up his arm. “And m-murdered my cat—fuck,” he groaned again, dissolving once more into horrified tears.

Keeping the phone against his ear, Harry turned the speaker away from his mouth to muffle his crying into the crook of his elbow. He didn't want the older man to hear him break down.

“Harry. Harry, where are you?” Draco’s concern was apparent through the phone, and urgent.

Harry cleared his throat and inhaled shakily before pulling his arm away and mumbled feebly, “Next to a dumpster outside Madam Rosmerta’s Hair Salon. It’s down the street from—from—”

“I’ve got your location. Stay on the line and don’t move. I’m having the car pick you up. Zabini is less than five minutes from you.”

Harry nodded his head weakly, even though Malfoy wasn’t there to see it.

“Harry.”

“I’m still here,” Harry whispered into the phone.

“When Zabini comes, I want you to get in the car and let him bring you to me. Do not get in the car with anyone else but Blaise, do you understand?”

Harry shook his head desperately, “Who else would be coming to get me—”

“Do you understand me, Harry?” Draco’s voice repeated severely, and goosebumps ignited along Harry’s flesh from the other man’s tone.

He swallowed again. “Yeah. Yes, I understand,” he answered quietly, bracing himself heavily against the wall.

“Good boy. Zabini’s just arrived outside the salon. He is coming to you right now, okay?”

“Yes,” Harry repeated. For the first time since he’d first met Zabini, he was genuinely relieved to see his face. He appeared around the side of the dumpster.

Harry looked up at the dark-skinned man from his spot on the dirty ground. Zabini held out his hand and Harry took it obediently, allowing himself to be pulled to his feet.

Zabini’s hand then drew away to rest on Harry’s shoulder instead. He steered him out of the alley
briskly. Harry was grateful for his steadier presence; everything else seemed to be quaking and spinning around him. Opening the car door with his free hand, the tall man guided Harry into the back seat with the other and shut him in.

He let out a breath he hadn’t realized he was holding. Another few seconds later, and Zabini had the car moving. Harry gripped the seat cushion with a trembling hand to steady himself.

“I’ll see you soon, Harry. I just want you to focus on your breathing.” Harry jumped slightly as he realized his boss’s voice was no longer coming from the iPhone, but from the speakers in the car. The partition between the seats was lowered so he could see Zabini in front. “What else can you tell me? Was anything taken?”

Harry shook his head, feeling faint and he had to forcibly shove the images of Hedwig’s mutilated body from his mind. He didn’t want to think of her, like that. He couldn’t.

What kind of monster slaughtered people's pets? What sick, twisted, piece of shit...

“Not that I saw,” he replied. His speech sounded scratchy and strained, from vomiting and crying. “There was a me-message though, on the wall. Written in her—in her blood.”

Zabini’s eyes snapped up in the review mirror. There was a flicker of surprise in dark brown as he stared at Harry's reflection behind him. He averted his gaze quickly, returning his attention to the road, stony-faced.

“…What did it say, Harry?”

“It said…” he dug the heel of his hand into one of his burning eyes. “It said, ‘Where is the map?’ I don’t—I don’t think I even own a fucking map! I don’t understand this! Why, why would someone —”

“Breathe, Harry. I am almost to you. Just breathe for me.”

…

“Is there anything you need from your apartment?” Draco murmured to him softly. Harry laid on his side, his body taking up the length of the back seat of the second BMW. His head was pillowed in Draco’s lap.

They were in a parking garage in an area of the city he couldn’t remember ever being, but Harry couldn’t bring himself to question where exactly they were. Nott was at the wheel of this one, but the partition between the seats was in place and for that, Harry was glad. He looked a right mess and probably smelled like puke.

Typically, he loathed anyone seeing him like this, let alone the man he’d been sleeping with and the two statues that worked for him. He preferred to suffer in silence or in solitude.

Yet, despite it all, despite years of independence and handling his business on his own, the first thing Harry did when he left his flat, was call Draco Malfoy.

He'd done the same, right after being attacked by Lockhart in June.

He hadn't even given it a second thought. What was happening to him?

“I never put away my groceries.” Harry mumbled, eyes staring blankly at the black seats in front of them. “The milk is going to spoil.” Draco carded his fingers through Harry's thick hair with gentle
“I meant in terms of personal belongings, Harry. Is there anything there that you want or need? Things that cannot be replaced?”

“…I have my guitar there,” Harry rasped eventually, “and…there’s a—a stuffed animal. A stag. It’s kind of stupid, but it’s all I have left from my parents.”

Draco’s other hand settled on his waist comfortably. “That is not stupid,” the blonde reassured him. “Anything else?”

Harry could feel more tears pressing firmly against the backs of his eyes as he breathed out one last, broken plea, “Hedwig.”

Draco let out a disgusted noise as he swiped his finger through each of the pictures Zabini had sent him. Harry’s tiny studio had been completely ransacked.

His belongings were thrown about, most of them broken. Hedwig’s mutilated body was left for the young man to find, and the message clear as day on the wall in her blood.

Draco had never been overly fond of animals. He hadn’t been permitted to have them growing up, and overtime he generally regarded them with indifference.

That didn’t mean that Hedwig deserved her fate, nor did Harry deserve to discover a pet he so obviously loved, sliced open and used as a source of finger-paint.

It was a familiar practice.

Draco’s drummed his fingers on the desk because he could barely conceal his agitation at this point. He dialed a number into his phone and waited for it to ring.

Harry had passed out in Draco’s bed, from pure exhaustion, most likely. His slumbering gave Draco the opportunity to sneak away to his office and he wasted no time shutting himself in it.

Ring.

Ring.

“Draco.”

“What are you not telling me, Father?” Draco snapped.

“I beg your pardon?” Lucius Malfoy replied sternly. Draco bit back the urge to growl into the phone as he leaned back in his desk chair. His hand formed a fist where it sat on the desk.

“Harry returned home to find his flat broken into. His cat was slaughtered,” Draco forced his tone into one of calmness. Lucius remained quiet on the other end. “There was a message left for him on the wall, written in the animal’s blood. It said, and I quote, ‘where is the map?’”

He heard his father draw in a slow breath.

“Where is the boy, now?”

“With me, of course,” Draco said coolly.
“Good. Keep eyes on him at all times, Draco. Do not let him stray.”

“Father.”

“…Yes?”

“Mind telling me what the hell someone like Tom Riddle, wants with a twenty-one-year-old kid from London?”

Chapter End Notes

Show of hands. Who hates me?

I'm just going to go and...make myself scarce...

Arc 3 is darker, folks. Not always! ...but it's definitely got some darker themes in it, so, just beware.

xx
One week later...

“Smells good.”

“I saw you stirring in there,” Harry said, glancing over his shoulder quickly before turning his attention back to the griddle. “I figured you’d be up soon.”

Draco smirked as he sat down at the dining table, already dressed and groomed impeccably. He couldn’t have been up for more than thirty minutes. Harry suppressed a snort; why the blonde didn’t just stumble out and eat breakfast in boxers and an old shirt was beyond him.

“Do you make it a habit of sneaking in to my room and watching me sleep?”

Harry set a cup of coffee down in front of him grumpily. “No. I just peeked in to see if you were awake. Don’t flatter yourself. Sir.” Draco’s hand shot out to grab Harry by the arm before he could walk away.

“You wouldn’t have to ‘peek in’ if you’d just sleep in my bed.”

“No.” Harry mumbled, pulling half-heartedly at his arm.

“Why not? You’ve slept in my bed before. It is quite nice, no?”

“Because,” Harry began, glaring down at the blonde man, though he stopped fighting his hold, “this is only a temporary situation. Soon I’ll find a new place and be out of your hair. Plus, sleeping in your bed is something a—” his voice cracked pathetically as he choked on his words. He cleared his throat and averted his eyes. Draco gazed up at him, his grip still loosely wrapped around his forearm

“Something a...?” he pressed. Harry bit his lip hard and made to move again, but Malfoy tugged him back, set aside his cup of coffee and urged Harry’s hips back so he was sitting on the edge of the table. “Say it, Harry.”

“Something a lover would do,” Harry bit out. His ears flushed.

“Pity. I was hoping you were going to say wife.”
Harry shoved the older man hard in the chest. “That’s not funny.”

Draco’s didn’t laugh but his eyes shined with mirth as he squeezed Harry’s thighs. “All right, not a wife. With that hair, you’d make a ghastly woman, anyway. Lover, then.” He pursed his lips and then reached beside Harry for his coffee and lifted it to his lips for a sip. “Would being my lover be such a terrible fate?”

Harry glanced at the cup in Draco’s hand. “You take your coffee black.”

“Is that a deal breaker?”

“You prefer savory food over sweet.”


“You wear a suit every single day.”

“So, having a sophisticated sense of style is a crime?”

Harry’s jaw twitched as he clenched his teeth briefly. “Don’t you think we’re too different?”

Draco sat back in his seat and looked up at Harry. “Why do you think you are here, Potter?”

“…Because…” Harry’s nostrils flared slightly, a treacherous lump manifesting in his throat.

“Someone broke into my home and k-ki—”

“…Because…” Harry’s nostrils flared slightly, a treacherous lump manifesting in his throat.

“…Because…”

“…And I wanted to protect myself.”

“Because I want you to be here.” He extended his arms and tugged Harry off the table and into his lap, where he landed haphazardly.

Their faces were closer now, and Harry shivered slightly at the heat between them. He could count every single one of Draco’s pale lashes, see every part of grey in his corneas, and from this proximity there could’ve been a faint spackle of baby-blue intermixed with gunmetal that Harry hadn’t noticed before. His own green eyes flickered down to Draco’s mouth, light pink and nicely shaped and Harry knew if he pressed his own lips against them, they’d be soft and warm and skillful.

“Oh,” Harry replied unintelligibly.

“Oh,” Malfoy repeated dryly. “Just to clarify a few things lover; you add an unnecessary amount of sugar and milk in your coffee—so much so, that you can hardly even deem it coffee, anymore. You have a huge sweet tooth but you function better with balanced meals, despite what you say. You’d wear jeans and T-shirts every day if you could, along with that frightening denim jacket of yours with all the patchwork.”

“I like my jacket,” Harry defended tersely, “and my jeans, and my T-shirts. And my fucking sugar, thank you very much.”

Malfoy cocked his head to the side and regarded Harry in his lap silently for a moment before he stood up abruptly, and Harry found himself upside down. The blood rushed to his head and the world became temporarily disoriented. Malfoy had an arm trapping the back of his thighs so he didn’t drop him on his head, but Harry still sputtered in alarm and grabbed onto Malfoy’s jacket in tight fists.

“What the hell are you doing?”
“I want to show you something.”

“What? That you do a great impersonation of King Kong? Brilliant. Now put me down!” He didn’t
know whether to yell at the other man or moan, when a hand came up and swatted his arse but he
didn’t have time to decide as he was tossed onto his boss’s bed. Harry scrambled back as Malfoy
loosened his tie. Harry licked his dry lips. “What are you going to show me then? Because I’ve
already seen what you’re packing—”

“I’m proving a point, Harry,” Draco purred, crawling onto the big bed. He reached over and hooked
his fingers into the waistband of Harry’s grey sweatpants. He dragged them down his hips, taking his
briefs with them, and threw both on the floor. “See?”

Harry growled and reached down to cover his half-hardened prick with cupped hands. “See what?”
he yelped as the blonde man pulled his hands away, pinning them to his sides and then Draco’s
mouth descended on him slickly. Harry let out a choked cry and stopped squirming. He let his legs
fall open.

They’d never given each other head before, and shit, if he wasn’t fully hard before, the second his
boss’s mouth closed around him, he became hard as steel.

One of Draco’s hands freed his own, in favor of steadying his cock as his head bobbed along
Harry’s length. Harry’s stomach muscles quivered as Draco worked him, tongue agile and proficient.
He didn’t seem to have much of a gag reflex, Harry noted, when his hips jerked up on his own
accord. He was, however, rewarded with another slap to his hip for the involuntary action. He
whimpered into the crook of his elbow as his eyes rolled back feverishly because a swat to his arse
was hardly a deterrent for him.

Suddenly, Draco pulled off him, exposing wetness around his prick to the cool air and Harry’s back
arched, trying to seek out that wicked mouth once more.

“Do you see, now?” Malfoy whispered, surging up his body to lick the seam of Harry’s mouth. He
tasted a bit salty from precum and a bit like the coffee he’d been sipping minutes before.

Harry growled low in his throat, cock hard and straining for lost attention. He humped
against Draco’s leg in frustration.

“See what?” he snapped. Malfoy brought a hand up to Harry’s chin and turned it gently to the side.
Harry looked at the room, massive and pristine but lacking in many personal items that made a
bedroom feel like a bedroom.

Draco Malfoy didn’t seem like the sentimental type, as it were.

“The closet doors? The mirror on them is a bit much, but I expected that from the likes of you—”

“—Do you see,” Malfoy interjected, aghast, but his lecherous smile was back in place. He rubbed a
toned quad against Harry’s erection teasingly. “How much better, your clothing looks on the floor of
my bedroom? Better than on the floor of the guestroom, I imagine,” he added nonchalantly and then
he moved back down, seized Harry by the thighs and set his mouth back to task.

“Oh god,” Harry groaned as a saliva-slicked finger breached him unexpectedly. His head dropped
back onto the pillow.

His toes curled into the mattress.
“You’re really bloody manipulative, you know that, right?” Harry grumbled, rolling over to rest his cheek on one of Draco’s pillows. His body felt utterly wrung out by the time Draco finished proving his point; the blonde had made certain to drill said point into Harry, repeatedly and thoroughly.

“You don’t do what I do without becoming adept in the art of persuasion,” Draco stated around the cigarette between his lips. He was sitting up, back braced against the headboard. He was scrolling through his iPad lazily. It was now nearly eleven and Harry had to be at the pub by noon; he had to get up soon if he didn’t want to be late.

“I’ve got to get ready for work,” he said absentmindedly.

Draco swiped his finger left before glancing down at Harry.

“Go shower and get dressed. I have a meeting at one o’clock. I can drop you off beforehand.”

“What about you?” Harry asked, gingerly sitting up and crawling to the edge of the bed. He suppressed a yawn as he stretched his stiff body.

“I showered prior to breakfast and I barely broke a sweat just now.”

“Is that why you made me get on top?” Harry asked drily.

“Precisely. Clever one, aren’t I?” Draco teased, but his eyes darted back and forth as he read something on the screen of his tablet. Harry threw a pillow at him but the man barely blinked. His arm came up and blocked it. “Go shower. Your arse is leaking on the duvet.” Harry reddened and flew into the bathroom cursing.

…”

“Did they nick anything, then?”

Harry shook his head somberly. “No, nothing was taken.”

“Blimey, Harry. But Hedwig? She hasn’t come home?” Harry’s lip quivered slightly but he quickly pressed his lips together and glanced away, putting some beer glasses below the counter as Ron swiveled from side to side on the barstool like a kid.

“No,” he lied feebly, reluctant to straighten up and meet Ron’s eyes. “I’m hoping she’ll turn up. I have Mrs. Figg keeping an eye open for me next door while I spend some time away.”

“With Damien,” Ron clarified. He rested his chin in the heel of his other hand as he stared at Harry. “Who I’ve yet to meet.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know. Soon. And I’ll be fine, alright? I just don’t feel very safe there after the break-in and Damien offered me a place to stay for a few days.”

“Reckon what you’ll be getting up to, eh?” Ron waggled his eyebrows at him suggestively and then his face grew serious once more. “What kind of sad sap goes through all the hassle of breaking into someone’s home but doesn’t end up stealing a thing?”

“To be fair, they probably thought I’d own something of value.” Harry shrugged with a forced chuckle.

“Right! You don’t even own a telly. No offense,” the redhead added, “but you’re the last bloke I’d ever want to rob. If I did that sort of thing, I mean. Joke’s on them, I suppose.”
Harry handed the man on the opposite end of the bar the ale he'd ordered.

“I really do hope Hedwig turns up for you, Harry,” he said after Harry returned from the register. “But at least no one was hurt, yeah?”

Harry smiled and nodded his head. He suppressed the building urge he had to throw up.

...  

A few days later…

Harry took off the rubber gloves and threw them into the bin. “No one should have a bloody home this big,” he muttered to himself, standing on the tips of his toes to replace the spray bottle of cleaner on the shelf of the closet that housed the cleaning supplies. Even the mean’s cleaning products seemed snobby and overpriced. “Especially for one person, don’t you think, Hed—” the name died on his lips before he could finish it. He clenched his fists at his side, took a deep breath, and did what he’d been doing for the past week; he shook it off. He pushed back the tears that threatened to spill over every time he recalled his lost pet.

He was just so used to talking to her. Obviously, she couldn’t talk back (though, he was never certain if someone told his old neighbor, Arabella Figg, that), yet, somehow Harry was convinced that Hedwig had understood him better than anyone.

“That’s the beauty of pets, Harry,” she’d told him once as he helped her carry in her groceries, “if you treat them right, they love their owners unconditionally. You don’t get that kind of loyalty from people these days…”

Resident ‘crazy cat lady’ or not, the woman had been right about that. Hedwig might’ve been persnickety and indifferent but she had still been loyal to Harry, and affectionate (when the mood struck her). More than anything, he wanted to find the person who did this to her. Over a fucking map that he didn’t own.

Harry came to the conclusion that the trespasser no doubt had the wrong person. He figured that they had mistaken his apartment as one that belonged to someone else. Stan Shunpike down the hall, Harry knew, had a terrible gambling problem. Perhaps, he’d gotten involved with the wrong sort.

Not that it made any difference.

A sick bastard was a sick bastard, and he or she or they, killed his cat in order to send a message.

He grabbed a dusting rag and returned to the Master bedroom; the place Harry had decided to save for last, because he still went into the room feeling like an intruder.

Swallowing, Harry began dusting the nooks and crannies of Draco’s room. The shelves were adorned with random items, mostly—knickknacks that served no purpose aside from decoration. Harry finished the shelves and moved onto the headboard made from a sleek, dark wood. At a closer look, Harry could see his own fingerprints smeared on the varnish. Blushing, Harry wiped them away quickly.

The top of the frame had another partial handprint, a bit larger than Harry’s, fingers longer, and his mind drifted back to the other day, when Harry’s legs had been over Draco’s shoulders, and the other man had must’ve seized onto the headboard for leverage—

Okay, that had to go, too.
He spent several minutes wiping along every groove in the wood, fervently trying to rid the room of evidence of debauchery. He had to admit, the thought of Draco never failed to make him flustered.

*Click.*

Harry jumped as he felt the wood give way beneath the dust rag. For a second, Harry didn’t pull back, like a soldier who feared he’d stepped on a landmine and didn’t dare to move a muscle. Then, finally, he did.

As soon as the pressure from his hand was removed there was another *click* as the wood moved back into place, like it hadn’t just indented beneath Harry’s hand. Harry, stood with one knee on the bed and the other on the floor, eyeing precariously at the headboard and he feared he might have activated a silent alarm of sorts.

Then, the bookshelf that took up half the far wall, *moved.*

Smoothly, but briskly, the shelving unit shifted forward a few centimeters, before sliding along the wall to the left. Harry watched, with bated breath, as the wall opened to reveal another room behind it.

“You’ve got to be kidding me…” Harry murmured in breathless disbelief. His pulse sped up, and a part of him wanted to press the button, seal the room, and pretend he’d never discovered this hidden place in Draco’s bedroom. The other part (consequently much louder), urged Harry off the bed and cautiously over to the displaced shelf.

He slowly peered inside.

The room lit up and Harry reeled back, landing hard on his bum.

From where he fell, Harry could see the room appeared empty of any people. The light must have been on a motion sensor that triggered as he neared. Harry rolled around onto his hands and knees. He crawled forward, like he was less likely to be spotted by some invisible entity if he remained low to the ground.

The room was relatively large considering it’s cloaked existence; the set up not unlike his own flat. It had a small kitchenette and a seating area with a couple of long, black leather sofas. They had the same luxurious throw blankets and pillows found in the living room.

The room was eerily sterile, like it wasn’t often visited. Mounted in front of the couches were a series of flat monitors. None were on. There were two other doors. One was partially opened to reveal a bathroom. The other was probably a closet, he assumed. He decided not to open it.

In comparison to the rest of the penthouse, however, it was a bit lacklustre—until Harry’s eyes located the massive glass casing embedded on the wall opposite the monitors.

Of *guns.*

His arms erupted into goosebumps as Harry stared at them, dozens of them. Pistols, revolvers, rifles, even a godforsaken *machine gun.* Harry slowly climbed to his feet, not taking his eyes off them in case they magically started firing at him. The sight of so many, displayed on the wall, made Harry wary.

He shook his head. Some people *collected* guns. That wasn’t exactly a crime. They were on display, not…pointed at anyone. They likely weren’t even loaded. Harry exhaled calmly.
"You do realize I am alerted whenever someone accesses this room, right?"

Harry spun around, his previous attempts to steady his breath fleeing him entirely. Draco was leaning casually in the entryway, arms crossed over his chest as he regarded Harry with an arched eyebrow. He didn’t look angry, either. Instead, he wore an expression of mild amusement.

"I—I’m sorry," Harry apologized, eyes wide. "I wasn’t trying to snoop. I was just cleaning the headboard and—"

Draco pushed off the wall and entered the room coolly. "Relax. Though, I suppose if there was ever a place to panic, here would be most logical." Harry stared at him blankly, prompting the blonde to elaborate, "This is a panic room. Luckily, I’ve never had to utilize it for such a purpose, but if you ever feel like you need to, it is here. Just…do try not to press any buttons in here, okay? Except the green one on the panel here." He pointed to the keypad beside the entrance. "It will seal the room from the inside. Press that one, and no one from the outside can get in without the override code which only I possess."

"Why…do you need a room like this?" Harry asked quietly.

"Panic rooms aren’t as uncommon as you might think, Harry," Draco responded smoothly. "Malfoy Incorporated is a predominant—" he paused and cleared his throat. "Whenever someone is in a position of power, there are always others who wish to refute that influence. We are not…without enemies."

"You said I’d be safe here, before," Harry reminded, looking around the room nervously.

"And you are. Much safer here, than you would be anywhere else in London. Sometimes, however, we must err on the side of caution."

"Makes sense, I suppose." Harry admitted eventually, tilting his head up to look at Draco fully. "Quite frankly, I thought these kinds of rooms only existed in film. And maybe amongst world leaders and royalty. You’re not going to tell me you’re the princess of some far away land, next, are you?" Harry quipped.

"Princess?" Draco scoffed, unimpressed. "Do I look like a princess to you?"

Harry grinned. "With the way you groom, you might very well be. I’ve seen the inside of your bathroom cabinets, you know. Anyone who spends fifty quid on a bottle of shampoo—"

"Careful now, Mister Potter," Draco warned, but the small quirk of his lips told Harry he was amused. "You’d do well to mind your cheek." Harry jutted his chin out and crossed his arms mockingly.

"Or what, Mister Malfoy?" he inquired innocently. Warmth bloomed in his belly from their bantering and from the general desire he always had these days, for the other man.

Draco’s eyes darkened slightly, his pupils dilating as he gazed at Harry. "Or, I may just have to punish you."

The heat burned. Harry licked his lips unconsciously.

"And what," he asked, his voice rough, "would that entail?" He shifted slightly where he stood, trying not to seem like he was too affected by the suggestive air between them.

Wordlessly, Draco’s gaze wandered somewhere over Harry’s shoulder briefly and then he smiled,
reached out and tugged Harry to him. Harry’s brows shot into his hairline as Draco kissed him soundly. Then, he released Harry and walked out of the room. Harry gaped for a moment at the blonde’s back before following him back into the bedroom. The shelving unit slid back into place behind him.

“That’s it?” Harry asked. Strangely enough, he found himself disappointed by Draco’s sudden lack of interest in their little game. Draco stopped short of the bedroom door and then, when he turned to face Harry, he was smirking the same teasing smirk.

“Would you rather me have taken a different approach?”

“Well,” Harry said, cheeks pinking as he spoke, “I hardly would count being snogged as a ‘punishment…”

Draco was close to him again, pulling him flush against his body. A hand wound itself around Harry’s back, resting beneath his shirt comfortably. It felt warm on his skin. The other, drifted down to cup Harry’s jean-covered bottom. “Well, what would you suggest?” he asked lightly, like he was asking Harry what they should have for dinner and not…this.

Harry inhaled shakily as Draco’s hand squeezed his arse encouragingly. Harry’s cock was hard in his trousers and from the feel of it, so was his boss’s. Their faces were close; they were breathing the same scorching air. Harry pressed back into the hand on his rear.

“Do it,” he rasped out. Draco gave the smallest of grins, pleased. He didn’t push Harry away from him, but instead the hand on his butt pulled away a bit and—

Whap.

Harry’s breathing hitched as a thrill of excitement spiked from the action. He jerked forward against his lover, burying his forehead into the man’s shirt. Draco’s hand rested where it landed, a lingering reminder, waiting.

“…Again?” Harry asked faintly. His cheeks were scarlet and he was effectively mortified by what he wanted but—

Another smack.

Slightly harder.

Harry gave a strangled moan into Draco’s chest, too ashamed to meet the man’s eyes because he couldn’t fathom what compelled to ask for this. It had started as a joke, playful, flirty bantering. Yet, despite it all, Harry’s body secretly craved it. He was hot all over, sweat blossoming beneath the palm splayed on his back and the palm on his arse, as blood pooled south.

His head felt rather foggy, heady with desire.

“You like that,” Draco acknowledged finally, his voice a liquid and sultry whisper against his ear, “I’m glad.” He guided Harry’s trembling body backwards in careful steps until the backs of his knees met the bed. He pushed him down on top of it.
I'm back! Is anyone still here after that last chapter? I AM SO SORRY, OKAY?

Quick note: this chapter really should've been twice as lengthy as it is, but I haven't had much time this week to write it all out and I feel bad when I make you guys wait long for an update. That's also why it's not very plot-heavy. The next chapter will pick up immediately after this one. :)
ARC THREE: The Heat Between Us (Part II)

Chapter Summary

Sometimes the heat is good.
...Sometimes, it isn't.

Chapter Notes

Any mistakes are my own, as usual. This chapter gave me some trouble, but I hope you all...like it?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

With one hand, Draco held Harry’s wrists above his head, pressing them against the mattress. His body was well aroused; just talk of punishing the young man had been affecting him more strongly than he cared to admit. Harry was on his belly, waiting for Draco, letting Draco hold his hands down. Draco knew if he rolled the brunette back over, his face would have that same adorable blush that made Draco want to do wicked things to him.

He pressed his body flush against the back of Harry’s, careful to distribute his weight in a way that was comfortable for the smaller body beneath him while remaining a powerful presence at the same time. It was what he knew Harry wanted. What they both desired.

Draco hummed softly as he peppered the back of his neck with deliberate kisses. When he gave Harry’s wrists a squeeze as a firm reminder of who’s mercy he was at, Harry’s back arched underneath his. Into the bed.

He was looking for friction.

Draco nuzzled into the side of Harry’s face.

“Would you let me?” Draco requested quietly. Harry didn’t say anything, so Draco took his silence as needing further encouragement. Another kiss, right behind Harry’s ear elicited a small shiver. “I think you would let me,” he continued smoothly, his breath hot against the younger man’s cheek, “I think you want me to, Harry.”

Harry’s head finally moved to the side, freeing his muffled mouth and he took in a breath of fresher air as he tilted to face away from Draco. “What are you on about, now?”

Draco smirked darkly, though Harry couldn’t see him. Draco shifted to the other side, to meet the darkened emerald color of his lover’s eyes. “Punishing you, of course,” Draco purred, watching as Harry’s eyes fluttered closed at his words. “Your body craves it. More than just those couple of swats. That much I am certain.”

“And how can you be so certain?” the other man asked evenly, but he wasn’t protesting, which verified Draco’s inferences.
Draco kissed Harry’s cheek, and then leaned down further to kiss him on the mouth, absent of any tongue because of the angle, but lingering all the same.

Promising.

“As soon as I merely touched on the idea of punishing you, your pupils dilated slightly, your pulse increased, and you shifted your hips in a way that suggested you were in the beginning stages of an erection, but didn’t want me to notice,” Draco told him matter-of-factly. “Then, of course, as soon as my hand slapped your arse, your pupils dilated further, breathing became erratic, erection prominent, nipples peaked. Aroused.”

“What the hell?” Harry rasped out, licking his lips like he was parched.

“Basic knowledge of human biology plus excellent observational skills,” Draco clarified, tongue flicking out to caress the shell of Harry’s ear. “Let’s also not forget the fact you asked for more. You like it, Harry. Your body wants me to do it. To take you over my knee and spank you. To hold you down and claim you. It’s your mind that is having trouble accepting those proclivities even while your body responds so agreeably to me.”

Harry huffed, unimpressed.

Draco dragged his teeth along the dampened skin of the back of Harry’s shoulder, biting down gently.

“You’re—” Harry’s voice cracked slightly, “You’re really fucking annoying.”

Unabashed, Draco chuckled deeply in his throat and bit down on his nape before pulling back a hairsbreadth. “There is nothing wrong with you, you know. We all have our kinks. One of yours however, happens to play so very nicely with one of mine.” He grinned and moved his mouth back to Harry’s ear. “So, that brings me back to my original inquiry: would you let me, Harry?”

“You want to—to actually spank me?” Harry mumbled feebly.

“Off the top of my head, I can think of at least a hundred things I’d love to do to you, darling,” Draco teased, whispered words between them, and Harry’s eyes widened slightly, surprised. “But yes, right now I’d quite like nothing more than to bind your wrists with my own tie and spank that sweet arse of yours.” Draco moved his hips to grind his erection down into Harry’s boxer-brief-covered rump. “Yes, or no?”

Harry let out an exhaled breath, loudly, desperately, and his eyes screwed up for a moment. Draco knew he hadn’t read his body wrong, but getting Harry’s brain to consent was decidedly harder. The young man was conflicted, between what he wanted and what he thought was strange practice. Perverted. Taboo. So, Draco waited for an answer, his face carefully schooled into one of patience.

“Yes,” came the shy reply, breathless, mortified, but it was there and that was all Draco needed. He released Harry’s wrists and sat up, straddling his backside as he removed his tie from around his neck and reached over him to loop it around the slim wrists in a loose handcuff knot. It was silk and a pale blue that looked lovely against Harry’s skin tone and wouldn’t be too restrictive; though, undoubtedly, it would ruin the necktie for good.

This was well worth the cost to replace it.

“Yes?” Draco repeated after he tightened the knot a bit. Harry’s cheeks were flooded with red but his pupils were blown and he nodded his head, dark locks flopping into his eyes.
Draco scooted down Harry’s body, pressing open mouth kisses down his spine and hooked his fingers into his pants. He pulled them down slowly, watching as the fabric slipped away to reveal the curve of Harry’s arse. Plump, smooth, and downright enviable. He sank his teeth in the fleshiness, unable to resist the temptation. He soothed it with a lick, reveling as Harry trembled beneath Draco’s tongue.

Finally, he parted those cheeks, trailing his tongue along the valley between them. The point of Draco’s tongue located the furl of muscle there, tight but pliable beneath Draco’s manipulations.

The guttural moan Harry elicited was music to his ears, as were the breathy, wanton whimpers. He probed his tongue into the tiny hole, the wet sounds becoming increasingly obscene and louder in their bedroom. Draco removed his tongue and pressed a sucking kiss right to Harry’s quivering rim.

After a few minutes of reducing Harry to a shivering mess, he pulled away completely and rolled over to sit on the edge of the bed. Harry made a noise of discontent that had Draco smirking as he wiped his lips with the pad of a thumb.

Harry looked over his shoulder at him and then finally pushed himself up on his knees. His bound hands came up to cover his erection the best he could. Draco scoffed lightly. “Why the sudden bashfulness? You do realize where I just had my mouth, right?”

“Shut it,” Harry grumbled half-heartedly but he let himself be tugged closer to Draco, who took his arms and pulled them up to circle around his neck. Draco held him and kissed him, his tongue parting the line of Harry’s lips to delve inside, like it had his arse just a minute before. He didn’t seem to mind it, either, if the sweet sound he made was any indication. Draco’s hand slipped between their bodies to stroke Harry’s erection. It was warm and flushed, dribbling precum on Draco’s hand and he could feel a pulse beneath his loose grip.

“Don’t,” Harry warned him roughly. “I’m way too close and you, you were…” he glanced toward Draco’s lap quickly before meeting his eyes straight-on. Harry gave him a sly smile. “Unless you’re all talk?” In one motion, Draco removed Harry’s arms from their place around his neck and tipped him over his lap. Harry grunted softly in surprise as he landed across Draco’s thighs.

“You’re in no position to be cheeky, Harry,” Draco admonished. Heat was blossoming in his stomach from arousal and excitement. For months, Draco had fantasized having Harry turned over his lap just like this. Now that it was finally happening, it hardly seemed real.

Draping one arm around Harry’s slim waist, Draco dragged a finger along the crease of the arse presented to him, still somewhat slick from where his tongue toyed with the puckered flesh. He pressed in, just the tip, to the first knuckle. The muscle flexed around him immediately and Harry’s hips wriggled slightly at the intrusion.

“What—” Harry began confusedly, breaking off in a gasp as Draco pulled back out and slapped him on the rear. “Oh…” Harry rested his forehead on the duvet, arms bent at the elbows and tied hands clasped like he was in prayer. Draco could feel Harry’s cock stiff like an iron bar against his leg. The faint sting in his palm sent a thrill down Draco’s spine; so worth the wait.

He swatted the other cheek next, and then rained several more down in succession. Harry was letting out ragged breaths amidst his needy moans. Every smack to his arse propelled him into Draco’s lap. He stopped again, to give Harry a minute to steady his breathing and to gage his mindset.

“Yes?” The brunette nodded his head, his eyes shut, red lips parted, and the pink in his cheeks matched the pinking on the flesh of his rear. Draco caressed his skin, massaged it lightly, before resuming his ministrations. They weren’t overly severe; just enough of a sting to bring Harry the
shock of pain that would undoubtedly manifest itself into pleasure.

It was a gorgeous sight to bear witness to…to behold the sight of every quiver and quake of Harry’s lithe form in anticipation; to watch the muscles along Harry’s back, arse, and thighs jump and twitch with every strike. Draco wet his finger quickly before slipping back into Harry midway. Harry cried out, louder this time, and bucked his hips wildly, seeking his pending release against Draco’s legs.

“Shit, you can’t—I’m not going to last if you—”

“Come on then, Harry.” Draco urged him lowly, pleased, and Harry’s hips rocked against him, in quest of just the right amount of friction to help bring him off. “Show me how good you can be for me. Cum.” Crooking his finger, Draco found his lover’s prostate and rubbed it determinedly. Harry’s channel was beginning to contract around the single digit, Draco noted with satisfaction. He pulled it out and brought his hand down on Harry’s arse one last time.

“Oh, fuck—fuck!” One of Harry’s legs kicked out against the mattress and then his muscles went taut as he came hard over Draco’s lap, groaning and grinding his hips against his outer thigh. After a few seconds, Harry shuddered one last time and then fell limp with satiation.

Draco could feel the wetness seeping into his trousers but he gave Harry the time he needed in the afterglow before he guided him back up. Harry leaned against him and panted heavily as Draco untied his hands and set the ruined silk to the side.

“Are you alright?”

“Yeah. That was…” Harry breathed out tiredly and then he let out a short, disbelieving laugh and scrubbed his a freed hand down his face sheepishly. “…Holy fuck.”

Harry squirmed slightly and then paused, eyes glazed and wide as he lifted his head to look back at Draco. “You’re still hard,” he realized. Draco brushed off the concern with a shake of his head and captured Harry’s lips fiercely.

Before Draco could say anything however, Harry wormed his way out of his arms and sank to the ground on his knees. He fumbled with Draco’s belt and then the fastening of his trousers until Draco’s erection sprang free. He glanced up through his eyelashes as he settled between Draco’s legs and took him in one hand.

Draco licked his lips distractedly, his cock pulsing in Harry’s grasp, and fuck, he was getting much too close to his own orgasm to last long for this. “I’m kind of out of practice, but…” he trailed off with a shrug and gave a timid lick to the crown of Draco’s erection; his tongue gathered the precum that pearled at the tip and tasted him with a thoughtful expression on his face. Leaning back for more, Harry dipped his tongue in the slit playfully and then swirled it around the blunt head of his cock.

The slickness left behind with each lick felt soothing on Draco’s fevered flesh and he could feel the pressure building in his spine and his groin. His bullocks felt heavy. He uttered a gravelly curse under his breath as Harry’s mouth descended on him, lips carefully tucked over his teeth and cheeks hollowing as he sucked Draco in. The hand holding him moved in tandem with his mouth, stroking him purposefully wherever his mouth couldn’t reach without triggering his gag reflex.

Harry’s eyes stole another glance up at him, seeking reassurance that he was doing alright. Perhaps if he were critiquing as an impartial party, Draco might have said that the blowjob was a bit on the sloppy side, lacking in finesse.

He was completely unashamed in his bias, nonetheless.
It was fucking perfect.

*It was Harry.*

Draco clenched his jaw tight and threaded his fingers through the thick curls on his lover’s head. It was a firm pressure, cradling his skull but not forcing his head because while he loved the idea of ruthlessly fucking that smart mouth, right now, he just wanted to *feel* it.

To feel *Harry*.

Finally, his fingers constricted involuntarily and he tugged firmly at the dark hair. “Pull off now. I’m close,” he advised hoarsely. The heat was scorching as it spiraled in his groin and his balls drew up as Harry popped off, jerking his prick readily.

The brunette opened his mouth as Draco’s hips stuttered as he came, his tongue peeking out to catch some of his release, but most spurted in thick ropes across Harry’s face, dripping on his swollen lips and chin. He was the personification of debauchery, of sin, and the most beautiful thing Draco ever laid eyes on.

Draco didn’t quite know what to do with that discovery.

…

*Five days later…*

Harry sat on the counter, legs dangling, as he took a sip of his tea. There was a television mounted on the kitchen wall in there; evidently Chef Slughorn had an affinity for daytime soap operas while he cooked. The rotund, middle-aged man had recently started returning to work, though now only for dinner during the week. Breakfast was still in Harry’s hands and neither of them seemed to be around long enough for lunch. The maid, Doris, arrived Monday through Friday while he and Draco were at work, but Harry took over laundry duty in exchange.

Although their hours had been significantly reduced, Harry was almost certain Draco never cut their pay. The thought made Harry smile into his cup. As arrogant as his boss could be, as aloof and calculated, there was a softer side to him that Harry got to see on occasion. He shook his head suddenly, and exhaled sharply though his nose.

Harry couldn’t get used to living with Draco. Domestic life, he had to admit, was kind of nice. Waking up in Draco’s arms, he liked more than he ever thought he would, and that…that was a damning revelation. Sure, they could be ‘together’ but for how long, before Draco got bored? How long before their fundamental differences hindered their relationship? Draco was a billionaire business tycoon. A bit of a *Lothario,* as well. Harry was just…Harry.

“You’re thinking too much.”

Harry’s eyes opened in a glare at the blonde strolling behind the island counter to where Harry was perched. Draco adjusted his tie, his light eyes flickering with amusement.

“I’m not thinking about anything,” Harry stated evenly but he opened his legs to let Draco settle between them. The older man grabbed his tea cup and raised it to his own lips.

“Yes, you are. You always get this same constipated look on your face whenever you are obsessing over trivial matters,” he stated before sipping Harry’s tea. He wrinkled his nose slightly and set it aside. “Much too sweet.”
Harry bristled and crossed his arms over his chest. “Oh, gee, thanks,” he deadpanned. Draco’s lips twitched and he leaned in to capture his mouth for a thorough kiss.

“You are most welcome, darling.” Draco smirked at him as Harry flipped him off and then wound one arm around his neck to bring him in for another snog. He’d be lying through his teeth if he claimed the other man wasn’t a good kisser.

“Breakfast is on the table,” Harry murmured when they finally parted. Draco withdrew from the counter so he could hop down. He lingered for a moment as Draco situated himself at the table. Harry fixed Draco a cup of tea, handed him his iPad, and then finally sat down too, resting his chin in his hand.

“Can I ask you something?” Harry asked quietly. Draco looked up from whatever news page he’d been reading to meet Harry’s eyes.

“Can you?”

“May I—oh stop correcting me, would you?” he grumbled. “I hate it when you do that.”

“My apologies.”

Harry softened a little and sighed, “You said—you said Zabini cleaned everything in my flat, right?”

Draco frowned.

“He did.”

“…Okay.”

“Okay?”

“Yeah, that’s all I needed to know,” Harry said with a shrug of his shoulder. He took another sip of his cooling beverage.

“Harry.”

“Yeah?”

“I do not want you going back there.”

It was silent for a couple beats before Harry’s brow furrowed. “I’ll be quick about it. I… I had a shoebox there, in the bottom of my closet filled with tips from the club. I never really thought about it at the time,” his heart tightened painfully, “but I need to see if it’s still there. It’s the money I set aside for the Weasley’s.”

It was true. That day he’d been so selfishly consumed with his own losses, that he never spared a second to think of the funds he’d been saving for the Weasley’s pub. With the state his apartment had been left in, the likelihood of the money untouched was doubtful. Bile threatened to rise in his throat. Months of working overtime, months of lying to his friends—his family, could all very well have been for nothing.

The Weasley’s could still go out of business, despite Harry’s efforts.

“It’s gone.”

Harry blinked owlishly. “What’s gone?” he asked, perplexed. “The money? But you didn’t even know where to look for—”
Draco shook his head minutely. “Your flat. I ordered it to be cleared out and sent your landlord, Mister Kreacher, a notice. Why do you think I asked what was irreplaceable to you? You failed to mention a box of money you had hidden.”

Harry felt the oxygen leave his lungs like he’d been kicked in the gut. He leaned back in his chair, dumfounded. “You,” he began, his voice scratchy. “You had no right to—”

“I asked you,” the blonde repeated, his grey eyes stony, “what it was that you wanted to keep—”

Harry stood up sharply. The chair he was sitting on skidded back and fell over from the force of it. “I thought you meant for a few days away!” Harry snarled, hands clenching at his sides into fists to keep them from trembling. “You didn’t say that you were going to—! Fuck, Draco, fuck, are you serious right now? That was my home! You had no right to throw everything—everything I’ve worked years for—” Tears clouded his vision as he walked out of the dining area, to the door, unable to articulate a coherent sentence. He braced his hands on the wall as he shoved his feet into his trainers.

“How much money was in the box, Harry?”

Harry’s head jarred up at the blonde, who’d followed him to the foyer. “What?”

“How much money,” Draco repeated stoically, reaching in the interior pocket of his suit jacker to fetch his phone, “was in the box? All it takes is a few minutes to do an online transfer—”

Harry stared at him.

That was all he could do.

Stare.

His brain was whirring with a million thoughts, too many emotions to make sense of, but most predominant was his fury. He stood before the doors to the penthouse, staring at his boss, because that was what the other man was, when all was cut and dry.

They could play house, pretend to live in domestic bliss and fuck like impassioned lovers, but in the end, Draco Malfoy was his employer. His self-entitled, condescending prick of an employer.

His throat burned, the backs of his eyes burned, and the heat between them was blistering Harry with something new, something ugly, but all too blatantly real.

Finally, Harry forced himself to speak. When he did, his voice was a soft, hurt. He wished he could scream, but he couldn’t. He didn’t have the energy to.

“You don’t get it, do you?” he said, moisture prickling at his eyes angrily. “You sit here, in your big penthouse, trying to buy people off just because you think you can. That it’s your God-given right. Do you…do you think you’re better than me? Is that why you decided that everything I had was—disposable? Just because I didn’t have much? Because my flat was old, and my clothes had holes and my dishes didn’t match? Because I’m from the poor side of town?” He shook his head weakly, “I’ve spent nights sleeping on those streets, Draco. I worked my arse off for years for what I had. I had a roof over my head and I was okay. I was okay before I met you.”

Harry wiped furiously at his nose with the back of his hand. Draco gazed at him wordlessly.

“You don’t get it, do you?” he said, moisture prickling at his eyes angrily. “You sit here, in your big penthouse, trying to buy people off just because you think you can. That it’s your God-given right. Do you…do you think you’re better than me? Is that why you decided that everything I had was—disposable? Just because I didn’t have much? Because my flat was old, and my clothes had holes and my dishes didn’t match? Because I’m from the poor side of town?” He shook his head weakly, “I’ve spent nights sleeping on those streets, Draco. I worked my arse off for years for what I had. I had a roof over my head and I was okay. I was okay before I met you.”

Harry wiped furiously at his nose with the back of his hand. Draco gazed at him wordlessly.

“It’s not your fault. I know that. You can’t help the family you were born into. You didn’t choose that—but don’t you dare think I’m nothing, and that I can be bought because I’m some poor boy
from a London slum. I don’t want your money."

“…You are not to return to your flat, Harry.” Draco commanded quietly. Harry’s jaw dropped and he let out a sharp brittle laugh in response that sounded foreign and cold to his own ears.

“Fuck you, Draco Malfoy,” Harry bit out jabbing his finger in the older man’s direction furiously. The tear tracks on his face were drying, his lips felt puffy, but he was no longer crying, and for that he was grateful. “I might let you dominate me in the bedroom, but you do not get to tell me what I can and cannot do. It’s my life. You. Do. Not. Own me.”

Harry dropped his arm and swallowed the agonizing lump in his throat. He wrenched open the door to Draco—Malfoy’s flat, and slammed it shut behind him.

…

For over an hour, Harry walked the many trails in the park. Around him, people were enjoying picnic lunches, riding bicycles, strolling around hand in hand. The sun was still high in the afternoon sky, but the clouds were beginning to roll over it, obstructing its light and turning the sky dull. Soon enough, it would rain, but until then, people would stay out and enjoy the summer day while they still could.

Harry tossed a coin into one of the stone fountains before casually dipping his hand in the water to wet it. Walking away, he brushed the fresher water across his face to rid the evidence of any tears. It felt soothing on his irritated eyes.

When he reached the top of a hill, the trail forked in two different directions; one leading down towards the main pond, and one a narrower route, but scenic with its trees and bushes of flowers. It was mainly abandoned, not because it lacked in beauty, but because the humidity made people favor splashing around in the water below, instead.

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.”

Harry jumped slightly and turned his head toward the source of the voice a few scant paces behind him.

“Nott?”

The sandy-haired man’s mouth pulled at one corner in a half-smile. He wore his usual suit, ear piece, sunglasses. However, his posture was more relaxed than Harry had ever seen it and he had his hands in the pockets of his trousers.


“I know who—I love that poe—you can speak?!” Harry stated in utter disbelief.

“Of course, I can speak,” Nott said drolly.

Harry looked at him, aghast. “Five months, I’ve known you, and you’ve never once spoke. Why?”

“Zabini suggested I didn’t.”

“Why?” Harry pressed.
“To mess with your head.” Harry sputtered but Nott continued like he hadn’t just admitted to playing a *prank* on Harry—for five bloody months. *Fucking Zabini... “So, which way shall we take, then?”*

Harry grit his teeth. “I am not going with you. Tell your boss to leave me alone and to stop sending his men to come collect me! I’m not a runaway child, I’m a grown man!” Harry snapped before setting off down the path to the right.

“He cares for you, you know,” Nott called after him. He didn’t need to raise his voice; his words reached Harry and stilled him once more like a staying hand.

Harry turned. The clouds grew more prominent in the sky, but still, it did not rain. “Draco Malfoy doesn’t care about anyone but himself,” he ground out, kicking a pebble in his path. He watched as it tumbled down the sloped terrain.

“If he cared about me, truly cared, he wouldn’t have thrown everything I’ve worked for away, like it meant nothing. He wouldn’t have tried to buy my bloody favor back. I should’ve realized, the day you brought me this damned cell phone, what kind of man he was. But in the end, I accepted the thing and I started to work for him, so, in a way, I suppose I did let him buy me.” Harry looked at the iPhone he’d taken from his jeans pocket. He regarded it bitterly for a moment. Twisting away, Harry chucked it into a cluster of rose bushes.

Nott took a deliberate step forward. Harry, a step back. They stood, silently, at an impasse, like an old film with two men in a duel, waiting for the other to make the first move, and hoping like hell they’d beat them to the punch.

Turning back around suddenly, Harry took off down the hill, where the greater population was. Nott could come after him all he wanted; he couldn’t very well drag Harry kicking and screaming out of the park whilst surrounded by witnesses. The incline had his momentum building and Harry finally had to skid to a halt before he ran headfirst into someone. He smiled as he walked passed a man and a young boy attempting to fly a kite, but there was little wind for it.

Another group of kids nearby were tossing a ball around and screeching loudly.

Families dipped their toes in the pond and splashed each other.

Harry sat down on a nearby bench, next to an old woman feeding a flock of birds.

“Looks like rain, doesn’t it?” the woman said conversationally, sprinkling seed on the ground.

“It does,” Harry said, glancing over to look up the hill in what he hoped was a nonchalant manner and not paranoia. “I’m surprised it’s held out for this long.”

“He isn’t there,” the woman said. She adjusted the big hat she wore as she squinted over to where Harry had come barreling down. “That man you’re trying to get away from. He walked the other way.”

“Oh,” Harry said awkwardly, “thank you.”

“Friend of yours?”

Harry made a small noise in his throat, “Something like that, I suppose,” he settled on eventually. Somehow ‘*my lover’s bodyguard*’ didn’t quite roll of the tongue.

“Ah,” she said with a knowing smile stretching her wrinkled face, “had a bit of a domestic, did you?”
Harry stared at her, unsure how to answer her partially-accurate assumption. It just wasn’t Nott whom he’d had said domestic with.

She didn’t seem to notice his inner-turmoil, however, as she scooped the last bit of seed out of her bag and tossed it out for the birds at their feet. They hopped around eagerly, snatching up the feed with their beaks. Harry gripped the edge of the bench tightly.

“Well, can’t say I know exactly how relationships are with two men, but I do know what it’s like loving a man. It can be rough business sometimes. Well worth it, though.” She brushed of her hands and wadded folded the emptied burlap sack before placing it in her bag. Harry looked at the pair of rings on her left hand, faded with age. Somehow, that made them more beautiful.

“How long have you been married?” Harry asked her curiously.

She stood and slung her bag over her shoulder with one hand. She picked up her cane in the other and then rested both hands on the handle so steady herself.

“Oh well, let’s see now…this November would have been our sixty-third wedding anniversary. My Howie was a good man. Raised four beautiful children together.” She smiled down at Harry on the bench. “Take care of yourself, dear…and do try to head home soon before this rain gets you! Bye-bye, now,” she finished as she made her way slowly, but surely down the path.

Harry gave her an appreciative smile as he waved goodbye. The occupants in the park started to clear out as the clouds roiled overhead. He heard a small rumble of thunder. Nott was nowhere to be seen but Harry wasn’t convinced he’d left altogether, so he opted for standing as a crowd of joggers passed by and let himself disappear amongst them. He jogged at their pace until the group reached a cluster of trees, and then took off down a different path.

The park had two separate entrances, but he was closer to the back. Harry walked along, struggling to sort through his troubling thoughts, reflecting miserably on his spat with Draco Malfoy. Since it was Saturday, he didn’t have work at the pub, but come eight-thirty, he’d be due for his shift at the Salazar.

If he hadn’t already been terminated.

“This is exactly why you don’t sleep with the boss, you dolt,” he mumbled to himself self-deprecatingly. “Now you’ve gone and made a right mess of things…” Harry stopped suddenly, his ears perking at the sound of footsteps that weren’t his own. He glanced behind him slowly.

Nott, again.

He was being inconspicuous, keeping his distance, not even looking directly at Harry as he tracked him. Harry’s nostrils flared, the ire building in his gut again as he turned and trudged onward. Immediately, his eyes landed on another figure, who appeared from behind a tall oak. Goyle? No, Crabbe, Harry amended silently. His heart beat a furious tattoo as he stilled again.

They were cornering him.

The fucking nerve of Draco-bloody-Malfoy.

Harry inhaled a calming breath and walked a few steps forward. He kept his eyes ahead of him as his brain plotted out where he was. The woods weren’t particularly dense. The trail wrapped around the woods and ended at the park’s exit. Through the trees would create a direct, albeit turbulent, escape route.
Crabbe was coming closer. Nott was probably not far behind him now, but Harry dared not to look back to see. He increased the pace of his steps and swiftly *veered* to the left, down a small hill, and right into the gathering of trees. Harry had to jump over a log as he entered. Branches snagged his clothing as he ran and scraped at his bared arms. Twigs cracked beneath his feet and threatened to trip him up.

Crabbe was taller than Harry, but also much bulkier. Slower. Yet, if by some streak of luck he did manage to catch Harry, there'd be no breaking his hold on him. *Don't look back, keep moving.* Nott was taller, too, legs longer, but Harry was lithe and quick, and well-practiced in the art of evading bullies. *Zig-zag,* his instincts told him. The shortest distance between two people was a straight line. *Keep them guessing. Tire them out.*

He'd have to send Dudley a thank you note if he succeeded in giving these blokes the slip.

Harry cleared another tipped log. A branch snapped back and whipped him in the thigh. It stung but didn't make him falter; he was so close to getting out of the park. *Perhaps he should've stuck to the front entrance,* he thought dreadfully as his eyes fell upon the metal gate. He stumbled slightly as his trainer caught on an elevated root, and Harry fell against a tree.

The cracking of twigs followed him, only muffled by the harsh sounds of Harry’s labored breathing. He used the trunk of the tree as leverage, pushing off and propelling out into the clearing. Harry crossed the threshold. The street wasn’t filled with people, but cars and taxis drove by left and right, so he figured it was better than nothing.

Before he had a chance to catch his breath, a familiar black BMW pulled up, and the window to the driver’s side rolled down to reveal the scowling face of Blaise Zabini.

Harry jogged along the sidewalk as the car moved beside him slowly. “Get in!”

“Piss off!” Harry spat. Zabini’s dark eyes glanced down into the side mirror and that was all Harry needed to see, to know that Crabbe or Nott or both weren’t much further behind him. His lungs burned from over-exertion and he was sweaty and a bit dirty, but there was a petrol station just a couple blocks away. He could go there and call one of the twins for a ride. Unlike Ron, Fred and George had a car that they shared. An old *Ford Anglia,* that they bought together a few years back.

He could go and confess everything to Ron; about the job at *Salazar,* and the fact that ‘Damien’ was really *Draco Malfoy* of all people… it would feel so good to get it all off his chest…

“Potter, get your scrawny arse in this car before you hurt yourself,” Zabini snapped impatiently. Harry flipped the older man off before darting into the street. Zabini had to slam his foot on the breaks to keep from hitting him. The car came jerking to a halt. Zabini swore sharply but the bumper barely tapped Harry. Nott was drawing closer, Crabbe not far behind him.

Harry was outnumbered.

*Draco was beyond ridiculous.*

“Tell your boss to bugger off!” he growled at the lot of them.

Landing an aggravated punch to the hood of the BMW, Harry crossed over to the other side of the street. A car passed by, and then another, preventing Nott and Crabbe from following.

Raindrops were starting to fall, wetting his already sweaty skin and the clouds made the mid-afternoon seem much later. Still, he'd rather walk around in a downpour than get in that car with Zabini. Sooner or later, they'd have to give up. Draco couldn't keep his dogs on him all day and
night.

Harry had always been painstakingly stubborn.

A dark van made its way down next, slowing down beside Harry unexpectedly. Harry faltered slightly in disbelief.

*Just how many people had Draco sent to collect him? And why? Did he get off on this little display of power?*

The doors slid open swiftly and a figure wearing a peculiar white mask and a dark hood reached out and yanked Harry into the van. Harry shrieked and thrashed in attempt to dislodge the grip on him. A second body tackled him to the floor of the vehicle.

There were four of them, he counted before the van doors shut out the daylight from outside. The van sped off and Harry was jostled by the sudden change in velocity. Harry squirmed madly, trying to break away. He let out a panicked shout.

“Get off! Let me——” something damp pressed itself over Harry’s mouth to quiet him, a rag, vaguely sweet smelling. Harry felt fatigue pulling at his eyelids, his vision darkened in blurry spots until it went black altogether.

Chapter End Notes

* *closes laptop and runs away*
Chapter Summary

Harry's nightmares are often found in reality.

Chapter Notes

Warning: This chapter contains violence, non-con, and use of chemical substances.

Any mistakes are my own.

“How could you let this happen?”

Draco’s hands gripped the edge of his desk. He was too furious to sit, but didn’t trust his legs to hold him up on their own, so he braced himself against it. His eyes landed on Crabbe, Nott, and Zabini, in turn. Good soldiers that they were, the trio was standing at attention; legs shoulder-width apart, arms clasped behind them.

Chin up, shoulders back.

Looking straight ahead.

They didn’t meet Draco’s eyes. Which was a wise thing, considering his state of mind. Draco looked askance at the speaker on his desk. Not in any mood to repeat himself for a second time, Draco replied with the abridged version through gritted teeth, “I sent my men out to retrieve Harry and bring him back here. He didn’t exactly favor that idea, so he ran—”

“—I am talking about you, Draco,” Lucius Malfoy’s voice cut him off icily. “I gave you strict instructions to not let that boy out of your sight.”

Draco exhaled soundlessly, trying to maintain control over the situation the best he could. “…and I haven’t, father,” he answered firmly. “Harry has been living with me. Whenever he needs to leave, my people drive him. I’ve had a security detail monitoring both places of work. He doesn’t go anywhere unprotected—”

“Then why, pray tell, did he end up at the park?”

“He was trying to cool off—”

“From what?” Lucius snapped.

“We had a bit of an argument. That isn’t the point—”

“No, it is not. The point, Draco, is that you and three of your best men found yourselves outsmarted by one little—”
“Harry doesn’t have the map, father.” Draco interjected.

Instead of reprimanding him for his disrespect, Lucius merely countered with a frosty, “How can you be so sure?”

“He doesn’t,” Draco insisted, keeping his voice even. “Harry doesn’t even believe that the message on his wall was meant for him. He’s convinced it was a misunderstanding; that the perpetrator targeted the wrong flat.”

“What makes you think he isn’t playing you?”

“He didn’t grow up with his parents, how could he possibly—”

“Has it ever occurred to you, my son,” Lucius’s soft timbre voiced, “that perhaps you have been too blinded by your boy’s spread thighs to see yourself being manipulated by him?”

“I am not being manipulated, sir. He doesn’t have the map,” Draco asserted lowly. His knuckles were beginning to turn white from his unrelenting grip on the desk.

“I pray that you are right. Find him, Draco. Or it will be last thing the four of you will ever do.”

The line went dead, but the silence was deafening. Draco closed his eyes momentarily, gathering his chaotic thoughts and organizing them properly. There was no time to waste.

On his iPad, Draco pulled up a map of London.

“Don’t just stand there,” he muttered darkly. Crabbe, Nott, and Zabini came to life immediately. The three of them approached the desk, crowding around it. They were no less stiff. “Are you certain the van went north?”

“Positive, sir,” Zabini told him. “A black loading van. Unmarked. I contacted Harper after I lost visual of the vehicle. He has men out looking for it as we speak.”

Draco pinched the bridge of his nose. “They could have changed course at any point after that. If Riddle has any sense, he would have...then again, heading northbound would put him closer to Morsmorde’s territory. What time?”

“Two thirty-seven,” Nott spoke up.

Draco glimpsed at his watch. “Fifty-six minutes ago. Nearly one hour.” He drummed his fingers along the wood as he thought for a second. He looked at Zabini. “Narrow our search to the ground. Contact Jacobs. Get me reports of all air traffic in London within the last hour.” The dark-skinned man nodded once. His phone was already to his ear as he stepped out of Draco’s office, into the hallway.

“They couldn’t have left the city,” Draco determined aloud. He dragged his finger down the tablet to examine northern London closely. His eyes trailed along the border of the city, like he was waiting for a miniature Harry to appear on it, letting Draco know where he was. Maybe flip him off. Draco would take anything, at this point. “…Traveling somewhere around forty-eight kilometers per hour on main roads, factoring in traffic lights, increasing speed if they—anything?”

“Nothing out of the ordinary,” Zabini said fluidly upon his return. “Within the past hour, there has only been commercial flights to and from all local airports and one mercy-flight to St Mary’s.”

Draco finally eased himself down into his chair.
He withdrew Harry’s phone from his pocket and stroked the screen with his thumb. If only the younger man hadn’t cast it away in his anger. They would’ve been able to track him. Of course, it would have been discovered and discarded almost immediately, but even a minute or two more would’ve given Draco something extra to work with.

“Where are you?” he whispered under his breath.

Draco pressed the button on the side. Without Harry’s fingerprints, it could only be unlocked with a six-digit code, per Draco’s request. Harry had his private number, a number he didn’t need others having access too. The picture on the screen was still set to a default one. He entered Harry’s birthdate.

Try again

He set the iPhone aside.

“Sir, that was Harper,” Zabini said, hanging up his phone for a second time. “They found an unmarked van matching the same description in the back of a store in Barnet. The manager said it had been abandoned there some thirty minutes ago.”

“Did he see who left it behind?”

“No, sir.”

Draco stood up, buttoning the suit of his jacket as he went.

“Let’s check it out then, shall we?”

...
a cloud of dust in the air around Harry. Harry covered his eyes and turned his head, coughing through the puff of dirt he’d inhaled.

“Please, Dudley,” Harry whispered miserably, dignity be damned. “Please.”

“Don’t talk to me, you freak—”

“—ing out over nothing. He’s no one, okay? It didn’t mean anything, I swear,” Anthony asserted, following Harry as he tore down the stairs. Anthony’s parents had gone on holiday. They’d been out of town, and Harry had come over. “Don’t go, Harry, please don’t go!”

“Damn it, Anthony, how could you do this?” Harry shouted, tears blurring his vision and spilling over. He whipped around, staring bitterly at his boyfriend’s naked body. Anthony held a throw-blanket to his front, as if covering his prick somehow made him less guilty of sticking it in someone else. But Harry…Harry had seen.

“It’s not what it looks like,” he tried and Harry’s laugh was brittle over the pathetic attempt of an excuse.

“Oh God, really?” Harry asked in disbelief. He shook his head, running trembling fingers through his hair, “It’s not what it looks like? You’re really going with that defense?” his voice sounded hysterical to his own ears and his face was wet and fuck, oh fuck, this hurt so much…

“I fucked up, okay?” Anthony confessed, reaching out for him with his free hand but Harry shied away from the touch. “Harry, babe, please, let me explain.”

“Two years, Anthony, two bloody years—how long? How long has this been going on? How long have you been fucking other guys behind my back?” Harry snarled, taking off Anthony’s Letterman jacket and chucking it at him angrily.

Anthony had to dodge to the side before it could whip him in the face. It landed on the floor nearby. His hazel eyes were wide and pleading. Even though Harry wanted to hate him, he also loved him, and he felt like he was being torn into pieces because of it.

“I love you,” Anthony whispered, avoiding Harry’s question. “Baby, I love you so much. I was stupid, so stupid. Please, Harry, I don’t want us to break—”

“—up, Harry Potter…time to wake up, now.”

Wetness drenched his face mercilessly and Harry’s eyes snapped open in shock. He took a gasping breath. The haze of his dreaming lingered still, befuddling him as he sought awareness.

The first thing Harry realized was that he was flat on his back, on the ground. Concrete, by the cool hardness of it. The second, was his state of undress. He’d been stripped down to his pants but he could feel the lumpiness behind his head and wondered if his clothing was acting as a makeshift pillow. Harry’s eyes enlarged suddenly, his fear spiking as he remembered what had happened seconds before he lost consciousness. He instinctively made to sit up, only to be restrained by something binding his wrists together.

A rope, he assumed, by the scratchy feel of the fibers against his skin.

“Now, now, Harry Potter,” soothed a voice to his left. “To struggle would be most unwise. I don’t want to have to hurt you.”

“Who…?” Harry rasped out weakly. His mouth felt dry. It was dim wherever he was, and his glasses
were missing, so he couldn’t make out any details. Even the face of the man knelt beside him was unclear. “Please, help me…”

A cool hand brushed his fringe away from his forehead. He felt a lone finger caress along the line of his faded scar.

“I will help you,” the voice promised gently. “I will help you, Harry, but only if you help me, first.”

“What...d’you...want...?” he croaked, squinting up at him.

“The map.”

Harry’s blood turned cold and goosebumps prickled along his bared body. His eyes screwed shut in fear.

*Where is the map?*

*Where is the map?*

**WHERE IS THE MAP?**

Blood.

*Hedwig’s.*

It hadn’t been a blunder, after all.

“I—I don’t have any map, I swear it,” he insisted, panic bubbling in his belly.

“Surely, he’s lying,” another voice echoed a little further away. The man beside him withdrew something from his coat.

A gunshot resonated loudly in the room, followed by a solid thump of something dropping to the ground. Harry jumped in his restraints and let out a horrified cry, trying like mad to scoot away. It was no use; the rope tying his hands above his head was attached to something unforgiving.

“If I wanted your opinion. I would have *asked* for it, Rosier,” the man snapped coldly. “Leave us. All of you.” Footsteps scattered across the ground as the area cleared out. Harry felt tears slip down both sides of his face and drip onto the floor as the man pocketed his gun and let out a sigh. “It is difficult to find decent help these days...are you helpful, Harry?”

His bottom lip trembled. Harry inhaled sharply, trying to calm his nerves. He nodded hurriedly.

“You are not an easy young man to get ahold of, Harry. Draco Malfoy has tried very hard to keep you tucked away from me.”

Harry’s face twitched in recognition at the sound of Draco’s name.

“Yes, yes, I know Draco Malfoy. Truth be told, I have known him for years...Though, perhaps not as *intimately* as you.” A hand patted Harry’s hip. The very same hand that had just pulled a trigger and shot...something...*someone?* He swallowed the stomach acid that had risen in his throat and resisted the temptation to shake off the hand on him. “All those Malfoys...*cut from the same expensive, hedonistic cloth...*” he continued smoothly. Harry felt nails rake up his leg. He drew in a sharp breath as the words resonated within him.
The voice chuckled coldly. “So, you do remember me, Harry. Good. I’m glad. For a moment there, I feared you’d forgotten me.”

“Mister…”

“Riddle,” the man offered calmly.

“Why…?”

“The map, Harry. Where is it?” Riddle repeated quietly. He was tracing Harry’s scar again. “I don’t want to have to resort to violence.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about! Please…please, let me go…I’ll—I swear I won’t say anything,” Harry pleaded with the man. He let out a dry sob when Riddle reached back into his pocket.

“Shh, there, there. I’m just going to give you a little sip of water, Harry. You seem thirsty.” Riddle’s hand slipped down and cradled Harry’s head, lifting it up for him. It put strain on his neck and shoulders, with his arms tied above him. A glass vial pressed against his lips and Harry shook his head meaningfully.

“Just a little water…” Riddle assured, letting a bit of it dribble against Harry’s dry lips. Harry pressed them together firmly. Setting the glass down with a disappointed sigh, Riddle reached back in his pocket.

The gun cocked threateningly and pressed to his lips. Harry’s muffled sobs grew louder.

“Open your mouth before I open it for you,” the older man hissed. Harry’s mouth dropped open obediently, shaking like a leaf as he did so. He wanted Draco. Why didn’t he stay with Draco? He didn’t want to die like this… “Good boy.” The liquid tipped into his mouth and Harry choked it down.

Water.

Harry gasped, only slightly relieved.

“See how nicely I help you, Harry? Now. The map.”

“I don’t have a—”

The gun reappeared and Harry gasped. He shook.

“P-please. Please, no!”

“You don’t like guns, do you?” Riddle murmured thoughtfully. “How ironic, considering whom you’re sleeping with.” Riddle dragged the barrel of the gun down his body as he spoke. He slid it to the crease of Harry’s groin.

“Please don’t, please…” Harry begged him. His voice was still hoarse regardless of the sip of water, and shrill in his distress.

He wanted Draco. He wanted to go home to Draco. He should’ve never left. He should’ve gotten in the damned car…he had been too stubborn. Too proud. All his belongings, even his godforsaken flat…suddenly seemed insignificant.

More tears fell.
“You're so pretty when you cry,” Riddle decided. He tried to wriggle the gun between Harry’s legs but Harry tensed up. “I really don’t like being disobeyed, though, Harry…”

“Please don’t…”

“Just tell me where it is, and I’ll let you go. You can run home to Draco and suck his cock like a good little slut and you won’t have to ever see me again. Just give it to me.”

“I don’t—”

“So pretty,” Riddle sang softly, the barrel caressing Harry’s penis when it couldn’t wrestle between his sealed thighs. “…but I’ve never been one to be distracted by pretty things. Your charms won't work on me, sweet Harry.”

“I’m not—” He heard the man set the weapon down. He wasn't convinced that it wouldn't make a reappearance. His spine was painfully rigid.

Riddle reached in his pocket once more and retrieved a third object. “Do you want to know a secret, Harry?” he continued. “I’ve never liked the Malfoy family. Arrogant men, flashing their inherited wealth around, never having to so much as lift a finger for what they have. People like you and me, we weren’t so privileged, were we? We’ve had to work our way up from the bottom, to get where we are today, haven’t we?”

Harry nodded dutifully.

“Yes…these Malfoy men. 'Born with a silver spoon', as the saying goes. Did you give it to them? The map?”

“I don’t have a bloody map!” Harry shouted, something shattering inside him. “Let me go!” he tugged at his restraints and kicked his legs, trying to break free. The rope burned his wrists and did not budge, but he managed to land a kick to Riddle’s side before he was slapped across the face roughly.

Harry felt his lip split upon impact. "I believe I just told you that I loathed defiance, didn't I?"

Riddle was covering his bleeding mouth and popping the cap off small bottle. He waved it in front of Harry's face, right beneath his nostrils. In need of air, Harry breathed in through his nose before he could stop himself.

Seconds.

That was all it took before Harry felt his body grow warm. His heart was picking up speed beneath his ribcage, beating rapidly, pumping his blood to a boil. It bloomed in his face. Despite his lack of clothing, his skin felt abnormally hot against the concrete. His head became dizzy, and then, Harry felt...relaxed.

Riddle’s hands felt cool against his burning flesh. Harry was lightheaded but aware of his pants being removed from him. He was aware of Riddle’s body situating itself between his spread legs.

“What is the map?” Riddle asked again as he picked up his gun. Harry could see the outline of it. It was a normal handgun but there was a silencing mechanism on it.

Harry's breathing was erratic.

So warm...
“Don’t have a map. Don’t have one…” he heard himself mumble.

“So you keep saying, Harry,” Riddle told him softly. Dangerously. “I wonder what Draco Malfoy would say if he saw you like this. Call me petty, but, there is a certain appeal to damaging a rich brat’s favorite toy.”

Riddle’s gun slipped down to Harry’s backside. Harry screamed as it breeched him.

…

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Ron asked him. He looked hurt. Harry shook his head, unable to meet his best friend’s eyes.

“I didn’t want anyone to know.”

“I didn’t care when you told me you liked blokes, Harry. It doesn’t bother me, and you know it doesn’t bother Mum or Dad. You could’ve told us that the Dursleys—”

“I don’t want anyone’s pity, Ron,” Harry said resolutely.

“It wouldn’t have been pity, it would’ve been some bloody compassion! And a damned roof over your head. Blimey, Harry...Two weeks?”

“It wasn’t so bad. I didn’t want to burden anyone.” Harry hugged his knees to his chest dolefully.

“You’re my best mate, not a burden,” the redheaded teen said. He sighed heavily. “Listen up, would you? Here’s what we’re going to do. I’m going to go run a bath and find some of my old clothes for you to change into...pre-growth-spurt,” he said, chuckling when Harry gave him a half-hearted scowl. “Then you’re going to get cleaned up while I phone Hermione.”

“I don’t want—”

“You’ve missed several days of school, mate. She’s been having a right fit about it, but she’s copied her notes for you so you don’t fall too far behind. No one else has to know, okay?”

Harry sniffled and rubbed his tattered sleeve across his face. He really was filthy.

“I don’t deserve to have friends like you.” Ron’s hand reached down and guided Harry to his feet with a hand beneath his elbow.

“No,” Ron corrected him severely, “You don’t deserve to have a family who’ve done nothing but treat you like complete shit for fifteen years. Come on, n—”

“—ow,” Harry groaned with a wince. “Not so rough, Anthony. Slow down.”

“Sorry,” the other boy apologized breathily against his throat. “You just feel so good—oh Christ, Harry, I’m so close already. Shit...” He leaned down to snog Harry, his hips pumping into him with eager thrusts. “He was right. It’s so much better without a rubber…”

Harry frowned up at Anthony. The arm that had been wrapped around his boyfriend's back slid down to hold his bicep instead. It was damp with sweat, but strong.

“Who was right?” he wondered, perplexed. Anthony pressed his sweaty forehead to Harry’s as he changed his angle a little. Harry’s back arched when the other boy finally brushed against his prostate. “Oh...”
“Mm, Zacharias. Mentioned it a while back after practice...”

“You—you talk to your teammates about our sex life?” Harry questioned, feeling scandalized.

“Every guy on the team talks about their sex life, Harry,” Anthony panted out. Harry felt his stomach twist uneasily at the thought of his boyfriend spilling their intimate secrets.

“What do you...tell them?” Harry questioned. He felt the lusty mood drain from him. He wasn’t going to be getting off anytime soon with scenarios roiling through his mind, of Anthony bragging to his teammates about Harry giving him head before school, or wanking him off underneath the bleachers after practice...

“Just like, where we’ve done it and who with. Please, don't be mad. You’re the only one I’ve ever been with. It's embarrassing not being included so I...It’s just locker room talk. Oh God, feels so good, baby. I’m going to c—”

“—ome on, Harry. Rise and shine. We’re not done playing, yet,” Tom Riddle’s voice rang loudly in his ears.

Chapter End Notes

Shorter chapter than the last, but I wanted to get something out before the angry mob comes. Not that this chapter ended much better?

¯\_(ツ)_/¯

P.S. I've said the word "map" so many damn times in this chapter, that I'm genuinely surprised it didn't jump out of Dora the Explorer's backpack and beat me to death.
ARC THREE: Awaken

Chapter Summary

Draco finds Harry.

Chapter Notes

All mistakes are my own.

ALSO. I should've mentioned this tidbit from the get go. This story takes place in London...but not really. It's like a very fictional, very loosely based 'London' that might very well resemble more closely somewhere like NYC. With that said, please, forgive me if you are from England. As much as I have always wanted to visit there, I have yet to get the opportunity. Therefore, I am sure a lot of things don't always add up/make sense. Take it with a grain of salt. There's only so much research a girl can do for fanfiction. ;) I just couldn't imagine taking these characters outside their home.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“I’m not seeing anything here, boss,” Zabini murmured lowly.

Draco swore under his breath. He pulled on a pair of gloved and climbed in the empty van. He took the black light from the other man and ran it over the handles of the door a second time.

“The van is identical. If it is the one they used, they were careful to not leave anything behind,” Nott stated from the front seat.

Draco narrowed his eyes. “Perhaps not.” He crouched on the floor of the vehicle. He dragged a gloved finger into one of the grooves in the plastic flooring. “They were rushing,” he muttered aloud. He rubbed his fingers together, watching as grains fell from them. “They got sloppy.”

“What can a bit of dirt tell us?” Crabbe asked in confusion.

Draco felt his stomach clench tightly as the residue fell from his fingers. “It isn’t dirt. It’s sand.” Zabini mimicked his actions in the far corner. More sand.

“London isn’t exactly crawling with beaches. If they’re still in the city…” Nott looked at him, his face pale as realization dawned on him.

“Southbank,” Draco growled. He climbed from the van and tore off the gloves angrily. “They drove forty minutes North to throw us off and then headed to bloody Southbank.”

Twenty minutes. They might have only been within twenty minutes from Harry the entire time. Draco wanted to break something. It would take another forty minutes to get back.

“I wasn’t aware Riddle had any properties in Southbank.”
“He doesn’t. Riddle is behaving rather audaciously,” Draco stated through gritted teeth. “It’s San Drac territory…”

“Perhaps he is hiding out in an abandoned building?” Zabini offered.

“Call Davis. Have her do a search of any abandoned properties in the area,” Draco said. He looked at Harper. “Wipe it clean,” he told him as he climbed back into the BMW.

“Yes, sir,” Harper replied.

…

The pain wasn’t the first thing that registered for Harry. At first, it was this sense of displacement, like his brain was disconnected from his body, or consumed in a fog. For a moment, he wasn’t aware of his surroundings. For a moment, he was in Draco Malfoy’s bed and he’d roll over and gaze at the older man’s slumbering face or meet opened grey eyes as his boss smoked a cigarette and thumbed through endless emails and articles.

Harry would roll out of bed and use the loo, and brush his teeth, because good-morning kisses were a thing he’d never truly got to experience before but learned that he liked. A lot. If they were both awake, they would snog each other, with fresh breath and sometimes there would be morning wood that they’d set out to take care of.

Together.

Because shower sex was also a thing he really enjoyed.

Eventually, Harry’s mind sank into reality; the fog dissipated somewhat and he realized with dread that he wasn’t with Draco, and the fight between them had been very, very real. Tom Riddle had been real. Then, the pain hit.

His arms were screaming in protest, having been tied over his head for so long. His wrists were raw from struggling and his arse…it hurt. Not from simple sex, or even a sensual spanking, but from being…violated.

Riddle’s gun.

Loaded.

Inside him.

Raping him.

His chest seized up in fear and it was hard to breathe. Excruciating to breathe.

He felt the echo of it inside him, stretching him in a way that was not normal. It hadn’t just been the pain though, but the perpetual distress withering away at him knowing at any second the gun could go off; one pull of a trigger and Harry would be dead.

“…not done playing, yet…”

Riddle.

Harry’s eyes flew open and his body tensed up and the tears that had dried up as he passed out pushed at the backs of his eyes again, trying to force their way out. Harry didn’t dare let them fall. He’d shown enough weakness.
Yet, he realized with morbid certainty, he wasn’t entirely sure his resolve would last long, before it crumbled into dust once more.

“How are you feeling, Harry?” Riddle’s voice asked. He was sitting next to Harry, he realized. Leaning back on his hands, his long legs extended before him and crossed at the ankle. He was smiling down at Harry. He looked every bit as charming as he’d been when Harry first met him.

He was a monster.

Harry’s body shivered. The coldness pierced his skin unpleasantly.

“More water,” Riddle advised. That same vial pressed to his lips. He didn’t fight it. He drank it down.

*Water.*

“Are you ready to talk now?” Riddle asked.

His throat was dry again, raspy when he spoke, “I don’t have a map,” he groaned. “I don’t, I don’t, I don’t…”

Riddle rolled over onto his side, propped his head in one hand, and stared coolly down at Harry. He was pressed against Harry’s body. He was so close that Harry could feel his breath ruffling his fringe. He was so close, that Harry wanted to scream and kick to get him away.

Yet, fear was paralyzing him. Cold, ugly, fear.

He trembled slightly when Riddle’s hand came up and caressed the length of Harry’s jaw. An intimate gesture. He felt acid from his stomach rush up into his mouth and he swallowed the acrid taste down.

“You don’t want to make an enemy of me, Harry Potter,” Riddle warned quietly. “I can make things so much worse for you.”

Harry jerked his head to the side, to get the touch off him but Riddle let out a low hiss and fisted a hand in Harry’s hair roughly. “I’m so tempted to, you know. So tempted to get you hooked on some heroin and then sell you to the highest bidder. You’re a bit older than what’s preferred, but not by much. You’re still an attractive young man. Tight body, pretty eyes and a fuck-me mouth…” Riddle’s fingers were tracing a pattern on his hip bone. The skin there felt raw, searing and hot for some reason. He dragged his hand up Harry’s torso to pinch at his nipples.

“You’d be so addicted, Harry. Ugly, fat pigs, all whom just want a hole to fuck would take turns with you, and do you know what you would do? You’d spread your legs and take it, because in the end, it would be the drugs you desired, longed for. Not *Draco Malfoy.* Your only concern would be when you were getting your next hit. It would *consume* you, boy.”

Harry shivered and a tear escaped but he held the rest back. He inhaled shakily. Riddle let out a throaty chuckle, “You don’t seem too enthusiastic about that idea, Harry. I didn’t think you would be. So, how about a little cooperation, yes?”

“You’ve got to believe me,” Harry’s croaked weakly. “I have no clue what you’re talki—*agh!”

Riddle slapped him roughly across the face. He slapped him a second time, and then a third. Instinctively recoiling from the abuse, Harry rolled over on his side and curled up. It hurt his arms, his shoulders, his neck. His wrists chafed and burned from the rope.
Riddle chuckled again. His hand stroked down Harry’s spine, dragging his nails down. There’d be scratches left behind. Harry’s back grew rigid and he tried to roll back over. His muscles yelled their objection. Riddle shoved him cruelly onto his front and it knocked the air out of his lungs.

“No, no, please! Please,” Harry pleaded with the man, trying to turn back around. He scrambled and wriggled to no avail. He was bound and helpless and at the mercy of a merciless man and maybe, just maybe he would’ve been better off if Riddle had pulled that trigger.

He was quickly becoming too numb to feel anything, fading away from reality into the blackness of his own mind. Something was wrong. His legs were growing too heavy to move. HELP! he screamed out, blood-curdling in his head but noiseless aloud, as rough hands held him down.

Someone help me! he begged wretchedly, tears burning the corner of his eyes as legs forcibly parted his.

Please someone help…his eyes screwed shut tightly. He heard the tell-tale sound of a zipper coming undone. He felt the pressure. He felt the piercing sting of skin tearing. He felt the blood.

Draco, he thought desperately as his body was sullied a second time, not by a gun, but by Riddle, himself. It burned. It ached. It threatened to break him into two.

Draco, please, help me, he pleaded. He felt like he was in a tunnel. His vision blurred, his own sobs sounded distant to his own ears. Riddle was saying something but it was muffled. His body was no longer his own. He had no control, no say...

Draco, Draco, Draco, I—

... 

“Roof is all clear, sir,” Nott’s voice sounded in his earpiece.

“How many?”

“Four.”

Draco crept along the edge of the building. Down the rear side, there were five loading docks, four feet off the ground. One of the garage doors was opened. According to his preferred IT girl, the warehouse had long been abandoned from too many safety violations. Zabini skulked closely behind him, covering his back.

“One coming around the westside. I don’t have a clear shot.”

“I’ve got ‘im,” Crabbe’s voice grunted.

A man dressed head-to-toe in black walked appeared in the opening of the loading dock. As soon as his eyes landed on Draco and Zabini, his hand whipped down to pull out his gun from his waistband as he tried to step back out of sight. Draco put him down before he could move from his view. The body dropped from the ledge and landed with a thud on the ground. Red bled into rain water.

Zabini’s body fell against the wall a few feet away and slid into the mud. “Fuck!”

Draco went to him, squatting down at his side.

“Nott?!”

“I don’t see it! I don’t see where the shot came from!” Nott told them breathlessly. “Boss, you need
to get—"

“Motherfucker!” Pucey’s voice growled. “It was a sniper beneath one of the decks on the waterfront. I put him down.”

“It’s just the shoulder,” Zabini hissed with a wince. “I’m fine, I’m fine.”

“Get back to the car,” Draco instructed lowly, pressing his handkerchief to the bleeding wound. “Crabbe can cover me.”

“Crabbe needs to man the other door,” Zabini insisted. He took the cloth from Draco and held it to his shoulder. “I’ll be fine. My right arm is unaffected. I can still shoot.”

More gunshots rang out.

“Boss! They’re leaving! Three men on Crabbe—!”

“On it,” Flint interrupted, running along the roof. “Get in through the loading dock, there. I’ve got —”

Draco hoisted himself up on the ledge. When he saw that it was clear, he reached one hand out for Zabini to take and pulled him up.

It was mostly dark inside the building from the lack of sunlight outside.

No one was there.

There were metal rafters, meters high, that created vacant aisles which at one point in time had been filled. Empty crates and cardboard boxes that were chewed through, likely from mice or rats. Cobwebs covered wooden pallets. It was cold.

“Boss, Riddle is leaving—!”

Draco stopped mid-step. “Is Harry with him?”

“He doesn’t appear to be, but Riddle is surrounded by eight of his men. Crabbe is down. He doesn’t seem to be moving. Flint, too. I can’t get a clear shot of Ri—”

“Let him go.” Draco ordered gravely. Now was not the time to start a gang war, and both parties knew it. His only objective was to retrieve Harry. If Riddle wanted to avoid conflict, Draco would play along.

With or without the Map, it was only a matter of time. A war was on the horizon.

He moved gingerly, but quickly along each aisle. There was no being stealthy; the echo of footsteps and clothes rustling with every movement filled the warehouse. Zabini headed in the opposite direction.

“Sir?”

“Pucey, bring the van around to the front. Check on Crabbe and Flint.”

“Yes sir.”

“Boss! Over here!” Zabini’s called. His deep voice resounded loudly to the left. Draco ran to the other end of the building. From where he was, Draco could see a smear of red on the ground.
Blood.

A lot of it.

Draco’s pace picked up. His heart raced. He didn’t want to dwell on the reasoning behind Riddle's decision to Harry behind. He shut out the damning part of his mind that told him he’d made plenty of sacrifices before, in his line of work. Truthful as it were, Draco couldn’t remember the last time his own life had meant this little to him. His laser-like focus was on one single, solitary boy, and nothing else mattered.

He turned the corner and faltered. The smearing of blood belonged to another body, Draco realized with the smallest semblance of relief; Zabini was in between the tall rafters, halfway down the aisle. Beside Zabini’s knelt form lay Harry. His arms were tied with rope above his head, attached to one of the metal beams.

He was naked. His clothes were scattered beneath him.

He was motionless.

Draco felt his heart rise into his throat. For the first time in years, Draco felt fear blossom within him. Zabini bloody hand was checking his radial pulse by the time Draco reached the pair. He dropped down beside them. For a second, Draco nearly told Zabini to run. If Harry was dead, friend or foe, Draco was convinced he’d kill whoever remained in his proximity.

“He has a pulse.”

Draco’s own hand found Harry’s neck and he pressed two cool fingers to it until he felt the thrum of his heart beneath them.

“Harry?” he said firmly. “Come on, Harry, wake up…” Zabini set to work with a pocket knife, cutting his hands free as Draco lifted Harry’s eyelids, one after the other and then felt along his skull for any trauma.

“Boss,” Zabini murmured. Draco’s eyes snapped up and met his. Zabini looked sideways to Harry’s lower half. “There’s blood, and—” he grimaced and his gaze flitted up to gage his reaction. Draco’s nostrils flared in rage.

“Roll him to you,” he commanded evenly. He could seethe over the mark branding Harry’s hipbone later. At the very least, a tattoo wasn’t life threatening. “Careful—”

“Ngh…”

Draco’s ears pricked at the groan coming from the brunette on the floor. He leaned forward, his hand pressing against the side of Harry’s face. His thumb stroked the cheekbone. It was starting to bruise, like he’d been hit a couple of times. His lip was split.

“Harry?” he urged gently. “Come on Harry, open your eyes. Can you do that? Open your eyes for me, Harry.” Draco pulled away for a second to shirk off his jacket and drape it over the young man some modesty. He bowed back over him. His damp hair hung in his face but Draco didn’t even bother to fix it. His suit was wet and his shoes were filthy and he didn’t care.

“Open your eyes, Harry,” he repeated, more sternly now. He brushed Harry’s own sweaty fringe from his forehead. Harry made another small noise and then his eyes finally did flutter open. They were unfocused. Their normally rich green coloring was dulled and weary.
Draco smiled at him, though he knew it wasn’t particularly convincing. “There’s a good boy,” he whispered. Harry’s tongue peaked out futilely, trying to wet his lips. His mouth stayed parted, like he had something he wanted to say.

“Sho…”

Draco leaned closer, one hand resting lightly on Harry’s chest. He counted his respirations.

“Shoulda…”

“Should have what, Harry?” Draco pressed quietly as Zabini helped Draco gather the slender body into his arms without jarring him painfully.

“Shoulda…got my…sc-scrawny…a-arse…in…car…’m sorry…” Harry went limp as he passed out in Draco’s hold once more.

Zabini made a stifled noise and shook his head like the words pained him more than the bullet had.

“Pucey. Status?” Draco said. His throat felt constricted as he carried Harry’s unconscious form down the length of the warehouse.

“Right outside, sir. We’re ready to go.”

“What of Crabbe and Flint?”

“Dead, sir.”

Chapter End Notes

Not a very exciting chapter, I know. It wasn't meant to be super climactic, though. Just kind of an all-around miserable time for everyone. The next couple of chapters however...I am REALLY excited for. There's a couple scenes coming up that I've had in mind since the very beginning, that I think you'll all enjoy. Harry will finally get some answers. ;)

Thanks for bearing with me. I know you guys had to wait a bit longer than usual, and for such a short chapter. It's a hectic week for me, and I unfortunately haven't had the time I would've liked to write. Hopefully I can get back to my normal pace in the following few days!
Harry traced the mark on his hip as he stared at his reflection in the mirror. The tattoo was the length of a finger and the width of two. The brand was comprised of a black skull, menacing and ugly. The jaw was opened and a snake came out of its mouth like a grotesque tongue; the length of the body was looped around in a knot and its fangs were bared in threat.

It seared unpleasantly on his skin, reminding of Harry of the nasty sunburns he used to get as a child after spending hours outside doing yard work for his aunt and uncle. If he were to rate his battle wounds on pain scale, the rope burns were more severe and the tearing in his rectum was nearly unbearable. However, it was the tattoo still, that bothered him most of all. Everything would heal in time, but a brand like this would always be a reminder of the attack.

Harry let the button-down shirt he wore drop down to cover the mark. It fell to mid-thigh, a little too long on him and he wore only his briefs with it. Evidently, the rest of his clothing had been ruined. Stained with his blood. Harry surmised that much, without Zabini needing to clarify. Harry slipped out of the bathroom and went back into the attached bedroom.

He couldn’t say he remembered much of what happened after they left the warehouse, nor did he even recall being on the jet that brought him to this place. Harry had woken up in the master bedroom. Nott was at his bedside and a stern-faced but kind doctor checked him all over, despite his reluctance and mortification. Aside from HIV testing after Anthony cheated on him, Harry couldn’t remember the last time a doctor had seen to him.

It was then, that Harry discovered his whereabouts. He had been taken to a privately-owned villa along the coast of Antigua. They were in the bloody Caribbean, of all places.

Draco wasn’t there with him. Nay, he was there, but he was either avoiding Harry or taking care of business-related bullshit. After half a day passed, Harry decided it was most likely a combination of the two.

Harry didn’t know why that thought hurt as much as it did. Part of him truly never wanted to see his boss ever again. The other part of him, a portion located somewhere in the area where his heart resided, yearned for no one else but Draco Malfoy.
He hated that.

Harry climbed back into the bed, gingerly situating himself onto his side. As far as he knew, only Nott and Zabini had accompanied Harry and their boss to Antigua. They took turns bringing Harry the meals he didn’t touch.

They tried to make small talk.

While he was nearly bursting at the seams with questions, Harry didn’t speak a word. Instead, he just stared blankly at the wall and waited. In between trips to the loo and flipping his pillow over to avoid the wet spots left behind from tears, Harry waited for Draco to come.

…

When Draco finally did come, three-quarters of a day later, Harry found himself at a loss for words. He couldn’t look at the man sitting in the chair beside the bed. Draco had come in carrying Harry’s dinner tray, put it on the table, and sat down in the small armchair. Harry did not meet his eyes. He let his gaze travel as far as a trouser-covered knee and that was it.

“We are in Antigua,” Draco murmured in a gentle tone, after several awkward moments.

“…”

“It’s beautiful here. You should look outside, get some fresh air.”

“…”

“Zabini and Nott told me you haven’t eaten a thing. You will make yourself sick if you don’t.”

Harry felt ill. His eyes forced more tears out and he didn’t bother to contain them. The dribbled down his face, sideways, into the pillow.

“Harry?” Draco whispered. For the first time, there was a note of something different in his voice. Helplessness, Harry decided on. He didn’t know what else it could be, but it didn’t suit the man who always seemed in control of everything, either.

“…”

“What can I do?” the blonde asked after another long pause. “Tell me, what can I do?” He leaned forward, his elbows propped on his knees as he observed Harry.

“…”

Five minutes seemed to drag by like hours and finally, Harry felt something inside him crumble.

“…You can…” he began, throat scratchy as he used his voice for the first time in almost a day. He closed his eyes and drew in a long, wavering breath. Then, he looked hard at Draco. “You can tell me the fucking truth.”

He didn’t yell the words, but there was a bitterness there, and a brokenness. He felt it, and he knew Draco could see it and hear it clearly.

“…You are not going to like it,” Draco admitted. He leaned back in his chair.

“You can let me be the judge of that,” Harry snapped, brushing the wetness from his face with a frustrated swipe of his hand.
Draco merely nodded. He crossed his leg over his knee and stroked his chin. He had a distant look on his face. “Where would you prefer me to begin?”

Harry chewed on his bottom lip before rolling over carefully onto his back. His wrists were bandaged and he’d been given something for pain. He refused to take it. The prospect of being given more drugs was horrifying to Harry. He winced at the action but otherwise ignored his discomfort. The mark on his skin was covered with a piece of clear wrap and medical tape, to keep it from rubbing against his clothing.

“Do you know what this means?” he asked quietly.

“It is the symbol for the organization known as Morsmordre.”

Harry nodded tightly. “So, your—your…friend, Tom Riddle? Who is…” he shook his head roughly as he trailed off.

“Tom Riddle is not my friend. He never was,” Draco answered coldly and then he added, “But…he is the leader of Morsmordre.”

“And that is what? A gang?”

“For lack of a better word, yes.”

“And you?”

“Me?”

Harry exhaled sharply through his nose and his palms were sweating from nerves, but he had to know…he had to—

“Who are you, Draco Malfoy?”

“…”

It was like an entire lifetime had passed by, by the time Draco finally spoke again. It was the most earsplitting silence Harry had ever experienced. For a while, Draco sat immobile in his chair until Harry wondered if he’d crossed some sort of line or if Draco was merely struggling for the right words to answer his question.

Either way, it didn’t sit well with Harry.

“I…” Draco leaned forward in his chair again like he was itching to run from this conversation but he held back and propped his arms back on his knees. His mask of stoicism was wavering. His hands were pressed together like he was in prayer and pressed the tips of his fingers to his mouth. “I am the single heir to Malfoy Industries, I am the owner of a multitude of businesses across Britain, and I am, or rather, I will be, the Fourth Head of an organization known as San Drac,” he summarized softly.

Harry had never heard of ‘Sandrock’ before but a ‘fourth head of an organization’ was enough to have him sitting up slowly in his bed, despite the ache in his body.

Of course Harry was surprised.

He just wasn’t surprised as much as he thought he should have been…and he knew he could only blame himself, for that. He had silenced the nagging voice within him on numerous occasions, overlooked each red flag.
Ron had *joked* about it before, from the bloody get-go.

Draco had ordered Zabini to break Avery’s hands.

Lockhart’s body turned up in the river just days after attacking Harry.

Riddle targeted him—and *Hedwig*—for this ‘Map’ he was hell-bent on locating. He hadn’t wanted to acknowledge the possibility, so he shrugged it off, made excuse after excuse, to put his mind at ease.

He couldn’t do that anymore, because now, now Harry *knew*. He wrapped his arms around his upper-half protectively. He swallowed thickly.

“So, your father is…?”

“The current Head.”

“Have you…have you killed people?” he breathed out.

“…Yes.”

Harry screwed his eyes shut tightly. “Lockhart?”

“On my orders.”

He felt lightheaded.

“…*Hedwig*?”

“Riddle’s doing.”

Harry’s face dropped into his trembling hands.

“Harry…” a hand touched his leg, featherlight. Harry jerked away, scrambling to the other end of the big bed. His body ached.

“*Don’t!* Don’t fucking touch me!” he hissed at the blonde. Standing on the opposite side, Harry was all too aware of his position. He was on an island in the *Caribbean*, without a phone or a way home or…

“Are you,” Harry croaked, “Are you going to kill me, too? Is that why you’ve brought me here?”

Draco stilled, a hand outstretched in the air, and he looked stricken by Harry’s question. Harry shivered where he stood and his knees buckled slightly to brace against the edge of the bed to keep himself upright.


“Why?”

“Why?”

“Why not? Why not just kill me, dump my body in the water, and walk away? You did it to Lockhart.”
“Shut up! His mind was screaming at him. *Don’t tempt a killer.*

“That’s because I didn’t…” Draco’s jaw snapped shut and clenched tightly. “I won’t, Harry.”

Harry let out a dry sob and kicked the bed. Pain shot through his foot and leg like a snap of a rubber band. Everything hurt, inside, outside, every part of him. “What is this fucking Map?”

Draco long, inaudible sigh, but Harry saw the motion of it. He moved back to the chair in the corner. Harry eased onto the corner of the bed but didn’t relax. He kept a foot planted firmly on the floor.

“…It was nicknamed *The Marauder’s Map to the Underworld*,” Draco said. “It’s a series of documents, testimonies—a plethora of evidence against the two main criminal organizations in the UK: *Morsmordre* and…”

“Sand-rock?”

“And *San Drac,*” Draco confessed. “...*Sanguis Draconis.* The Dragon’s Blood. It’s Latin, as is *Morsmordre.* Over time, ‘*San Drac*’ became commonplace. Aside from my family, I don’t believe anyone recalls the full name, anymore.”

“Your tattoo?”

“You’ll find a similar mark on Zabini or Nott or anyone else who belongs to the organization.” Harry’s hand wandered down to hip distractedly and then his brow furrowed.

“Why come after me for it? Why would I have this Map?”

Draco closed his own eyes and inhaled slowly. He looked like he could use a cigarette. Harry didn’t care. He wanted answers.

Full disclosure.

“The Map was compiled in secret by a select group of people. As far as we know, there were five individuals total: three of them were police officers and the other two were investigative journalists.”

Draco needn’t elaborate further. Harry felt as if someone had gone and sucked all the oxygen out of the room. His fingers gripped into the bedspread. “My parents? That’s it, then, isn’t it? They were in that group?”

Draco nodded wordlessly.

“They died when I was a baby…” Harry’s whipped his head upwards. “You—please tell me that *San*—”

“*Morsmordre,*” corrected Draco quickly. “Riddle.”

“M-murdered?”

“Yes.”

“All my life, I was told it was an accident,” Harry muttered incredulously. He rubbed the heel of his hand into his dampened eyes. “So, h-he thinks I somehow inherited this—this bloody *Map*?”

“It was never found. It’s damning evidence, Harry,” Draco told him gravely. “I don’t know what is on it. No one does, exactly. I was just a child myself when it was—”
‘Damning evidence?’ Damning evidence against fucking criminals!’” Harry snarled, jumping to his feet, once more. He snatched a throw pillow off the bed and threw it at Draco as hard as he could. His boss didn’t even try to block it, which only served to make Harry angrier. Then, Harry stopped moving completely.

“Oh God,” he mumbled and then more tears gathered in his eyes and his blood ran cold and Harry covered his mouth.

He cried.

He hated how weak he was, but he cried.

Silently, mostly, but the sobs were wracking his shoulders and he felt pathetic because Draco was standing again, looking like he wanted to come forward and Harry took a stumbling step back just in case he attempted to.

“Is that why?” Harry continued, “Is that why you gave me a job? This whole time, were you just using—” he broke off in a distressed groan. Anthony had broken his heart after two years of Harry loving him, yet somehow, somehow this wounded him so much more deeply. The prospect of Draco using him, getting close to him, only to see if he had this so-called ‘Map’…it made his heart bleed.

“No, that is not why. I didn’t know of the Map until after Riddle left the message on your wall.”

“Don’t lie to me,” Harry hissed. He wiped his nose furiously. “Don’t you dare lie to me anymore —”

“We were driving by that day,” Draco interrupted. His voice was even, albeit a little strained. “I had business to take care of in the area. There was an issue regarding a rogue foot soldier and we’d lost hundreds of thousands worth of—” Draco halted again, closed his eyes, and changed his course before speaking again.

"We were stuck at the light right outside. I looked over and saw you through the window of the pub. I wasn't in any hurry to break the news to my father. So, we pulled over and we came in for a drink.”

“Why?”

“You had a nice smile and kind eyes. Pleasant and sincere. I was irritated with all the bullshit and I just wanted to talk to someone who seemed…genuine, for a change.”

“You couldn’t have known if I were or not,” Harry scoffed in disbelief. “I was just some bartender in an old pub.”

Draco’s lips twitched into a sad smile. “I took a chance on the bartender in the old pub.”

“And?” Harry asked with a short, brittle laugh. Draco’s grey eyes met his. They pierced into him. They stole his breath away, just like they had when Harry had first truly gazed into them months ago, post-interview, when he stood in the lift and Draco sat at his desk at Salazar.

However, there were no elevator doors to slide between them and bring him down to a different floor, this time. There was nothing but open air and this cold, hard truth between them.

“…And I came to love him.”

Harry blinked once. Twice. His mind was whirring like he was riding a roller coaster that was plummeting. His stomach was in his throat, his heart racing madly, he couldn’t hear his own thoughts
He dropped to the floor, unable to stand anymore, unable to summon the energy to climb back on the bed, even though he was directly in front of it. The floor hurt his knees, *everything* fucking hurt, but the worst was still his bleeding heart. Harry pressed his face into the comforter, and he wept.

Chapter End Notes

I mean...at least Harry isn't COMPLETELY in the dark anymore?
“Please don’t cry anymore.”

“Why?” Harry snapped. His voice had that nasal quality to it that made him cringe inwardly and he didn’t need to see them to know his eyes were red-rimmed. He could feel the tears clinging to his eyelashes. “Do I seem pathetic to you? Is it a turn off? Are you embarrassed for loving me?” He let out a sharp, humorless laugh that tapered into a pathetic sob. Humiliated, he buried his face in the bedding once more.

“I am not embarrassed,” Draco murmured. He crouched beside Harry carefully, like he was approaching an abused animal. Although he didn’t touch him, Harry flinched at their proximity. “I just don’t like seeing you cry.”

“…You’re a bad person, Draco Malfoy,” Harry accused as he rested his forehead against the edge of the bed. The words were muffled but he knew Draco heard them.

“…I know I am.”

Harry let out another brittle laugh as his hands gripped into the mattress and he pulled himself to his feet. His legs felt weak and unsteady but Harry left the room, left Draco behind. The blonde didn’t try to stop him, and for that Harry was relieved. By the time he reached the main living area down the hall, Harry had become a tangible ball of nerves. The fine hairs on his arms and the back of his neck were standing at attention. His breaths were coming out short and forced. It was hard to move and it was hard to stay still. Paying little attention to his new surroundings, Harry’s focus narrowed in on the large doors that led outside.

He opened them with shaking hands to reveal a pool that was shaped like a peanut imbedded into the ground, surrounded by lounge chairs for sunbathing. It seemed nonsensical, considering the natural body of water a little further passed the villa. The air outside was warm and even without his glasses, he could tell that the ocean was a shade of blue than Harry had never known water could be. It looked like an image on a post card that Harry had always assumed was photoshopped to make
people jealous or to attract tourists.

The sun was getting low in the sky and Harry, who’d never seen the ocean in person or even been on a beach before, and despite the whiplash of emotions barreling through him, was enraptured by the beauty of it.

Looking left and right, Harry couldn’t see anyone else nearby, confirming what he’d been told was private property. Assuming beach-goers often wore less than his long button-down shirt and underpants, Harry walked passed the useless pool and headed down the slope into the white sand. His feet slid into it; it was warm and soft and fluffy. Gently, Harry overturned a mound of it with his foot and then he wriggled his toes as some of the tiny grains found their way between them.

As he drew closer to the shore, the sand became wetter from the tide. He stood at the edge and let his feet sink further into the ground until they were buried up to his ankles. He watched as the water drifted up in waves over his covered feet before returning to the ocean. He closed his eyes and felt as the wind ruffled his messy locks of hair.

The wind moved the sand, Harry thought absently, and sometimes people moved the sand, and if the circumstances were right, even the sand that had once lay undisturbed and furthest from the ocean, could end up getting swept away with the tide. With a bit of effort, Harry unanchored his feet and backed up to where the sand was drier. Grains of sand stuck to his wet feet as he eased down gingerly.

Everything still hurt.

However, the pain in his body was far outweighed by the pain in his heart.

Wasn’t that something?

Harry brought his knees up to his torso and hugged them. When he’d initially began hooking-up with Draco, Harry had been so determined to not let feelings get involved. He convinced himself that he could be That Guy, that he could enjoy the casual sex and not lose himself in the process.

How miserably he failed.

The more time he spent with his boss, the more he gave of himself. He had felt it too, felt the fall, but somewhere along the way he stopped resisting the pull of gravity. Though he tried to deny it, tried to tell himself it wasn’t happening, deep down Harry had known better. He could always lie to himself…he just had never been particularly adept at it.

How could he have been so foolish?

For a while, he lived with Draco. He woke up in his bed, every day in his arms. Draco had chosen to spend his birthday with Harry, of all people. They admitted to each other that they weren’t sleeping with others. They knew how one another preferred their tea and coffee. They learned the quirks, the likes and dislikes. Harry did things with Draco, intimate things, that he couldn’t imagine doing with anyone else. He revelled in the way the other man had made him feel prior to his revelations.

When Riddle…when Riddle had him yesterday, Harry only thought of Draco.

He was always thinking of him.

The truth of the matter was as simple as it was complicated. Just as Draco Malfoy loved Harry, Harry loved Draco Malfoy.
And he didn’t know what to do with that.

... “You’re a bad person,” Harry whispered again when Draco came down to the beach an hour later. He didn’t take his eyes off the setting sun in the horizon. It’s warm, golden tone made it easier to observe, and the sky around it swirled with multi-colored hues.

The tall blonde was silent for a few beats.

“You won’t hear me deny it,” Draco agreed lowly. “When we return to London…are you going to leave?”

Me, was the unspoken word between them. Are you going to leave...me?

Harry enfolded his knees more tightly to his chest. His chin rested on top of them.

“Would you even let me?” Harry asked doubtfully.

“If it was what you wanted.”

“Would I even be safe?” He tried not to sound pitiful as he brushed at the gritty sand dried to his bare feet.

“Whatever you choose, wherever you decide to go, I will do everything in my power to ensure your safety. Although it may not mean much to you, I give you my word on that.”

“I don’t…I don’t know,” Harry rasped eventually. He shook his head tiredly. “What did he give me? Riddle, I mean. What did he drug me with?”

Draco was quiet for a moment as he sat down, slowly, a meter away from Harry. Harry felt his thighs constrict briefly in apprehension, like his muscles were preparing to help him jump up and run away if it became necessary. It was his own stubbornness that made Harry stay where he was.

“The doctor said she found traces of GHB in your bloodstream.”

“GHB?” he repeated, “I don’t…”

“It is commonly used as a—as a date-rape drug. It is usually an odorless, colorless liquid thus making it easy to slip someone without their consent. Though, it is said to have a hint of soapiness, or a salty taste, to it.”

“He gave me water,” Harry mumbled, eyes clenching shut. “It tasted a little off, but I thought it was because my lip had been bleeding. I couldn’t move. I was awake for most of it but I-I couldn’t…” he shook his head again.

“GHB can have that effect on people,” Draco replied calmly. “It was not your fault.”

“I know that,” Harry snapped, even though he could feel a stray tear slip free. He angrily wiped it away. “What else? What else did he give me?”

“What else?” He could hear the confusion in Draco’s voice. Harry finally turned to look at him.

“That GHB stuff, he gave that to me the second time. The first time when he—he made me inhale something.”
“Inhale?” Draco was turning to stare at him fully now. His eyes were narrowed.

“It didn’t last long,” Harry said, “But I felt really, really hot and dizzy and my heart was beating really fast…”

“That sounds like rush,” Draco offered. “Amyl nitrate, poppers… It is a generally harmless inhalant —”

“Harmless!” Harry hissed, cutting the older man off. He gripped a handful of sand and flung it at him. Draco turned his chin the other way to avoid the blast to his face.

“I did not mean to undermine—”

“He—he—with his loaded gun,” Harry interjected furiously. “Don’t you dare tell me that whatever he gave me was harmless, because it was not. It was not…fuck!” he choked on another sob and he buried his face in the circle of his arms. A hand pressed itself to his back and Harry’s back arched to dislodge it.

He scrambled around to his knees. “Don’t fucking touch me! I hate you, I hate you, I hate you—” Harry didn’t know at what point he closed the distance between them, or what compelled him to shove the man so hard in the chest, that he was sprawled on his back. He didn’t know why he couldn’t stop lashing out at him and he didn’t know why the blonde didn’t so much as attempt to block Harry’s blows.

“I know. I know…I’m sorry, I know…I am so sorry,” Draco repeated hoarsely as he took the assault. Something in his speech had Harry dissolving into another flurry of tears and vicious curse words. He collapsed onto Draco. Draco, who’s lip was split like his. Draco, who’s cheek was reddened from a handprint, Harry’s handprint. When his outburst started to subside, guilt roiled in his belly because there were no double-standards to be had. Harry had hit Draco repeatedly, and regardless of their situation, it was cruel and abusive.

It wasn’t Harry.

He didn’t feel like himself.

In the few hours Tom Riddle had hold of him, the man took what Harry was and sullied it, twisted it, and left him questioning everything.

“You should’ve stopped me. You could have, easily. Why didn’t you stop me?” Harry croaked, his forehead pressed against Draco’s chest. He could feel the older man’s heartbeat thrumming beneath his head.

“I deserved it.”

“...I didn’t mean it.”

“Didn’t mean what?”

“I don’t hate you,” Harry choked dolefully. His nose was dripping on Draco’s shirt. He couldn’t bring himself to care. “…I just really, really hate that I don’t hate you.”

He felt the rise and fall of Draco’s solid chest as the older man drew in a deep breath and let it out slowly.

“I won’t pretend to know what you’re going through, Harry. I...cannot even begin to apologize
enough for keeping things from you, for letting that bastard—” he cleared his throat in a very uncharacteristic way for Draco Malfoy. The typically suave and sharp-minded man seemed to be struggling for the right words to say.

Harry wasn’t sure if there was anything Draco could say to make it any better. By his fall into silence, Draco must have agreed. Instead, arms carefully came up to wrap around Harry’s shoulders. He secured Harry to him, and Harry for the life of him, couldn’t fathom why he didn’t pull away.

…I do not have the passcode."

Harry stared at the phone Draco sat next to him on the bed. His phone, that Draco had given him some almost six months ago. He blinked and turned his dry, scratchy eyes to the blonde in a blank stare.

“The UK is five hours ahead of us here in Antigua, which means back home, it is nearly—”

“Two in the morning—*shit,*” Harry groaned. “I didn’t even begin to think…what do I tell them?” he scrubbed a hand down his bleary face.

“That is…up to you.”

Harry snorted in disbelief. “I can hardly tell them what’s happened. I don’t…I don’t want them to be brought into this mess in any way.” He rubbed at his eyes. “When do the lies finally end?”

Draco eased down onto the mattress. The phone lay between them, waiting. “I am afraid that is question I have yet to discover the answer to,” the man murmured. It was an ugly reality. Harry carded his fingers through his hair a few times out of sheer nervousness, before picking up the phone he’d chucked into a rosebush just a day ago.

Or two days, depending on the time zone.

Whichever way Harry looked at it, so much had occurred in such a short period. He wished despondently, that he could hit the rewind button on his life. He just didn’t know when he’d press play again.

Before Saturday?

Before Hedwig, or Lockhart, or Avery?

Before all the sex or before that first time he asked for help tying his tie?

Before the job-interview?

Or would he press play right before that godforsaken day when Draco Malfoy walked into his life?

…If he could, would he choose to do anything and everything…differently?

Try as he might, Harry wasn’t able to settle on a response he was confident in.

Harry pressed his thumb to the home button and let the sensor scan his print. The iPhone unlocked and Harry immediately opened a new message to Ron.

“You’re better at this than I am,” Harry muttered dully. It was a bit of a jibe but his tone held no bite. “What should I say?”
Draco leaned forward and rested his elbows on his knees. His feet were firmly planted on the ground as he pressed the tips of his fingers together in thought. Eventually, he said, “Tell them I—or Damien, if you will, took you away on an impromptu holiday to celebrate your birthday.”

Harry’s eyebrows shot into his hairline for a second. “Oh…” In all the turmoil, Harry had forgotten his birthday was just a few days away.

“If the Weasleys believe you are on holiday for the week, they won’t come looking for you.”

“I need to go back to work,” Harry insisted. “I can’t leave them for a week without any prior notice!”

“That is why I suggest you play it off as a spontaneity. Place blame fully on me. Tell your family that this was a surprise and you didn’t have the heart to refuse,” Draco asserted firmly. “…Harry, you need to heal. I am certain they can manage without you for one week.”

Harry opened his mouth to object but then he looked back down at the phone in his hand and he knew, begrudgingly, that Draco was right. Harry was not in any position to be returning to work.

Not like this. Not when he wanted to crawl out of his own skin and hide from the rest of the world.

He let out a long sigh in defeat.

Then, he typed.

Two days later…

“Happy birthday,” Draco told him. He was quiet as he approached the bed.

Harry glanced up from the book he had found while scavenging around the villa when no one else appeared to be around. Whenever possible, Zabini and Nott made themselves scarce, and his boss clearly knew to keep his distance, as well.

Growing up, Harry had learned that solitude could often be a blessing. Solitude meant he could be at peace. Solitude meant he didn’t have to face the world and the cruelness of it.

Nonetheless, there were some things solitude could not erase. The pain from being branded and raped, for instance, left a lingering ache and an invisible scar inside him that he couldn’t avoid. Nor could he escape the fact he had fallen in love with a criminal.

He lowered his gaze back to the book in his hands but his eyes failed to absorb the words on the page. He shrugged one shoulder. “Thank you,” was all he said.

“May I sit down?”

Harry flipped the page.

“This is technically your bed, isn’t it?”

“While we are here, this is your bed.”

“Oh. Then, no thanks. If you don’t mind, I’d rather be left alone.”

Draco was silent. If he was disappointed in Harry’s lack of courtesy, he didn’t show it. Instead the man simply placed a box at Harry’s feet and began to walk away. At first, it didn’t register to Harry what it was. When it did, Harry was lurching forward to snatch it up. He fumbled as he clutched the
shoebox tightly within his hands.

“You-you said it was gone!” Harry stated breathlessly, running a hand over the lid in disbelief. He opened it up and looked down at the chaos of money inside it. He pawed through it for a few seconds. He had yet to count it, but it appeared to all still be there, untouched.

“I may have stretched the truth,” Draco told him judiciously from where he halted near the doorway. Nostrils flaring, Harry paused and glared up at him. “You mean you lied. Again.”

“I lied again,” Draco agreed softly.

“Why?” Harry beseeched him. “Why would you—? This-this box was the fucking reason we fought, Draco! This box is why I…” Seething, he slammed his fistful of money back into the shoebox.

“…I did not get rid of your flat, Harry,” Draco admitted after a while. “I realize that I told you I did, but I could not allow you to return to Grimmauld Place. Riddle was waiting for you. He had his men following you, ready to strike whenever you became vulnerable.”

Harry let out a harsh chuckle. “Oh, imagine that! If only I hadn’t been left in the bloody dark for so long...” He shoved the box to the side. “It’s no use, anymore. Tomorrow is the first of August. There’s nothing I can do for them with two weeks left. It’s all too little, too late.”

“How much money are you short?”

Harry scoffed in derision.

“Here we go again. Go away, Malfoy. Just please...go the fuck away.”

“Don’t flatter yourself, Potter,” the blonde said and Harry started at the coldness in his tone. “This isn’t about you. This is about your friend’s family’s livelihood. You told me once that they were too proud; that they would never accept money from you if they knew what you had to do to get it. Clearly, you are no different when someone is offering help.”

“I didn’t murder people or, Christ, I don’t know, run a drug cartel or-or anything illegal, to earn this money!” Harry growled at him, ire and unease coiling together in his belly.

Draco crossed his arms over his chest, unimpressed. “You do realize I own plenty of other businesses, such as Salazar, that generate revenue as well, yes?”

“I don’t want your fucking money.”

“Again, Potter. This is not about you.”

“Oh, so, you want to help purely out of the goodness of your heart, do you?” Harry sneered at him. Draco said nothing more as he strode from the room, leaving Harry perplexed in his wake and speculating why he suddenly felt like the bad guy.

Harry dropped back heavily onto the fluffy pillows behind him. How could a place so peaceful, he wondered, still leave him without any peace, at all?

…

The sky was clear and the sun was beating down as far as Harry’s eyes could see. Even from the villa, Harry could hear the rhythmic sloshing of waves upon waves at the shore. Walking out onto
the patio a little further, he watched as Draco absentmindedly blew smoke into the air. He was dressed more casually than Harry had ever seen him, with the same black trousers and a simple white button down shirt. However, gone was his necktie and his designer jacket. No pocket squares or cufflinks in sight. Draco’s shirt was unbuttoned down to his sternum, revealing a sliver of the pale, firm chest beneath, and his sleeves were rolled up to just below his elbows to spare him from overheating.

For a solid minute, Harry debated soundlessly whether to retreat inside or not. His energy felt depleted and he was so tired because of it, but in the end, he walked up to stand closer to the taller man.

“…If your offer still stands,” Harry mumbled aloud to Draco's back.

“Pardon me?”

Harry swallowed. “For the pub. If your offer still stands…please. Help them,” he whispered. Draco’s arm dropped to the ashtray and he stubbed out his cigarette before turning to look at Harry. Harry didn’t like that he couldn’t see into Draco’s eyes with the sunglasses concealing them. Or maybe… maybe it was better that way.

Easier.

“What changed your mind?” he asked him blandly.

The aloofness in his tone hit Harry hard. At some point during the past six months, there had been a shift in the way Draco Malfoy had spoken to him. It must have been a subtle change along the way from being employer-employee to…lovers. So subtle, that Harry hadn’t noticed it until it was no longer there.

The intimate lilt in Draco’s smooth drawl that had come to feel like home, was gone.

That revelation shattered something inside Harry and the angry, bitter, tumultuous roaring in his head over the past few days tapered down to a dull drone. He swallowed the burgeoning lump in his throat as he stared at the shoreline. Part of him wanted to lie down right there on the beach and let the water wash over him. He wondered if such blue water could wash away the dirtiness he felt deep-rooted in his skin.

“You were right,” Harry whispered. “It’s not about me. It’s about helping the Weasleys.”

“…Very well. I’ll have it taken care of as soon as we return to London on Saturday.” Harry sat the shoebox next to the ash tray.

“Thank you.”

There was more he wanted to say. He could feel that much; it left an ache in his chest. His head however, couldn’t seem to string together the words. They were as far out of his reach as the sun, the moon, the stars. Overwhelmed, Harry turned and fled back inside before Draco could respond.

...

Two days later…

*Large hands gripped into his hips hard enough to leave bruises behind. He couldn’t move. He was groaning and crying weakly. His arms were bound tightly over his head. Though his legs were unbound, he couldn’t lift them.*
Try as he might, Harry could not seem to buck off the weight pressing him down to the cold cement.

He felt like he was being ripped in two and the pressure on his shoulders were pulling the ligaments so roughly, he was convinced they were on the verge of snapping. He felt so weak, dazed, and in danger of passing out and he knew it couldn’t have been just water he’d been fed this time around.

Harry opened his teary eyes, and his vision was blurred as he looked around his flat. The rope tying his wrists together was just an old sock hooked around one of the legs of his futon and it wasn’t tight, either. One good tug and he could free himself but still, he couldn’t seem to find the strength in his limbs.

With every push and pull into his body, with every brutal thrust from his attacker, Harry could feel his frontside getting friction burn from the rug beneath him.

“You look like you could use a pillow.”

Harry’s neck craned upward and he met the deranged smile of Gilderoy Lockhart. He was holding a fluffy white pillow in his hands as he crouched down in front of Harry and tried to slide it beneath his head. The pillow was stained red and it wasn’t a pillow, because pillows didn’t have bones or a face—

Harry screamed.

“—up! Harry, open your eyes!”

Harry’s eyes snapped open and he instinctively lashed out at whomever was closest to him. The first blow he managed to land, but the second that followed was deflected and his arm was restrained to his own chest. He gasped for a breath of air as his new glasses were slipped onto his nose.

They were more of a modern-style, and they did fit him nicely. When his boss gave them to him on Monday afternoon, he tried not to question how Draco was able to look up his prescription and order him a new pair from a different country, all without him knowing. As soon as he put them on and could see clearly again, Harry couldn’t find it in him to dwell over the specifics.

Harry let out another shaking breath as the world around him slid into focus. Draco was sitting on the edge of the bed and had a frown on his face while he assessed him. Harry gasped again, trying to slow the hammering in his chest. He was covered in sweat and his eyes were wet like he’d been crying in his sleep. He was holding the older man’s forearm in a death grip but Draco didn’t seem nonplussed by it.

“You’re safe, Harry, I promise you’re safe,” Draco soothed. He tentatively reached out with the arm that Harry wasn’t squeezing and brushed Harry’s fringe from his damp forehead. Though it sent a sequence of somersaults in his belly, Harry let him. “Okay?”

Gradually, the tension in his body faded ever so slightly; his clutch on Draco loosened but did not disengage. “…I’m sorry I woke you,” he mumbled. He averted his gaze and his cheeks flushed in shame. “What—what did I…was I screaming?”

Draco nodded his head minutely, “Only just before you woke up. Before that, you sounded… distressed. I came in here to check on you.”

“Thank you for waking me,” Harry muttered resignedly. He looked down at his hand on Draco’s bare arm. His fingers twitches but didn’t move. His eyes followed the line of his boss’s pale arm, the light dusting of blonde hair, the expanse of muscles that covered his tall form; solid and firm and defined but not overly bulky. Years of having a personal trainer, Harry presumed. Back in his
London flat, the man had a whole room dedicated to workout equipment. Yet, now Harry couldn’t help but wonder if Draco spent more time beating on people rather than his actual punching bag.

Then, a single thought struck him harder than the time his aunt walloped him with a soapy frying pan.

Whereas Harry had become the prey for a handful of twisted individuals, Draco had consistently been a predator. Smart, strong, calculated, proficient.

*Someone like Draco Malfoy would never let himself become the target.*

“I should p—”

“Teach me,” Harry blurted out. Draco’s mouth snapped shut and an elegant eyebrow arched in confusion.

“Teach you?”

Harry felt the swing within him like a pendulum. Filled with a rush of determination, Harry lifted himself to his knees. His eyes itched with tears but he kept them at bay as resolve manifested in his gut.

“I don’t want to feel like this ever again,” he told his boss grimly. Chewing on his lower lip nervously, Harry reached both arms up and framed Draco’s face with his hands. His thumbs rested along sharp cheekbones. The blonde looked perplexed and his grey eyes were regarding him intently. “Draco. I don’t want—” he shook his head angrily and his hands trembled slightly. Draco’s hands reached up and covered his.

Steadying him.

“Teach me. Teach me how to defend myself. Please. *Please*…I don’t want to feel like the fucking *victim* anymore.”

... 

As soon as Harry said the words, Draco’s chest became heavy with a paradoxical blend of relief and apprehension. Whatever he had been expecting Harry to say to him after he gathered Draco’s face in his clammy hands, it hadn’t been…that.

Nevertheless, he watched as a glimmer of life spread across Harry’s features for the first time in nearly a week.

Determination locked his brow. His lips, plump, and perfectly shaped with that prominent cupid’s bow, were turned down, not in a frown but in complete concentration. His eyes were glassy from too many tears shed but they were busy searching Draco’s face for something unbeknownst to Draco.

He kept his hands pressed over Harry’s hands, whether to comfort him or to keep him, he wasn’t certain which.

*Teach me how to defend myself.*

*…”I don’t want to feel like the fucking victim anymore.”*

It wasn’t an expression of forgiveness or acceptance. Nor was it hatred or disgust. Regardless of the unlikeliness of their relationship ever being the same, it was the most reassurance he knew he could
possibly get.

In retrospect, it was far more than he deserved.

Despite the sensibility in Harry’s request, it burdened Draco to know it was because of him that Harry had to make it. If not for Draco’s selfish desires urging him to seek out the bartender, Harry would have probably gone on living his life unscathed. If Draco had not wanted him…

In all his twenty-eight years, Draco had never once been in love. Still, Draco recognized it for what it was, and he knew he was a fool, utterly lost to it.

He met Harry’s verdant eyes and he nodded his head resolutely.

*There wasn’t anything*, he realized with a certain amount of trepidation blooming in his core, *that he would not do for Harry James Potter.*

**END OF ARC THREE**

Chapter End Notes

Parts of this chapter I'm not totally happy with. But TBH, I'm rarely satisfied with my own writing, so maybe I just need to chill.

Hope to see you lovely people in Arc 4!! ;)

“…Right foot in back. Watch your stance.”

“…You’re swimming again; hands up, protect your face.”

“…Better. Elbows in.”

Harry exhaled sharply through his nose and adjusted his form for what felt like the hundredth time before throwing another punch at the target pad. He followed that with several more.

“Good. I want you to remember to keep pivoting your hips. You want to use your body weight to put more force behind each strike.”

“…”

“Much better. Relax, Harry. You look like you are seconds away from tearing your own hair out,” Draco drawled. “Let’s take a break, okay?”

“I just might if I hear you say, ‘mind your form’ one more time,” Harry groused. Careful not to disturb the bandages around his wrists, Harry yanked off his gloves and dropped to the ground, exhausted. Draco handed him a white towel and a bottle of water before settling down across from his sprawled body.

Leaning back on his hands, Draco stretched his legs out in front of him along the matted flooring and crossed them at the ankles casually. “If I’m ever in an actual fight, my form isn’t going to be flawless, you realize,” Harry added as an afterthought. Taking off his glasses, he wiped at the sweat of his face.

“That doesn’t mean I’m going to teach you the wrong way to do things,” Draco admonished as he watched Harry replace his spectacles. “You would be wise to try out the contact lenses, Harry. Your glasses keep slipping down your nose whenever you start to sweat. If you were to lose them—”

“Yeah, I know. It’d leave me vulnerable. Again.” Harry grimaced slightly as he tilted his head back to glug down half his water. He swallowed, some of the liquid dribbling down his chin and then he flopped on his back. “But I don’t like the idea of sticking my fingers in my eyes.”
Wordlessly, the blonde man shifted a second time, bending at the knees. He rested his arms on them. He was dressed in a fitted, sleeveless top that showed just the wing tips of the dragon tattoo covering his back. It was paired with compression tights that left little to the imagination. Whenever he moved, Harry could see lines of muscle in Draco’s legs and arse. The bulge in his front was visible as well, and while Harry's libido still felt out of his reach, his natural attraction to Draco was not. Prick included. Harry’s eyes wandered down south on their own accord.

They were just…really tight. It was the closest Harry had seen the other man to being naked in over a week.

“Well, they are there if you want them,” Draco concluded before taking a sip of his own water. He dragged his fingers through his hair, pulling back the dampened locks. Harry nodded distractedly.

“Thanks. For the contacts, I mean. And for—all of this, too. I know you’re a busy man.” With that, Harry worried his lower lip between his teeth. Running Salazar was one thing, but knowing that Draco was also dealing with San Drac unsettled him.

“I am never too busy for you.” The words were spoken with general nonchalance, but there was a touch of genuine warmth to them that had Harry glancing up at the back of Draco’s head in surprise. Before he could think of a way to respond, Harry’s phone buzzed from across the room.

Body heavy and muscles protesting from over-exertion, Harry slowly climbed to his feet to retrieve it.

“Hi, Ron,” he answered wanly.

“All right there, Harry?”

Harry winced. “Yeah, mate, just tired.”

“Who goes on holiday and comes back knackered?” Ron quipped.

“No, I’ve just been…exercising.”

“Exerci—oh! Oh, bugger! I’m so sorry, mate. Didn’t mean to interrupt—”

“No!” Harry sputtered, wheeling around to shoot a frantic glance at a bemused Draco. The man arched an eyebrow at him as he sipped his water. “No, not that. No. Actual exercise.”

“Since when do you exercise?”

Harry scowled even though Ron couldn’t see him. “I over-indulged while I was on holiday, you wanker.”

Ron chortled loudly. “Yeah, alright. You haven’t gained weight since your last growth spurt, but who am I to judge? Just don’t get too ripped and make me look bad. I like food too much. Speaking of! Come meet me for lunch over at the Hog’s Head, would you? I’m dying for their bangers and mash...Or are you going vegetarian on me now, too?”


“Yeah, yeah. I’ll text you in a bit. Try not to fill up on too much sausage before lunch.”

Harry snorted. “I’ll try to control myself.”

“Oye. See you, mate.”
“Bye, Ron.”

Harry quickly hung up the phone and let out a long sigh. He closed his eyes.

“Are you okay?” Draco’s smooth voice drifted across the room. Harry set his iPhone down and walked back to where he sat.

He bent over to pick up his gloves and put them back on. “Ron wants to meet up for lunch,” he muttered.

Draco climbed to his feet and slid his hands into his padded mitts. He slanted curious eyes over at Harry. “Do you think you’re ready for it?”

Harry shrugged as he stepped back into proper form. “I have to be,” he grunted as he threw another sequence of hits at the target pads. "The world’s going to keep on spinning whether I’m ready or not, isn’t it?"

“No one would expect you to jump back into things, after...everything.”

"I don't want—anyone else—to know—" Harry grunted out in between punches. "I've got to...keep moving forward," he finished.

Draco, who'd simply been holding the target pads for him to strike, stepped forward quickly and swiped at him; the pad of one of the mitts he wore rapped Harry in the forehead before he could block it. "What did I say about swimming?" The blonde tyrant admonished. “You’re leaving your face wide open.”

“Tosser,” Harry muttered under his breath as he swung a right hook with as much force as he could.

Draco blocked it with a smirk.

"There's that fire."

... 

“So, how was Antigua?” Ron teased. Harry grinned sheepishly.

“Bloody brilliant. It didn’t even seem real. The sky is blue, the water is bluer. Nothing at all like London, that’s for sure.”

Ron shook his head, aghast. “That’s some birthday gift, mate.”

“You’re telling me,” Harry said, forcing a soft chuckle. “I couldn’t believe it.”

“I thought you’d be tanner.”

“Er, well…we ended up staying inside a lot.” Ron leered at him. Nudging Ron’s leg with his foot, Harry rolled his eyes. “Don’t even start.”

Ron winked and then his expression faded into serious lines and edges. Slowly, he leaned over the table on his forearms. “Harry,” he began quietly. “Right before you left last week, Mum and Dad told the fam about the pub closing. I don’t know why they’ve waited so long. Well,” his thoughtful frown deepened, “yeah, I do, I guess. I think they're convinced the lot of us are still kids in need of protecting from all the B.S. in life…”

“I’m pretty sure that’s in the parenting handbook,” Harry stated, lips twitching into a brief smile
but his stomach squirmed with nerves at the topic he knew was approaching. He agitated the ice cubes in his water glass with his straw and tried like mad to keep his features schooled.

“No kidding,” Ron replied good-naturedly. “So, all week we’ve been preparing for foreclosure. Put up notices on the windows, had to break the news to the regulars, that sort of stuff. Then, guess what the bloody hell happens out of nowhere?”

Harry blinked owlishly. “What?”

“Someone paid the debt off. All of it. Anonymously.” He eyed Harry carefully.

Harry feigned shock. His hands slid into his lap as he sat back in the worn faux-leather of the booth. “Oh, wow! That’s…awesome, Ron. So, you guys are going to be okay, then? Are your parents happy?”

“Mum started crying and hugging everyone to damn near death. Dad was crying, too. It’s…incredible, mate. I can’t believe it.”

For the first time in over a week, Harry felt true joy blossom within him. He beamed at the redhead. “I’m really happy for you guys.”

“Thanks,” Ron said. He suddenly sounded less excited. “So…How’d you do it?”

Harry’s neck popped as his head jerked up to look at his friend. “Do what?” he asked. Beneath the table, he twisted his hands nervously in his lap and wished he was a better actor.

“I don’t—”

“Harry.”

Just like that, he was found out. Nearly half a year of working overtime, sneaking around, and saving everything he had, and he was finally exposed within seconds of being put on the spot.

It didn’t matter anymore, however. With the debt paid, there was little Ron could do about it, except, perhaps, rat him out to his family, but that was unlikely. It seemed that sometimes even the child felt the need to protect their parents, too.

He lowered his gaze to the tabletop. “I got a job.”


“What?”

“Nothing.”

“Ron!”

Ron winced apologetically, “I thought maybe…Damien…” Harry sighed and rubbed his eyes in vague annoyance.

“Please don’t make me feel like a gold-digger, you prat,” Harry sighed.

“I know!” Ron hurried. “I know, you're not. I’m sorry.”
“He did…end up helping in the long run, though.” Harry admitted with some reluctance as he dropped his hand back down to rest on the table. With a fingernail, he scratched at the grooves in the wood there, pointedly looking away from his best mate. “At the end of February, after you told me you overheard your parents talking about the pub, I went out and got a job.”

“…Where?”

“At a nightclub called Salazar.”

“I’ve heard of that. Isn’t that some swanky, high-end place?”

Harry nodded and cleared his throat. “I saved up everything I earned from there—”

“Harry,” Ron groaned tugging at the roots of his ginger hair.

“I had to help, okay? I couldn’t stand by and watch your family lose their business,” Harry defended.

“Fifteen thousand—”

“I couldn’t get it all together in time. I tried but, I couldn’t. Even with OT and tips, it just wasn’t enough. There wasn’t enough time.”

“…So. Damien?” Ron prompted quietly. He leaned back against the seat and folded his arms over his chest unhappily.

“Yeah,” Harry mumbled. “He offered to put in the rest.”

“Harry…”

“Look,” Harry began steadfastly, “I know you don’t like this sort of thing. Please don’t look at it as charity, Ron. I just wanted to help you guys.”

“Harry.”

“What?”

“You could’ve used that money for yourself. Used it to go to uni, if you wanted. Or-or, hell, even to get up out of this bloody neighborhood! Something. Anything. Shit, Harry.”

“I love you guys. I had to help, however I could.” Harry confessed. A blotchy flush bloomed along the tips of Ron’s ears and neck. His head tilted upward to glare at the ceiling for a while. Finally, he exhaled slowly through his nose before looking back down to Harry. When he did, his eyes looked unnaturally shiny.

“Yeah, well,” Ron started, his voice gruff. “You know we love you, too. You’re a total bugger, though. An infuriating, sneaking, annoyingly lovable bugger. Damn it.” he pressed his fingers to the corners of his eyes, covering his tear ducts balefully. “I swear, Potter, if it were anyone else…”

Harry swallowed thickly.

“Fuck, we’re having a moment, aren’t we?” Ron swore, aghast. He blinked rapidly but his eyes were back to being dry.

“I think we are,” Harry gave a feeble snort, glimpsing away to stave off his own emotions.

Ron wagged his head wildly and swigged at his beer. “Christ, I really hate this sappy shit. Do a
bloke a solid and change the subject, would you?"

Harry shook his own head, reaching for a new topic. His mind worked to churn out something light-hearted but with truth unfolding between them, Harry couldn’t seem to jump off the honesty train. “—I’m dating Draco Malfoy,” he blurted.

Ron gaped.

“You play quite nicely. I suppose I wasn’t expecting that.”

Harry’s fingers faltered on the guitar strings and he craned his neck around to see the blonde-haired man standing in the doorway of the guestroom. “Oh! Crap, I’m sorry to bother you. I didn’t think you’d be home this early,” he rushed setting the instrument to the side.

“Home,” Draco repeated in a low voice, more to himself than to Harry, before he reached up and brushed away the pale strands of hair that were obstructing his view. He studied Harry closely. “My last meeting of the day ended earlier than anticipated. How long have you been playing guitar?”

“Seven—no, going on eight years, now.” Harry smiled slightly. “I started in my freshman year of high school. Music class. It was an elective. I took it because I needed the credits in order to graduate and thought it would be fun. My cousin, Dudley heard it was an easy-A, so he signed up as well. It turned out to be the only class we had together that year, but that also meant I had to watch my back extra hard in case he tried to pull something.”

“Did he?”

“Usually,” Harry said with a small shrug. “One day, right at the beginning of first term, he shoved me into the percussion section when no one else was looking. I fell into one of the drums and snapped it into pieces. Dudley and his cronies told our teacher it was just me goofing around.”

“Your teacher believed them over you?”

“I didn’t say anything against them. I knew better than to argue with my cousin or I’d get it worse as soon as I got home. But, no. Flitwick didn’t believe Dudley at all. He still gave me detention, though.”

“You appear to be rather fond over something others might perceive as an injustice,” Draco claimed as he pushed away from the door frame. He stopped a few paces away from Harry but made no move to sit down or touch him.

“Flitwick made me stay after school to help clean up the classroom and organize all the sheet music. He just sat there, perched up on his stool and strumming away at his guitar while I worked. I was fretting over what my relatives were going to say when I got home. Dudley always had a way of playing them against me in the most creative of ways. So, of course I was nervous about that. Or I tried to be, but my focus on punishment kept getting lost in the music he was playing.”

“I see. So, this Mister Flitwick taught you?”

“No. My relatives would never have let me stay after school to learn. There were chores to be done and dinner to be made, right?” Harry said mildly. “In the beginning he offered, but I had to tell him no. Still, he kept encouraging me.

"He had a class to teach during my lunch period, but he started leaving one of the smaller rooms
reserved for private lessons unlocked for me during that time. He also left behind his personal guitar and some beginner’s books in there. So, every day, fourth period, I ended up teaching myself how to play. But it was Flitwick who didn’t give up on me. I think I needed that more than I realized, at the time."

Harry ran a finger down the length of the instrument absentmindedly. “I saved money for months to buy this thing. I’m relieved it wasn’t destroyed.”

“Play something for me?” Draco’s soft request came after a brief pause.

“Er,” Harry began with a shy grin, "To tell you the truth, I’m more of a ‘play-while-no-one’s listening’ kind of guy.”

“What a shame. From the little I heard, you have a real talent.”

Harry felt himself redden at the compliment. Leaning over, he propped the guitar against the bedpost. “...Thanks.”

“I am just being honest.”

Feeling altogether too warm, Harry stood up and pulled his hoodie up over his head. He let it drop on the floor and straightened the hem of his t-shirt as he turned to face Draco.

“Speaking of honesty,” Harry started uncertainly, "Ron knows.”

“…He knows?” Draco repeated. His face was blank but his eyes darkened with a shadow of wariness.

“About the money and me working at Salazar. He knows you helped pay off the loan.”

“You told your friend about me?”

“Yeah,” Harry said, shirking out of his trousers. He kicked them aside as he reached for a pair of pajama bottoms instead. He brushed his fringe away as he glanced back up. “The real you.”

Harry noted the subtle way the older man stiffened. For a moment, he didn’t understand why, and when he did, he was putting a hand up in what he hoped was a placating way. “No! Not—I meant. Not that,” he rushed to add, “He knows about Damien being—you. Draco. Not about—” Harry wagged his head violently as he flopped down onto the edge of the mattress.

“Relax, Harry,” Draco commanded lightly.

Harry scrubbed a hand down his face. “This is hard,” he confessed.

“I know, it is.”

“I told him we were dating. Maybe I shouldn’t have. I don’t know. I feel like I don’t know much of anything these days.”

Draco came forward until he was standing in front of Harry and he slowly crouched down before him. He stared up into Harry’s face searchingly.

“What can I do?” his words were quiet but there was an undercurrent of concern as palms rotated from their place on the bed to rest along Harry’s outer thighs. His thumbs stroked to-and-fro soothingly. Harry’s heart stammered in his chest and something expanded in his belly that he couldn’t assign a feeling to. He couldn’t seem to ignore it, either.
His hand reached up to cup the side of Draco’s neck and for a moment, Harry wanted nothing more than to pull him in for a kiss. If the glimmer of want he saw deep-rooted in the other man’s face was anything to go by, he didn’t think Draco would have minded.

He could do it.

He could close the distance between them, slip off the bed and into the man’s willing arms and surrender to the fragmented desire of his body. But what, he wondered, would his brain have to say to that? Despite his feelings, he knew he wasn’t ready to find out.

“Stay with me?” Harry whispered. He felt pathetic.

“I’m not going anywhere.”

“No. I mean…” He gestured with his head toward the bed.

“You’re asking me to stay in the bed with you?” Draco clarified.

“Just…sleep.”

Draco reached up and removed the hand Harry still had on his neck. He pressed a featherlight kiss to Harry’s knuckles and smiled faintly when Harry did.

“Just sleep,” Draco promised.

…

Three days later...

“Slide?” suppressing the urge to roll his eyes to the heavens, Harry pointed obediently.

“Frame?” Harry pointed.

“Slide catch.”

Point.

“Magazine—let me finish! Magazine release.”

Point.

“Barrel.”

Point.

“Trigger.”

“You’ve got to be kidding me.” Harry said, exasperated.

“Where is the trigger, Harry?” Harry jabbed his finger at it. “Since you were so keen on placing your finger on it as soon as I handed you the gun earlier,” Draco chastised.

“Didn’t I apologize for that, already?” Harry sighed, cheeks pinking in guilt and annoyance. Admittedly, Harry knew next to nothing about firearms. He’d never actually held one before, until Draco handed him the Glock 19 from the holster he wore. Harry only had it in his hands for a second before the older man was reaming him a new arsehole for aiming the weapon at him, for holding it
improperly, and for being an overall, irresponsible dunderhead.

What ensued, was an hour-long lecture on proper gun safety, which Draco claimed was still an abridged version. Harry didn't doubt that, either.

"And what did we learn?" prompted Draco sternly.

"That you love to hear yourself talk?"

"Harry."

"...Never put my finger on the trigger unless I'm planning to shoot the gun," quoted Harry with a hint of snark.

"And?"

Harry's eye twitched. "...And never aim the gun at something I don't intend to destroy."

Draco gave a curt nod, seemingly satisfied enough with that answer. "Good boy. Where is...the grip?"

“Um, I dunno, where I’m gripping it, maybe—ow!” Harry hissed at the sharp slap to the back of his shoulder that didn’t really hurt but left him feeling indignant.

“Be serious. This is serious.”

“For a gangster, you’re rather uptight about guns,” Harry bit out before he could stop himself. His throat closed immediately following the statement and he dared to sneak a glance at the blonde beside him. Draco’s arms were crossed as he was quizzing Harry, like a surly professor that didn’t have a sense of humor. At his words, however, Draco merely raised an unimpressed eyebrow.

“Front sight.”

Another point, humbler this time.

“Rear si—yes, good. Chamber.”

Point.

“Hmm,” Draco hummed coolly, “Disassemble it.”

“I literally just—”

“Again, Harry. I want you to be able to do it in your sleep.”

Harry put zero effort into concealing his groan as he released the magazine and set out to take apart the gun. Draco shifted behind him, one hand on the back of his chair and the other pressed on the table, hovering. If he was trying to be an insufferable prat, he was more than successful, Harry thought grumpily.

…

“Keep your focus on the front sight, not directly at the target...why on earth do you look so constipated?” Draco questioned him dryly. Harry lowered the hand gun slightly, but he didn’t step out of his stance or adjust his grip. It took him too long to get it to Draco’s standards, as it were.
“I can’t see the target clearly when I do that,” Harry protested, disgruntled. "It freaks me out."

“Must I get into this with you, again?” Draco’s crisp voice was muffled by Harry’s headgear but his exasperation was evident.

“Please don’t, I beg of you.”

“Then you should do as I say without questioning my methods, darling.” Draco chided with unconcealed arrogance. He reached out and took the gun from Harry. “I think we’re done for today. There is a matter I’ve been needing to discuss with you. Come along.”

He returned the weapon to his right side. Harry removed his headgear and let it hang around his neck as he shadowed Draco to the exit. In a single step, they exchanged the coolness of the indoor shooting range for mid-August heat and muted sunlight behind grey storm clouds. Nott was propped against the BMW, waiting for them.

“What did you want to talk about?” Harry asked him quietly as soon as the door to the car shut them inside.

“There is some business I need to take care of overseas,” Draco stated and Harry’s stomach roiled apprehensively. He gripped the leather seat beneath him for an anchor as the car drove down the street.

“Oh.” Harry licked his dry lips, trying to sound casual. He didn’t know what was making him more nervous; the fact Draco was leaving in general, or the fact Draco was leaving on a ‘business’ trip. Going overseas didn't automatically imply he was partaking in illegal activity, he reminded himself. Draco had plenty of other business ventures. A mogul through and through.

Once again, Harry found himself face-to-face with a situation where he had to decide whether to walk away or turn a blind eye. And, if he chose naïveté, was he equally as guilty of Draco’s crimes? ...Or, was he just preferring to acknowledge the good he knew existed in the man he—loved? Harry didn't think there could be a right answer for something like this.

“For how long?” Harry swallowed around the dryness that had come to consume his throat.

“I shouldn't be gone longer than two weeks.”

“When?”

“Tomorrow.”

“Oh. Alright, then,” was all Harry could summon. He turned his head and pressed his forehead to the tinted glass of the window. The motion of the car made his head rattle. Feeling smothered by his dread, Harry tried to clear his mind and focus on nothing but the droplets of rain that began to pelt down on the congested London street.

... 

While Harry was fairly certain it was a basic part of human nature to seek companionship of some sort, up until half a year ago, Harry had been fine being on his own. Despite his love for the Weasley family, he didn't think he would have survived growing up in that kind of chaos. He needed his independence.

So why, Harry wondered, frustrated with his own irrationality, did he feel like a fish out of water at the prospect of Draco leaving the country for two weeks?
Kobe, Japan.

Come tomorrow, there would be nearly ten thousand kilometers separating them.

He shoved his worry and self-doubt away with no small amount of scorn. He was stronger than this. He was not this co-dependent, meek little thing that needed to hide behind a protector.

After all, wasn’t that the point of all these lessons; to learn how to stand on his own two feet again… to protect himself? To prove to himself, that regardless of the men who wronged him, he was not a victim.

Careful not to disturb the man beside him, Harry rolled over to situate himself on his belly. Draco’s body was relaxed with sleep. He looked even younger than his twenty-eight years when he was slumbering peacefully like this. In his efforts to assure Harry’s comfort, the blonde wore a full set of pajamas instead of just his typical boxer-briefs.

The bed in the guestroom wasn’t as plush nor was it nearly as big as the one in the master, but Draco hadn’t complained about it once. Draco, who also claimed to not be much of a cuddler, didn’t seem to mind waking up with Harry nestled against him every morning like a koala bear. Harry blamed that one on the lack of mattress space.

They still hadn’t kissed.

Not once.

Shadows enshrouded the room, covering most of Draco’s face, but Harry couldn’t tear his eyes away from Draco’s mouth. He missed snogging the bloke. He missed touching him and being touched. He missed having one of those toe-curling orgasms wrung out of him by the other man’s ministrations.

At the same time, the prospect of such intimacy again set his teeth on edge. Could someone both want sex and not want sex at the same time?

Huffing, Harry buried his face into his pillow and tried desperately to silence the turbulence in his mind before it threatened to crack open his skull.

…

“Zabini and Nott will be in house with you, and I have a dozen other men keeping an eye on things,” Draco murmured to him as he buttoned the jacket of his suit. Harry was standing in the doorway to the bathroom watching him as he prepared to leave. “They’ve both have orders to keep up with our current training regimen,” he added.

Harry snorted, “I bet Zabini is thrilled.”

The corners of Draco’s mouth upturned. "He said he’d rather have to deal with a plague of locusts than with Harry Potter."

“That fuckwit,” Harry said without missing a beat, the insult eliciting a low chuckle from Draco.

“Please behave,” Draco said, walking over to him. Harry bristled indignantly. “Don’t start a war with Blaise.”

“I always behave,” he snarked, crossing his arms in a defensive pose. "He's the one who starts it!"

“Of course.” Amused eyes flitted down his face and lingered on Harry’s mouth for a split second.
Long fingers twiched like they longed to reach out and grab him, but then Draco was moving briskly passed him to collect his suitcase and the moment, whatever it was, was gone as quickly as it came.

Harry couldn’t ignore the disappointment that trickled through him as he followed Draco out of the room. A tall man he didn’t recognize stood by the door to the penthouse and took Draco’s luggage from him with a short bow.

“I will be down momentarily,” the blonde said in dismissal. When the suit left, Harry looked at him curiously. “One of my father’s men,” Draco elaborated with an offhanded wave of his hand. “Two weeks, okay? Work hard, train hard. Listen to Nott and Zabini—do not give me that look, please—and do try not to point the gun at one of your poor, unsuspecting bodyguards.”

“Oh, piss off. It was one time! Can't make any promises now, though. I'm competing with a plague of locusts, after all. Have a nice trip,” Harry said with a cheeky wave.

With a small smirk of his own, Draco shook his head and turned to leave. Harry’s resolve all but crumpled as Draco reached for the door handle.

Harry’s arm came out to seize his forearm, staying him. He didn’t give Draco the opportunity to ask what the hold-up was—as soon as Draco turned back to face him, Harry pounced.

Much like the first time they’d ever kissed, Harry was grabbing his boss by the lapels of his jacket and pulling him in to snog him with everything he had before his own head could talk him out of the impulse. He felt the sharp intake of breath against his lips before he closed the distance between them.

Solely from the press of their mouths, Harry felt his previous reservations crack and crumble, breaking along the already existing fault lines. Instinctively, Draco’s arm closed around his back and Harry, spurred on by the lip lock, spurred on by the subtle tongue and the graze of teeth as the kiss deepened, pushed his body up against the blonde’s.

Draco’s hands swept down and were guiding Harry’s legs up by the backs of his thighs, not far enough for Harry to lock around his waist but enough for his toes to barely skim across the floor as Draco propelled them both back into the living room in a rushed, half-arsed carry that neither cared lacked finesse.

Amidst their snogging, Harry found himself being pressed down along the length of the couch. He shoved a pillow that got in their way to the floor and allowed himself to get lost. He got lost in the way Draco’s hands were carding through his hair and roaming down his body like he couldn’t get enough of Harry. Draco wasn’t holding him down, but he was blanketing him with his weight. It felt more securing than restricting.

When the other man came up for air, Harry’s head lifted to chase his lips but Draco had already moved down his jaw, nipping and peppering it with the little open-mouthed kisses Harry relished in.

*It was Draco. Draco, who always knew exactly what he liked.*

In what he hoped was an inconspicuous action, Harry opened his eyes to steal a peek at the man kissing along his neck and—and yes, it was Draco.

He was okay, *this* was okay...

_Buzz._
Draco reared back with an irritated growl deep in his throat. Still kneeling over Harry on the couch, he reached into his pocket and answered his phone.

“I am on my way, father,” Draco said curtly, summoning a surprising amount of composure, considering what they’d been up to. Then again, this was also the man who’d fucked him during a business call from Russia. Harry laid on his back beneath him, breathing heavily and feeling heady with desire. “Yes, I am aware that we are on a tight schedule...Yes, sir...Right away, sir.” The line went dead and Draco closed his eyes to quell the irritation no doubt creeping within him.

Harry watched as the light left his features, his face locking down into steadfast stoicism. Apparently one could only call themselves a Malfoy if they perfected the art of having an impenetrable poker-face. Draco exhaled inaudibly and then he studied Harry, one hand reaching down to brush the back of a knuckle along the side of his face. Harry leant his cheek into the caress.

“I have to go,” Draco said, climbing to his feet.

“You do,” Harry agreed.

“Just so we are clear...I loathe having to leave you.”

“You and me both,” Harry admitted with a breathless chuckle. He sat upright. Taking the proffered hand, he allowed himself to be pulled off the couch. Slyly, he also added, “Who else is going to harp on me about proper form?”

Draco scoffed. He squeezed the hand he held and gave Harry a little reprimanding shake. “I give you a day under Zabini’s tutelage before you call me and beg me to come back home.”

“You’re on.” Harry poked Draco in the chest before he was swept into another kiss, more chaste this time, but effective.

“Take care of yourself, Harry,” Draco murmured against his mouth, grey eyes surveying him attentively as he pulled away. Harry was buzzing from the warm thrill his touch left behind.

“You too, Draco.”

Even as he watched Draco leave, the promise lingering in the air between them was electric. Harry ran the tip of his finger along the seam of his lips and smiled.

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Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the longer wait for this chapter, guys. Unfortunately I haven't had much time to really sit down and write lately and then lacked proper motivation to edit (which ends up taking more time for me to do than actually writing a chapter). Then this last week I got sick, so I've been drugged in bed feeling like I lost a boxing match against Andre the Giant and the seven dwarves.
I'm sorry for any ridiculous errors. A lot of the editing for this had to be done on my iPhone and it's a temperamental bitch to correct things with.

Anyway, I hope this chapter wasn't too disappointing, especially since you guys had to wait a while for it!

One last note! This arc isn't very plot-heavy; it's very much Drarry-centric as we try to smooth out some of the rough edges in their relationship. If there's anything you're dying to see happen between them, let me know and if it works, I can try to include it. (:
“Rise and shine, your highness. It’s time for your lesson.”

Light penetrated through Harry’s closed eyelids unpleasantly, waking him from his sleep. Harry grunted unintelligibly and eased his eyes open against the rather blinding early morning sun. Zabini was perched against the doorframe, his warm mocha skin and jet black attire a sharp contrast to the pristine white of the wall. In one hand, he held an iPad mini and he was swiping his finger along it lazily. The blinds in the bedroom window moved up and down with the trajectory of his finger.

The sunlight shuttered, disappearing and reappearing vividly. It made Harry’s sleepy brain ache. He clenched his eyes tight, reached blindly for a nearby pillow. He seized one in a fist and threw it in Zabini’s direction.

“I do hope you’re a better marksman, because your pillow-throwing isn’t reassuring in the slightest.”

“Bugger off, Zabini,” Harry growled.

“Wish I could,” the other man replied smoothly. “Unfortunately, the Boss has you on a pretty tight schedule.”

“Schedule?” Harry repeated, blinking slowly.

“Yes.”

“Like, he has my entire day planned out?”

“I am so thrilled you know what a schedule is. Saves me from having to pull out Oxford’s bloody Dictionary for you.”

Ignoring the sarcasm, Harry eased himself into an upright position. “Why does Draco have me on a schedule?” he asked with a frown.

“To keep you out of trouble, I imagine.”

Harry bristled. He might’ve (secretly) loved Draco, but he still had a tendency to be an overbearing prat when the mood struck him.
Zabini turned off the tablet and held it loosely at his side. His other arm came up to rest on his hip as he glared down at Harry impatiently. “Listen, Potter. What the Boss wants, the Boss gets. He may not be here to coach you in your training, but he knows that it is in your best interest to continue, with or without him. Now you can refuse, and try your best to get through life as a sitting duck or, you can do as the Boss advises, get your arse out of that bed, and get moving.”

Harry’s lips pressed together in a scowl. He and Draco had been getting up for the last week even earlier than this, sometimes. They’d spend several hours every day doing kickboxing, cardio, or weight training—and, if they had the time for it, target practice at the shooting range. If they didn’t, Harry still found himself getting schooled about guns one way or another. If he had to disassemble and reassemble a pistol one more time…

Still, he was grateful to Draco for taking the time to teach him…for empowering him. After everything, it was what he needed above all else. Nevertheless, the man also left him under Zabini’s guidance for two weeks despite knowing the likelihood of them surviving each other’s company was slim-to-none. To add fuel to the fire, he handed the demon bodyguard a schedule, with instructions to follow them.

“Is there an allotted slot of time on the schedule for me to take a piss or can I just go ahead and…?” he called out with mock cheeriness as Zabini strode out of the room at a brisk pace. The man offered nothing in reply but Harry still counted it as a win.

“Bloody hell!” Harry gasped as he was slammed onto the ground seconds after he walked into the penthouse gym. The mats layered over the floor provided a couple centimeters of padding, but it was not enough to cushion the blow of being bodily slammed onto the ground. With the air knocked out of his lungs, he stared up in a daze at the ceiling until Zabini’s unimpressed face swam into view.

“What was that for?”

“You must not have a lot of overnight guests,” Harry grumbled as he sat up and rubbed the back of his head. Nott, dressed in clothing similar to Zabini’s, came up behind him, gripped him beneath his armpits and hauled him to his feet. “How’s your shoulder?” Harry asked Zabini drolly with a thankful nod towards Nott.

“Just brilliant. Clearly, I’m in no shape to be doing this with you, so Theo will be your partner and you will follow my instruction.”

“If Nott’s my partner, then why’d you just attack me?”

“I thought I might find it to be therapeutic,” Zabini said. Before Harry could say anything in return, Zabini and Nott were walking further into the room, towards the pair of treadmills. Nott took the one on the left and immediately started off in a light run, increasing his speed and incline as he went. Deciding to take the high road, Harry wordlessly climbed onto the second one that Zabini was waiting beside expectantly. He turned it on and brought the speed up to an easy jog.

He carried on for maybe thirty seconds before Zabini came closer and started adjusting his pace. Harry winced as he was forced to run faster and batted the man’s hands away. He was sent a threatening glare. “No,” Zabini chided.

“This—oh fuck, stop!” Harry gasped as he was jarred into going faster. He grabbed the side bar to
steady himself but Zabini pushed his hand off it. “This is—supposed to be—warm-up!” he snarled breathlessly.

“Not today,” Zabini answered, eerily calm. “Today, you are running for your life.”

“On a treadmill?” he wheezed.

“You see a treadmill. I see…three men in pursuit of you. They’re armed and dangerous and want to kill you. Run, Potter. And don’t stop running...”

Harry’s heart was hammering in his chest as he ran, feet pounding frantically against the machine beneath him. He tried to throw Zabini a dirty look but he didn’t think he pulled it off well because his body was too busy pumping the blood through his veins and flooding his ears with it.

Harry ran. He might not have been able to throw Zabini bodily on the ground like he’d done to Harry, but at the very least he wasn’t lacking in stamina.

At first, Harry pretended it was Dudley and his gang chasing him. He sprinted along until Zabini pressed the upward arrow again, and then Dudley became Nott and Crabbe, trailing after him in the park.

He was running through a shroud of trees, snapping twigs underneath his trainers, adrenaline high as his instinct to flee took over...

Even faster, now.

Nott and Crabbe turned into a crowd of masked men in a dark van, reaching out for him. But this time Harry was ready, and he wasn’t slowing down to look behind him. He was going to keep running and running until—

Zabini stopped the treadmill and the belt beneath Harry’s feet slowed down. With his heart in his throat and sweat beading into his eyes, Harry barely had time to push his slipping glasses up the bridge of his nose before Nott stepped over to his treadmill and seized him around the waist from behind. He was dragged to the center of the room, away from the machines and the rest of the equipment, to where Draco and he had spent the last week sparring.

Nott shoved him forward. Harry stumbled into the corner and turned, pressing his back into the wall, more than a little out of breath and dumbfounded. Zabini and Nott loomed menacingly close by and there was no way Harry could slip around them. Nott looked at him with a curious glint in his hazel eyes, like he wanted Harry to prove something to them. Beside him, Zabini didn’t look like he expected anything promising from Harry.

“And now you are cornered. Pity,” he drawled. “Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide, and no one to come to your rescue.”

“Oh, piss off. You made your point, okay?” Harry said coldly. In a counterproductive move, he wiped at the sweat from his brow with an equally sweaty arm.

“And what, pray tell, is the point I am trying to make?”

Fury spiked up Harry’s spine. “That I don’t know what the fuck I’m doing!”

“Sure, you do.”

Flummoxed, Harry shot him an inquisitive look.
“You know exactly what you’re doing. You’re playing the victim, Potter,” Zabini finished at the same time Nott murmured a soft, “Blaise...” in warning.

Harry’s nostrils flared. Straightening up, he hissed, “I am not—”

“Yes, you are. You are the victim. You were running for your life and now you’ve been caught, cornered, and are going to die like a dog in an alley with no one around to save you. Unless...” the corner of his mouth lifted in a challenging smirk. He glanced over and shared a silent exchange with Nott before his eyes swiveled back to Harry’s damp face and messy hair.

“Unless what?” Harry repeated, hands curling into fists at his sides. Anger barreled around in his chest like an animal trying to break out of its cage at the zoo. He wanted to knock Zabini’s smirk from his face and shove it up his arse.

“Unless you learn to save yourself.”

The words hadn’t even registered with Harry before Nott advanced on him. His hands wrapped around Harry's throat in a firm grip, unrelenting, but not choking. Harry’s hands wrapped around the other man’s wrists.

With wide eyes, he tried to push him away. His fingers scrabbled at Nott's, trying to pry them off. Instead of faltering however, Nott merely tightened his hold on him. The threat was clear.

Realistically, he knew Nott wouldn’t hurt him—but he could, so easily, like this. Harry felt his lungs flutter in apprehension and pulled harder at his wrists.

Zabini reached out and took his arm. He guided it off Nott's. “Lift your shoulders to relieve some of the pressure,” he advised, voice considerably less harsh than it had been moments ago, “And sweep your arms down across his, like you’re chopping something. You want to break his hold on you.”

Harry did as he was told, not overly hard, but enough to demonstrate what Zabini was instructing. Nott let go easily, which proved that he wasn’t really trying to cause him any harm.

Then, his hands raised and latched around his throat once more.

“Good. But unless your opponent is a seventy-year-old man, that’s not always going to be enough, is it? So, now you’re going to bring your knee up.”

“Huh?”

“Knee to groin, Potter,” Zabini elaborated with a sigh. “Like before, you want to bring your arms down as hard as you can. It may not break his hold, but it will divert his attention to what’s going to happen down below.”

Lips parted slightly, Harry did as he was told; he brought his arms down across Nott’s and pulled his knee up to the man’s crotch. Quite a bit harder than he intended. Nott made a sharp nose as he broke away and bent over at the waist.

“Not really!” Zabini said incredulously. “Christ, Potter!”

“Shit! Nott, I am so sorry. I am so, so sorry, I swear, I didn’t mean to—”

“Damn good think I didn’t have you do an eye jab, too,” Zabini muttered. Nott and Harry both glared at him, wholly unamused.

...
“I think you may be exaggerating,” Draco stated wryly in his ear. Harry shifted in the bath gingerly, trying not to get the phone wet.

“I’m not,” Harry said stubbornly. “It was bad. I was really, really rubbish. People make it look so effortless in the movies.”

“Don’t be discouraged. Nott and Zabini both informed me that you did rather well for your first-time.”

“I’m not discouraged…just, frustrated with myself, mostly. Wait. They said that?” Harry asked in disbelief, pausing in the middle of his half-hearted scrubbing. Setting his washcloth aside, Harry leaned back and stretched his body out.

“They did. Don’t be so surprised, Harry.”

“I had my arse handed to me,” Harry said. He tried not to sound too bitter. Years of growing up in a rougher neighborhood and with a cousin like Dudley, no less, Harry had thought he'd have no trouble mastering self-defense lessons. To be fair, he'd also been outnumbered, but his pride took a bit of a hit on or around the eleventeenth time he'd gotten knocked on his arse.

“They did precisely what they were instructed to do. From what Nott reported, you are a quick study with even quicker reflexes. Zabini informed me you were very resilient. Well, I think the word he used was ‘feisty’. Those are not bad qualities to possess at all, Harry. To be quite frank, I expected nothing less from you.”

“You…” Harry blinked twice. He almost smiled at the compliments but instead, a scowl formed along his lips. “Let me get this straight. You told them to knock me around six-ways-to-Sunday? You—you told Nott to strangle me in twenty different positions and then instructed Zabini to pull a knife on me?”

“…Perhaps not in so many words. And the knife was rubber.”

“Yeah? Well, I didn’t know that at first!” Harry said, his voice unnaturally shrill.

“I told them to do what I could not,” Draco replied evenly.

“What do you mean by that?”

“I mean, Harry, that I was going easier on you than I should have.”

“You…” Harry stilled for a moment. His eyes absently traced the pattern of the tiled wall as he absorbed Draco’s confession. He wanted to claim that Draco hadn’t gone easy on him at all. He wanted to point out the fact he practically wiped the floor with him every sparring session they had together.

His mind conjured the memory of Zabini wielding a knife, of Nott holding him down in a choke hold. Although he hadn’t been truly hurt, he couldn’t imagine replacing Zabini and Nott with Draco. Draco, with a knife pointed at him, rubberized prop or not. Draco, with his hands wrapped around Harry's throat.

He couldn’t do it.

More so, it seemed, Draco didn’t want Harry to envision him that way. Despite his desire to teach Harry how to protect himself, Draco admitted to loving him. Like pieces of a puzzle falling into place, Harry knew, without him needing to say so aloud, that Draco really had gone easy on him. He
had held back, because he didn’t want to villainize himself in Harry’s eyes. He didn’t want to be the one Harry needed to protect himself from.

What Harry didn’t know, however, was if Draco’s reticence was for Harry’s sake or his own.

Instead of telling Draco that he understood, or at the very least that he could never see Draco as the villain, Harry simply huffed, “Yeah, well, I kind of want to push Zabini out of the window. It’s a long way down.”

“Please try not to break both of my best men.”

“Nott’s fine, now!” Harry said to his defense. He raised a leg out of the tub and watched as the soap and water slid away. He wriggled his toes before lowering it back down. “I like Nott. Zabini can go choke.”

“You two behave like naughty children in desperate need of discipline,” Draco sighed.

“Hmm, what, are you going to come home and spank me?” Harry quipped. The words tumbled out of his mouth before he could stop them. His fingers twitched around his phone nervously and a blush tinged his cheeks. Draco went quiet for a half of a beat.

“As tempting as that sounds, I do have business to take care of here, first,” the other man murmured lowly.

Harry let out a feeble chuckle. “Damn. Can’t blame a guy for asking, right?” he asked. He slapped himself in the forehead, hard. Idiot. He leaned his head back and looked at the ceiling of the bathroom, wishing that the shadows painting the corners of the room would sweep down and swallow him whole.

Silence. Then, “Harry?”

“Ignore me. I’m beat and talking nonsense,” Harry said quickly.

“Harry.”

"Please."

“As you wish.”

Harry’s resolve bled out into the water he bathed in. “I…I miss you,” he whispered honestly. He sounded so pathetic to his own ears and he bit his lip hard for a split second and then added, “I miss…it’s not that I don’t want to—”

“You do not have to explain yourself to me.”

“I want to,” Harry told him. He inhaled a steadier breath. “I miss…touching you. And I miss you touching me. But I don’t know if I’m…” he drew his wet knees up to his chest and wrapped his free arm around them as he spilt his thoughts into the phone.

He didn’t know if this was easier, discussing this while Draco was abroad, where Harry couldn’t see him. On one hand, he felt braver not having to be under the scrutiny of Draco’s soul piercing stare. On the other…he couldn’t gage Draco’s reaction. He couldn’t try to figure out what he was thinking as Harry spoke. He faked bravado, “I’m not all the way there, yet. I want to be. But I’m not, and I don’t know how to get back to...”
He heard the faint sounds of Draco’s breathing on the other end. He imagined the blonde man dressed in one of his expensive suits, sitting in an armchair on the highest floor of some fancy hotel. He’d be smoking a cigarette for sure, and probably sipping on overpriced scotch from the minibar while staring out of a big window at the evening sky. He was eight hours ahead of them, in Japan.

“Are you still in the bath?” Draco asked him softly.

“Yeah.”

“In the master or guest?”

“Master,” Harry mumbled, feeling sheepish. “I like your bath salts and—” it reminded him of bathing with Draco; of spooning their wet bodies against one another.

It recalled memories of washing each other with tender strokes of a wash cloth in between featherlight kisses. Those thoughts were a balm, healing the cuts inflicted on him by Tom Riddle.

“Close your eyes for me, Harry. Can you do that for me?”

“Uh, sure.” A little uncertain as to what Draco was planning, Harry let his eyes close anyway.

“Relax. How’s the temperature feel?”

“’s nice.” And it was. The warmth of the bathwater combined with scented bath salts had a soothing effect as they seeped into overworked muscles.

“Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth, nice and slow,” Draco instructed, his voice still a low caress to Harry’s ear. Harry obeyed. He drew in several deep breaths and let them out and slowly, he felt himself sink further into the water. His head rested on the padded pillow comfortably.

“Will you try something for me?”

“Hm? Yeah, sure,” Harry sighed peacefully into the iPhone.

“Place your hand on your thigh.” Draco must have noticed the hitch in his breathing because he continued to add, unbothered, “Only if you want to, Harry.”

“Um, yeah, yeah—I uh, okay. Hand, thigh, got it.”

“Relax. Keep your eyes closed and breathe. Think of my hand on your thigh. Just mine.”

“Yours,” Harry mumbled, chewing on his lip. He was embarrassed and curious at the same time; uncertain and excited. He pictured Draco’s hand, a bit bigger than Harry’s, but smoother, with nails carefully groomed. His fingers were long and graceful. Harry curled his own fingers against his skin gently.

“Drag your hand up from your thigh to your naval, just like how I would when I touch you.” Harry found himself complying, his nails raking ever so slightly in a straight line from his thigh, up passed his hipbone, and then his fingertips skimmed inward toward his belly button. He shivered and kept his eyes closed.

He could feel the awkward flush in his face but even so, his prick twitched with interest as goosebumps ignited along his skin. He shifted in the water a little. “Do you like when I touch you like that, Harry? Do you like when I run my hands along your body, caressing every part of you with my fingers?”
Much too self-aware, Harry found himself nodding and then when he realized Draco couldn’t see him, he puffed out a little “yeah,” and then his face reddened further and his arousal stirred because he knew he’d be lying if he said otherwise. Draco’s voice tapered down to a purr. It reverberated through Harry’s head and spread agreeably all the way to the tips of his toes.

“If I was there, if you’d let me, I’d touch your nipples next. I would roll them and pinch them—lightly, at first. I’d flick my tongue over each one, licking and teasing them until they are hard and peaked and you’re making those delicious little moans that I love so much.”

Harry’s breathing faltered again and his hand traveled up to his chest on their own accord to tweak his nipples like Draco was describing. He imagined the man’s mouth on him.

There’d been times when Draco had spent minutes upon minutes just at his chest, playing with his nipples until they puckered, sucking and nipping at them, leaving little marks behind to decorate Harry’s chest. His body quaked again and the invisible thread that seemed to connect his nipples to his groin trembled and pulsed with pleasure until Harry’s cock was fully hard.

He let out a small, breathy groan and shifted in the tub again. Like an engraving in the backing of his eyelids, Harry could see Draco’s smirking lips and sinful tongue.

Fuck.

He didn’t have much time to feel mortified by how easily he became erect because Draco was speaking once more through the phone.

“I know you like that. Your body is so sensitive. I could spend hours learning you over and over, again. I have, haven’t I? Tell me Harry, where do you want my hands?”

Harry’s heartbeat spiked at his words. He’d barely touched himself and he was already squirming. He’d jerked off in the past, to thoughts of sex with Draco, but never...never had they done this.

Never this, with Draco’s voice liquid heat in his ear, encouraging Harry to play with himself while he painted a picture and composed the lustful words to go along with fantasy.

Harry’s lower lip trembled with a neediness that had been suppressed for too long. He’d thought, at one point not too long ago, that he was fine living a relatively abstinent life. He didn’t need sex to be content, like most men seemed to need. He hadn’t even partaken too often in pleasuring himself. Masturbation was more or less a thing he did to take care of unprovoked morning wood or to relieve an abnormal amount of stress. More chore than fun.

It wasn’t that he disliked sex or found it unpleasant. Quite the opposite, really. He’d just never been so...driven by his baser instincts. Not until Draco came along and awoke something inside him. Clearing his throat, Harry only managed a raspy, “Lower…”

“Are you hard, Harry?”

“Mhm.”

He could practically hear the self-satisfied smile in Draco’s voice. Oddly enough, Harry felt too far immersed into the fantasy to scoff at it.

“Go on, then,” the man urged placidly. “I want you to wrap your fingers around that lovely prick of yours. Let them fall into place one-by-one. Feel my touch through your hand. Gently, now.”

Harry’s hand drifted back down to his cock and took himself in hand, just as Draco directed. He
failed to bite back a small grunt as he did so. He settled further into the water, waiting for his next instructions. There was something strangely thrilling about being told how to touch himself.

“Stroke yourself for me. Rub your thumb along the head and tell me...” Draco said. Wetting his lips with the tip of his tongue, Harry did. His eyes, which had opened at some point amidst Draco’s whispers, fluttered shut again. He started in, his hand a loose fist and rubbed his thumb over the head of his erection, gathering the moisture that was pearling at the tip and let out a short hum of pleasure from the sensitivity.

“...Are you wet for me?”

“Y-yeah,” Harry responded weakly, and his hand tightened reflexively at the question before continuing his fondling.

“I wish I could taste you. I’d take you in my mouth, feel you hot and heavy in my hand, sweet and salty on my tongue.” Harry let out another broken moan, louder this time and suddenly his fingers ached, longing to be around Draco’s cock instead of his own. He yearned for those words to be their reality.

In a naughty apparition, he imagined Draco’s head bobbing between his spread thighs. Harry would reach down and thread his fingers through blonde tresses of hair as Draco blew him with an unparalleled amount of talent.

“Would you like that? Like my mouth on your cock, my tongue dragging you closer and closer to orgasm?”

“Ngh,” Harry whimpered incoherently. He turned his hand so that his palm provided more sensation to the head of his prick. He pulled himself off in quicker his strokes.

“I want it all, Harry. I want you moaning and panting and thrusting into my mouth with abandon. I want your thighs to tremble and your toes to curl. I want to make those green eyes of yours to roll back into your head as I drive you crazy with desire. I want you to succumb to pleasure as I swallow you down. I want to make you scream my name.”

“Fuck,” Harry choked out.

How could Draco whisper these things and not feel uncomfortable with admitting them? He didn't sound forced. In a very Draco-fashion, he spoke effortlessly and still managed to sound sexy. It was a feat Harry thought he would never be able to accomplish. It should've been an awkward situation, phone sex.

Yet, it wasn't; Harry could feel the heat gathering, he could feel the tightening at the base of his spine and in his balls. Digging his heels into the slippery base of the tub, Harry thrusted up into his hand. Around him, the water sloshed precariously as he moved. His arm was in the beginning stages of a cramp, but Harry worked through it, chasing his release with the enthusiasm he’d been missing for several weeks.

He clenched his teeth, turned his hand back around and tightened his grip, because he was so close, so close—

“Are you going to cum, darling?”

“Oh—fuck...!”

“Come on then, my love. Cum for me. Let me hear you.”
“God—I—Draco—”

And Harry did, because his body was somehow trained to react to that particular demand from Draco’s mouth. Shocks of pleasure tremored through him and he spurted down his hand as he fucked the vice his fist made, dribbling into his bath water.

Harry’s tensed muscles relaxed and he gradually regained his senses. The water was clouded in a pool around his crotch. Grimacing, he stuck his soiled fingers into the water at his side, trying to rid himself of the evidence.

“You sounded so beautiful. I wish I could’ve seen you. Are you alright?” Draco murmured. He sounded content, like he was the one who’d been brought to orgasm instead of Harry, and Harry vaguely wondered if Draco was at all turned on by what had just transpired.

“I,” Harry began with a short, hoarse chuckle. His face was burning, even as the water began to chill. “I think I need a shower, now.” He grinned madly to himself and let his eyes close once more, not bothering to care that he was sitting in his own spunk. To be fair, it wasn’t the first time. And, if he had any say in it, it wouldn’t be his last.

It couldn’t be.

Not when he had Draco.

This didn’t eliminate his wariness towards intimacy...but it felt like another stepping stone to deliver him closer to where he wanted to be: in Draco’s arms, yielding to his touch, and loving every minute of it, without fear.

For the first time since his run-in with Riddle, Harry felt like he could have that again.

It was only a matter of time.

Chapter End Notes

Well...that happened?

I've never written something like this before. Hopefully it isn't to cringe-y.

TBH, this chapter was supposed to be the only one without Draco in it, at all. He was supposed to return in the next chapter. I added the phone call, because I missed Draco. Don't ask me how a quick conversation between them turned into 2k of phone sex. I DON'T KNOW.

Anyway...I ended up having to split this chapter into two because of it. Sorry? Luckily I have a whole day to write tomorrow. Yay! ;)

Thank you lovely people for all the kudos, comments, etc. Seriously, you guys are the best. :)

xx
One week later…

A week into Draco’s absence, Harry found himself missing him more than he was prepared to admit. They hadn’t spoken much since their…verbally intimate encounter in the bathtub; the meetings, work, and the differing time zones all proved to be a barrier between them. Truthfully, there wasn’t much time for more than a good morning text and a brief phone call goodnight. On most occasions, Harry would pass out from a long day at the pub and wake up in the middle of the night to discover the missed call reflected on the screen of his mobile.

It would take him hours to fall asleep after that.

Fuck.

He was pining. Harry suppressed a self-deprecating groan and forced himself to focus on something besides his foolish heart. He sat perched on one of the tall bar stools at the kitchen peninsula, running an idle finger along the swirled patterns found in the granite counter.

“You don’t have to make me breakfast every morning, you know. Not that I don’t appreciate it, but a bowl of cereal is fine with me,” Harry told Nott. Nott barely spared him a glance as he killed the heat on the stove and transferred the eggs onto three separate plates with the spatula.

“You’ve been burning more calories than your body is used to and it’s important to compensate for that with well-balanced meals. Cereal has hardly enough nutritional value to—”

“Just be grateful he’s not making us drink green smoothies,” Zabini interrupted darkly, slanting Harry a warning look from one stool over. He was leaning on his good elbow, reading an article on his tablet.

“Green smoothie?” Harry repeated with two lines forming between his brows.

“Ever try drinking kale and spinach through a straw? It tastes like the broken dreams of small children.”

“So dramatic,” Nott sighed, setting little bowls of fresh fruit at each place setting. “Eat.”
Harry sent him a grateful smile. He picked up his fork and tucked in obediently. For the life of him, he couldn’t figure Theodore Nott out. The man was preternaturally quiet.

For months, Harry had presumed him mute until he discovered that had been a ruse. However, even now, with the cat was out of the bag, Nott wasn’t exactly a chatterbox. When he did speak, he did so with a calm thoughtfulness: the opposite of Zabini, frankly. Yet, regardless of their differences, they appeared to be good friends. Perhaps they had a bond that could only be developed after years of putting their lives on the line to protect a crime lord.

Whenever Harry and Nott trained, Nott remained a helpful and tactical instructor, unless Zabini was scheming an alternative. He didn’t go easy on Harry but he didn’t seem to get as much of a kick out of tossing him around like a rag doll, either.

Aside from the low volume emanating from the telly mounted to the kitchen wall, the they ate in relative silence. Harry shoveled eggs into his mouth hurriedly, scarfed down his sausage, toast, and baked beans, before finishing off with his fruit in a matter of minutes. It was unusual for him to have such a hearty appetite, but the hour-and-a-half workouts nearly every morning left him ravenous.

Harry was gulping down his glass of ice water just as Zabini finished his own meal and stood up. He sauntered into the spacious seating area where he pulled a suitcase out of his black duffel. It was small, with a hard body and a black handle.

When Nott stood as well, he motioned for Harry to remain seated and began to clear away their dirty plates. Even though the maid, Mrs. Crawford, would be there that afternoon to clean, Nott still rinsed dishes off and was strategically arranging them in the dishwasher when Zabini returned with the case. He rounded the peninsula to stand opposite of Harry. Setting the case down, he unhinged the latches with one hand and spun it around to face Harry.

Wordlessly, he opened it to reveal the contents inside that had Harry’s brow creasing again.

“What the bloody hell is that?” Harry asked, eyeing the weapon.

“A Beretta Pico,” said Zabini, leaning against the countertop on his uninjured arm. “A gift from the Boss.”

The pistol was two-tone, a black frame with a light grey barrel. With a slight frown, Harry reached in and took it gingerly from the case. It was slim and lightweight and small. Smaller, even, than the length of Harry’s hand. It looked to Harry like the kind of weapon a woman might stash in her purse for protection.

Swallowing his displeasure, he set it back down.

“I’ve been practicing on Draco’s Glock 19,” he said eventually. “Why would he…?” he shook his head, frown deepening into a scowl. He knew he was being churlish. He didn’t understand firearms like these men did. Still, he couldn’t help but take it personally being gifted such a dainty-looking pistol. It was an immature, petty way of thinking, he knew. Bigger didn’t necessarily equate to more powerful, but it certainly felt like a jibe: an unspoken implication that Harry couldn’t handle a big bad gun with the rest of them.

“This is the thinnest semiauto handgun on the market, Potter,” Zabini replied coolly. “It’s perfect for concealed carry.”

“…Right,” was all Harry could muster. He picked up the gun again and turned it around in his hands to inspect it more closely. In comparison to Draco’s Glock, it was much lighter. If he were being
honest, Harry preferred a bit of bulk. It felt more secure and promising in his hands.

“Try not to look so concerned and don’t forsake it because of its compact size, either. It’s a fine gun,” Nott reassured him, turning the faucet off and drying his hands on a dishtowel. “It’s easy to breakdown and clean. Soft-recoil. It’s both reliable and durable. The Boss wouldn’t have selected it for you if he didn’t think it would be a good match.”

Somewhat mollified, Harry nodded his head and looked back into the briefcase. Zabini lifted a series of straps and let them dangle over one finger. Harry recognized the shoulder holster immediately, although it had a single sheath unlike Draco’s, with two. Harry was certain he’d never willingly wear it unless they were at target practice. There was a second holster next to it.

“Thigh holster,” said Zabini.

“Ah,” Harry mumbled, examining it shrewdly.

“You can wear it under your dress.”

Nott pulled him back before Harry could complete his lunge over the counter.

Five days later…

Harry walked past the food cupboard in the kitchen of Weasley’s Pub and let out an undignified squeak when a hand shot out and fumbled for the back of his shirt. Raising his arm, Harry twisted around and swung back at the unwanted presence with a rough jab of his elbow.

He managed to land a blow to what felt like the side of someone’s skull. The impact sent the person sprawling back into the cupboard with a shout muffled only by the sounds of a vacuum running in the front of the pub. Wide-eyed, Harry spun completely around to face his attacker.

Ron’s face and lanky form finally registered in Harry’s brain.

“Oh, fuck! Ron, are-are you okay?” Harry gasped, pushing the pantry door out of his way to kneel by Ron. Holding the side of his freckled face, Ron pinned him with a bewildered look that was twisted with pain. Harry placed a hand on Ron’s shoulder and guided him upright.

“What the bloody hell, Harry?” Ron yelped, his voice oddly high.

“I’m sorry!” Harry groaned. “You-you caught me off guard!”

“So, your response is to go all Karate Kid on me? Blimey mate, am I bleeding?”

Harry pressed his fingers to the reddened temple and winced in sympathy when Ron did. “No, there’s no blood. I think there’s going to be a bit of a nasty bruise, though. I’m am so sorry, Ron.”

“It’s okay,” Ron said. “You haven’t killed me. But just so you know, you’ve got some really boney elbows there, Potter…Be a pal and fetch me one of the bags of peas from the freezer, won’t you?”

Harry did so, scurrying around the food prep station, passed the sinks, and over to the walk-in freezer. He retrieved a bag of frozen veggies from within and jogged back to deliver it to the redhead before settling down on the pantry floor beside him. The door was left ajar, letting in enough light for Harry to see the beginning stages of a bruise on the side of Ron’s face. It began at the peak of his
cheekbone and ended near his hairline.

“Sorry…” repeated Harry guiltily, drawing his knees up to his chest. “Why, er—so why did you decide to grab me like that?”

“I just wanted to show you this without George walking in and seeing, you git,” Ron grunted. With the hand not holding the peas to his head, he reached in his pocket beneath his apron and withdrew a velvet ring box. He thrust it at Harry.

Harry started.

“Are you asking me to marry you?” he asked, blasé, even as a wide grin broke across his face and he snatched the box up. “Because if you are, you should know I want to Honeymoon in Fiji and get started on making babies right away.”

“Prat,” Ron snorted. “At least tell me what you think.”

Harry flipped open the lid and peered at the delicate golden ring inside. It was a modest thing, a solitaire, round-cut diamond, but it had a bright sparkle to it. “I’m no expert, but it’s a really nice ring, Ron. Pretty. Hermione’s going to love it.”

“Yeah?” Ron asked, his anxious expression melting to an easier smile.

“Hell yeah,” Harry confirmed, snapping the box closed with enthusiasm and handing it back to Ron. “When are you going to do it?”

“Haven’t decided yet. I…” he glanced around quickly and lowered his voice to a whisper, even though Arthur had left nearly an hour ago and George was still up front. “I’m taking her out for her birthday next month, so I thought maybe then? Do you think I need to ask her dad for permission or his blessing or whatever?”

“Do people still do that?” Harry wondered curiously.

“Beats me. I think so? Maybe it depends on the folks.”

“Hermione’s rather close with her parents. Maybe they’d appreciate the sentiment?” Ron made a disgruntled face at the prospect. “Her parents like you, Ron,” Harry reminded him. “You’ll be fine.”

Ron fell silent for several long moments and Harry didn’t press him further. Finally, Ron settled his back against one of the metal shelving posts, “Yeah, you’re right…” Then, as an afterthought the redhead added, “Do you think you’ll ever want to get married?”

“Me?” Harry felt his face twitch and he let out a short laugh. “Haven’t given it much thought, to be honest. At least, not since I was seventeen and stupid and convinced that Anthony and I would be together forever. But now…” He shrugged noncommittally.

“What about Draco?” Ron prodded. He gave Harry The Look. It was a specific look he inherited from his mother that told Harry he still wasn’t fully in the clear for his previous deception. Harry had the good grace to duck his head as a flush climbed his face.

“I—it—it’s too soon to even begin to—”

“Yeah alright. Too soon,” cut in Ron good-naturedly, nudging Harry with his elbow. He pulled the peas away from his face and set the bag on the ground. “…Do you, you know, love him, though?”
“…Yes,” he admitted after a long pause. He raked his fingers through his messy locks and continued, “It wasn’t…It wasn’t supposed to happen. I didn’t even like him like that, at first. At first, it was just this physical thing. And then he grew on me and he’s—I mean, he’s not perfect. He can be bit smug at times and he’s excessive as hell, with his designer suits and diamond cuff links and organic window cleaner.” He ignored Ron's bafflement by that last hang-up. “But still, he makes me happy. Happier than I have been in years, honestly...and it’s different than it was with Anthony.”

“How so?”

“I think—no, I know, that I loved Anthony more than he loved me. Even before he cheated, there were always these little signs that he just didn’t care as much about me as I did him…

“Then, there would be times he’d be really sweet and I'd swoon and feel special,” Harry scoffed, irritated with his teenaged self for having been so naïvely love-struck. "...But there was always a catch, always something he wanted in return. He’d surprise me with a new book I wanted and then expect a blowjob as a means of thanking him. Or, he’d treat me to dinner and badger me into fooling around in the loo while we waited for our food. It was things like that, all the time, and I was too blind to notice I was being used. I was so deep in denial because at the end of the day, he still treated me better than the Dursleys ever had.”

"You settled for way less than you deserved, Harry."

Harry chewed his lower lip and stretched his feet out on the floor in front of him as the sounds of the running vacuum ceased. It was only a matter of time, he thought, before George discovered them sitting there instead of cleaning up. Outside, he knew Nott was parked and waiting for him to take him home.

Harry glanced at his watch before raising his eyes back to Ron, who had returned the frozen peas to the side of his face but threw his free arm around Harry's shoulders. A shy smile danced across Harry’s lips. “With Draco, it’s not one-sided. I don’t feel objectified or used by him. I've never felt this...valuable to somebody else before, Ron."

"Hey, you're valuable to me!"

"You know what I mean smart-arse."

“Yeah, I do. Bloody hell,” Ron swore, shaking his head. He squeezed Harry’s shoulders. "You have the sappiest look on your face right now. What’s happening to you?” Softer, "Does he know how you feel about him?"

“No,” said Harry, his momentary joy dwindling from Ron’s innocent question. He thought of Draco, far away in some big executive building, sitting through tedious meetings and not knowing how Harry felt about him, because Harry couldn’t seem to utter three little words without the overwhelming urge to hide in fear of being hurt again.

Since their time in Antigua, Draco hadn’t repeated those words once. Not out of spite, Harry felt, but out of patience. It wasn’t in Draco’s nature to stand down, but he did so, for Harry’s sake: to give him time, to find his footing, to find himself. Maybe Harry was changing, but Draco was changing with him and try as he might, he couldn’t quite find the fault in that.

Harry closed his eyes. In his head, the image of Draco Malfoy was standing before him, impeccably dressed, with a tiny smirk playing on light pink lips. He had a hand outstretched towards him in invitation, waiting for Harry to decide if he was ready and willing to close the gap between them. And Harry, notwithstanding his apprehension of both the unknown and the known, wanted to
take that hand and not let go.

“No, I haven’t told him,” he confessed.

"Well, what the hell are you waiting for, mate?"

... 

Harry stretched his arms over his head and yawned from his spot, draped length-wise along the backseat of the car. The BMW made its way down the street. It was less congested than it was in the daytime, but they managed to hit what seemed to be every traffic light within the city.

“Can I ask you something?” Harry asked Nott, disrupting the peaceful atmosphere. “I mean, _may I_— bloody hell, I’m going to kill Draco,” Harry muttered under his breath, scrubbing a tormented hand down his face.

“You may,” Nott said calmly, “but I must ask you to refrain from making threats against the Boss’s life in my presence, seeing as I am trained not to take kindly to them.” His tone was grave but his eyes snapped up to survey Harry in the rearview mirror and they glimmered with amusement as he spoke.

Harry sat up quickly to see him better. The partition was down between them, so Harry leaned forward and rested his chin on the ledge. “I was thinking,” Harry began softly, “about the poem you quoted that day, in the park.”

“ _The Road Not Taken, _” Nott offered. Harry watched as his hands tightened minutely on the steering wheel and Harry wondered if it was because he was remembering what happened after they’d spoken that day. _After_ Harry ran from him and Zabini and the now-deceased Crabbe.

“Robert Frost,” Harry added, trying to keep his voice light, even though every recollection of that day was wrought with a heaviness he didn’t want to dwell upon. He felt bile rise in his throat and his own stubbornness had him swallowing it down. “I was thinking about that last bit there, when the traveler says that taking the road less traveled on made all the difference. I used to interpret that as a good thing. Like he was happy with his choice. But Frost doesn’t determine for the reader if life was made better by his decision or not.”

Nott was silent for a moment. Hazel eyes fixed on the road and didn’t leave it again as he turned the car left. When they were waiting at another stoplight he said, “That’s true.”

“So, the traveler could very well be regretful with his choice,” said Harry. “Or maybe he’s indifferent.”

“...All plausible explanations.”

Harry exhaled a slow breath. “I always used to think that line was this huge sigh of relief. Kind of a personal victory, of sorts. But what if it _wasn’t_? What if the traveler realized he made a mistake and is just _sitting_ there one day, wondering what his life would’ve been like if he had chosen the road _more_ traveled by?” Harry’s stomach churned with irrational unease.

“I think,” Nott replied carefully, “that you may be overthinking things. It is just a poem.”

“Isn’t that the _point_ of poetry?” Harry fell back into the leather seat, aghast. “To dissect it for all potential meaning until you go cross-eyed?” Nott chuckled softly as he pulled into the underground garage of Draco’s building and parked the vehicle.
He was out of the car and opening Harry’s door before Harry’s fingertips could even touch the handle. He bit back a sigh at the superfluous gesture but mumbled a quick thank you, because he wasn’t an arsehole.

“Sometimes, perhaps. Maybe if you’re taking a creative writing course or you’re feeling particularly ambitious,” said Nott. He shut the car door behind Harry.

Harry grinned crookedly at him, “And other times?”

As they were walking to the elevators, he watched Nott pull his cell phone from his jacket pocket and glance down at it. He tucked it away before offering Harry a strained smile.

Harry didn't miss the subtle way his shoulders tightened, either.

“Other times, I think it’s best to simply appreciate poetry for the feelings it more readily invokes within you. I find that obsessing over every word of every line of every stanza, makes it less enjoyable as a whole.”

Nott said nothing more on the subject after that. Together, they made their way to the top floor, to the penthouse, and Nott held open the door for Harry to trudge through. Distracted by the upheaval in his brain, Harry only vaguely heard the door shut behind him and Nott’s footsteps retreating to the kitchen.

Harry halted when his lowered gaze met a pair of black boots. His eyes slowly moved up to find legs, thick like tree trunks, a solid torso, and then, heavy biceps of a man he’d never met before. He opened his mouth in confusion, “Who—”

Before he could finish his question, something—a belt or a strap, maybe—wrapped around Harry’s neck from behind, effectively cutting off his airway. Harry’s mouth opened in shock and he turned into the hold, his body reacting similarly to the way it had with Ron an hour ago—was it Nott? No, he’d gone in the kitchen, hadn’t he—Zabini?

Was this another blitz attack of his, to determine whether Harry was prepared to fight off an unexpected assault?

The turn of his body within its limited confines was a small motion but proved effective in relieving the pressure on his throat. He managed a sharp gasp of air but his vision was obscured. His heart stuttered painfully in his chest. Harry flung a fist out to deck the person trying to choke him with everything he had. Their grip was lost on the strap, and his attacker stumbled away—though he wasn’t quite as huge, Harry didn’t recognize this man either. Fear and adrenaline spiked down his spine tenfold when he realized he made the mistake of turning his back on the second man. He was two seconds too late.

The behemoth closed in rapidly; he had Harry in a bearhug, holding him tightly from behind. Harry let out a mangled shout as he was lifted bodily off the ground. His arms were trapped at his sides as he kicked wildly.

Evidently, a few weeks of training was not enough to recondition all of Harry’s natural instincts and reflexes. In theory, it would’ve been much easier: Harry could calmly assess his situation with pause. He could break down the steps he would need to escape the hold on him and maybe perform a counterattack. Theoretical self-defense, as it turned out, was utter rubbish.

In practice, fighting the huge man off was an insurmountable task. His mind was disorganized and scared and all Harry could do was flail about in futile desperation until his mind regained a sense of control over his body again.
When it did, Harry found himself hooking his foot behind his attacker’s leg so he couldn’t move him as easily. The motion shifted his body a hairsbreadth to the side and anchored it, creating a gap for Harry’s arm to land a punch—right to his groin—and another: open-handed, squeezing mercilessly for good measure. The man made a noise like a wounded animal, dropping Harry as he sank to the ground, both hands holding himself between his legs. Harry fell on his hands and knees.

Up until then, it seemed as if the first man was merely waiting for another turn with him. He was back on Harry in an instant, grabbing his arm and twisting it crudely behind him. Harry let out a pained grunt of his own at the burning pressure. This was nothing like training with Nott and Zabini. Harry attempted to buck him off. *A useless endeavor,* he noted in a bitter daze as he found himself pinned face-first to the floor.

“That is enough.” A smooth voice that Harry did recognize emanated from the living room. “Release him.”

Harry felt an uneasy chill flower through his body as his arm was freed and his attacker backed away. Unsteadily, Harry climbed to his feet. The beast of a man was kneeling just paces away at his left, looking furious as he cupped his abused crotch.

Harry met the coldly amused face that belonged to Lucius Malfoy with no small amount of trepidation. Tall, blonde, and dangerous, Malfoy Senior was standing in the center of his son’s living space, scrutinizing him with a piercing gaze. Harry took an unconscious step backward, towards the door and looked around the room. Betrayal washed over him when he saw Nott and Zabini in the kitchen, standing at attention.

A set-up…

His hands trembled at his waist so Harry curled them into fists.

Behind the plush armchair, sitting on the sofa, was another stranger watching him through a curtain of black hair and equally black eyes. His nose was hooked and he was sneering down it as he regarded Harry with unwarranted contempt. On the coffee table, he was in the process of setting up a laptop and connecting a device with wires and straps to it.

Another step back, overcome by his impulse to flee.

"While that was an admirable attempt at an escape on your part, Mister Potter, play time is over. I daresay we have more important matters to discuss before this evening is through."

Harry’s mouth went completely dry as Lucius drew nearer. In his hand, held between two fingers, was a syringe.

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**Chapter End Notes**

*twiddles thumbs* Well...that was fun!

Side note: I was up until 1 o'clock in the morning editing this chapter last night and then
my phone had a glitch and I lost two hours worth of corrections. So, today, I had to go through again and try to remember all the things I had tweaked the first time. My eyeballs hurt, so forgive me if there are any mistakes, please!

As usual, thank you guys for all the kudos and comments and for simply reading this story, in general! You guys are lovely.

xx

CJ
As he eyed the syringe, Harry’s stomach twisted precariously. He knew he was in danger of becoming violently ill all over the floor just from the possibility of being drugged against his will again. Lucius’s grey eyes followed Harry’s tense gaze to his own hand.

“Oh, this?” Lucius questioned, unnervingly calm as he held up the needle. “No need to fret. This wasn’t meant for you.” The man that had attempted to strangle him came forward, took the syringe from his boss and placed it in a small case. He retreated after giving a respectful bow. Lucius paid him little attention. “Do come in, however, and have a seat.”

Harry didn’t budge.

“I was not asking, Mister Potter.”

Ignoring the aching in his knuckles from the punch he’d thrown, Harry clenched his fists tighter and remained where he was. “I’m sorry, did you say something?” he asked neutrally, looking around the room for signs of Draco.

He didn’t care who or what Lucius Malfoy was. He’d had enough of these corrupted men making demands of him. The older man’s aloofness turned frigid when he realized Harry wasn’t about to obey his orders.

Lucius glanced at the behemoth who’d finally stood up. In a rapid sequence of events, he inclined his head in permission, spurring his man into action. Harry’s arm was seized in a huge hand. He was propelled into the living room and shoved in one of the armchairs with more force than was necessary. Harry expected nothing less from the man whose testicles he likely bruised.

Lucius sank gracefully onto the opposite couch. His body was turned slightly to face Harry’s direction and he crossed his legs. There was something palpable about the way the man commanded a room. He was a king sitting on his throne: everyone and everything was far beneath him.

*Egotistical twat.*

Harry didn’t need to spend much time with the elder Malfoy to tell he didn’t like him.

“I don’t think Karkus, here, appreciated your mistreatment of him below the belt, Potter,” Lucius
“There wasn’t much there to mistreat, if I’m to be honest,” said Harry. Karkus cracked his knuckles menacingly but made no attempt to advance.

“Hm,” Lucius hummed softly, his eyes glittering in cruel amusement. “You have a smart mouth.” He leaned back in his seat, one hand coming up to rest beneath his chin. “My son might find that an endearing quality of yours but you can be most assured that I do not. I am, however, eager to see just how honest you are, Harry Potter.”

Harry said nothing, but he didn’t lower his eyes from Lucius’s, either.

“Severus, if you will.” The dark-haired man stood, the sound of Velcro being separated sounded more ominous than it should have. “This, Potter, is Inspector Severus Snape. He has graciously offered his services this evening, to perform a polygraph for me. Do you know what that is?”

“Where’s Draco?” Harry whispered, disregarding the question. He knew full well what a polygraph was, and he knew Lucius was getting satisfaction from talking down to him like he was uneducated. A pauper, he had called him once, mere months ago. The elder Malfoy had pigeonholed Harry before he’d even known his name.

Lucius smiled mockingly. “Since you’re a simpleton, let me spell it out for you, Potter. You will get your answers after I get mine, and not a moment sooner. Do we have an understanding?”

Harry sent him a nasty look.

“You are testing my patience. We can do this the hard way if you’d prefer?”

“Oh! So, assaulting me at the front door was the easy way, then?”

“That little charade?” Lucius arched an eyebrow. “I was informed you had taken up self-defense lessons. I simply wanted to see if you stood a chance. You see, Mister Potter, I have already lost two of my men coming to your rescue.”

Harry paled drastically at the harsh words thrown at him but didn’t falter. Instead, through gritted teeth, “Fine. Do the polygraph. Unlike you, Mister Malfoy, I’ve got nothing to hide.”

“Father of the year,” Harry muttered darkly. Snape secured a couple of wires to the tips of Harry’s fingers with unfriendly detachment. His skin was pallid and his hair, cropped to his chin, was lank. He wasn’t dirty; Harry could smell the faint aroma of soap from their proximity and he was dressed nicely enough. Still, the man gave off the unapproachable vibes of a bitter, short-tempered man.

In his chair, Lucius leaned forward a little and his voice became dangerously soft. “I am the father of the man you’ve been spreading for. I am also a man with the power to make life exceptionally
difficult for you if you continue trying my patience.”

Harry could feel his face flush and he stiffened in his seat heatedly. He opened his mouth to retort but Snape interrupted in a brisk voice, “With all due respect, Lucius, I think we should proceed without further delay. If we want the polygraph to perform optimally, the boy needs to remain calm.”

“…Very well. As you were, Severus.”

Snape had Harry prop his arms flat along the armrests and told him not to move them again. He continued to connect the wires stemming from Harry to the laptop. When he was done, Snape sat down and turned the laptop in his direction. Harry couldn’t see the screen. He wet his lips and forced himself to relax the best he could; it wouldn’t do well for him to have his nervousness interfering with his results.

“This test is designed to detect lies by measuring your pulse, respirations, skin conductivity, and your blood pressure, so it is crucial that you remain still and answer truthfully. I will begin by asking you a few simple baseline questions,” said Snape, “You will respond with a yes or a no answer. Don’t waste our time with incessant babbling. Understood?”

“Sure.”

Snape glared at him.

“I mean: yes.”

Turning his eyes to the screen, Snape asked in a neutral tone, “Is your name Harry James Potter?”

“Yes,” said Harry.

“Are you twenty-two years old?”

“Yes.”

“Do you wear corrective lenses?”

“Yes.”

Finding no fault in any of Harry’s answers, Snape leaned in and asked the question Harry had been waiting for, “Have you ever heard of the ‘Marauder’s Map’?”

“Yes,” he bit out. Then, knowing the possible implication of that statement, Harry rushed to add, “Only because Draco told me about it, though!”

“Are you affiliated with the organization known as Morsmordre?”

Forcing his emotions in check, Harry said, “No.”

“Do you bear Tom Riddle’s mark?”

“…Screw you.”

“Yes or no?” Snape snapped.

“Yes,” Harry growled, his nostrils flaring in anger. The backs of his eyes ached with tears wanting to make themselves known and Harry, with all the vigor he possessed, pushed them into submission.
He would not weaken in front of these men, not like he had with Tom fucking Riddle.

“Do you work at Club Salazar?”

“Yes.”

“Are you in possession of the Marauder’s Map?”

“No.”

“Do you know who is?”

“No.”

Snape traced the seam of his thin mouth with the tip of a finger as he studied the results on his laptop. Then he turned to Lucius and nodded. “No deception indicated.”

For a while, the blonde man’s expression was inscrutable to Harry. Then, slowly, the corner of his mouth turned up in a humorless smirk.

“Do you love my son?” Lucius prompted. The way he spoke seemed like he was challenging him.

“You do not need to answer that, Harry.”

Harry jerked his head in surprise.

Draco.

He appeared suddenly, standing in the threshold of the hallway that lead to the master bedroom like Harry’s personal Deus ex Machina. Though his eyes were fierce and his body stiff with anger, he looked handsome as ever. If it weren’t for the wires affixing him to the computer, Harry thought he might’ve ran to him. Then, Harry noticed the spatter of blood on his white shirt. It wasn’t much, but the deep red stood out in sharp contrast against the fabric.

Lucius glanced at his watch. “Seventeen minutes. I’m impressed. I do hope that isn’t your blood, Draco?” Harry watched in wonder as a muscle in Draco’s jaw twitched. Though he’d seen Draco’s cold fury before, it was a rare sight to witness.

“Karkaroff might need attending to. I’d also like the main security monitor replaced as soon as it’s convenient for you,” Draco murmured stiffly as his father’s smirk grew. “Until then, you have your answers, Father. Please see yourself out.”

“I have all but one answer, my son. Your impudent dismissal of me is ill-advised.”

“And this interrogation is uncall—”

“—Ask me the question again!” Harry interrupted through gritted teeth. The tension in the room was tangible: a few seconds more of this and Harry was certain he would choke on it. As he turned his attention back to the elder Malfoy, Harry saw Draco hesitate. It was a nearly indiscernible motion caught in his peripheral.

Lucius, however, remained seated with his composure and arrogance unwavering.


“Yes,” said Harry with every ounce of conviction he had. He waited a beat for the results to show up
on the computer. Snape nodded curtly. *Truth.* “Are we done here?”

Without waiting for an answer, Harry reached down and yanked the wires from his fingertips. He tore the blood pressure cuff off. He let them fall away, not giving a damn where they ended up. Lucius and crooked police officer, *Inspector Snape,* could take them and shove them up their arse, for all he cared.

Snape was on his feet to unhook the tubing from around Harry’s torso before he could do any lasting damage to them. He glowered down his hooked nose at Harry as he did. Harry wasn’t to be cowed by him or Lucius Malfoy.

He imagined he should’ve been, considering who the man was. With or without San Drac, the man had more influence than Harry could ever comprehend. Yet, it was all Harry could do not to call him every foul and loathsome name he could come up with. With a single question, Lucius Malfoy took what should’ve been a private moment belonging to him and Draco, and made it into a spectacle.

“Such a temper on this one, son.” Lucius sniffed, unimpressed. He had risen to his feet as well, brushing invisible dirt from his suit that easily cost triple the sum of Harry’s monthly wages. He approached Draco with sure steps, stopping right in front of him. Then, he leaned forward and murmured something in his ear to which Draco listened with steadfast stoicism.

The elder Malfoy brushed his lips against his son’s cheek just barely, in farewell, before he strode from the penthouse with his men. Snape following closely behind with his briefcase. They were trailed by a third man—*Karkaroff,* Harry presumed. Karkaroff stumbled from the hallway after them, holding a rag to the side of his face.

... 

The silence that ensued was deafening. Harry remained in front of the arm chair he’d risen from, his heart racing and palms damp with sweat. Draco stood between Harry and the door. Zabini and Nott remained in the kitchen, motionless. Finally, Draco turned to face the pair. When he spoke, his tone rivaled the frigidity of his father’s.

“Leave us,” he said darkly. Bowing obediently, Zabini and Nott left the apartment. Even after the door closed, Harry knew they wouldn’t stray far.

Licking his lips, Harry turned to look at the blonde and found he didn’t know *what* to say. Draco however, beat him to the punch. “Harry...I cannot even *begin* to apologize for—”

“Don’t,” said Harry. “It doesn’t matter.”

“Doesn’t it?”

Slowly, Harry sank back into the chair and leaned his elbows on his knees. “No offense, but your dad is a colossal prick.” Draco edged closer to him until he was propped up on the armrest. Harry could hear the soft sound of him breathing and hell, even *that* was comforting.

“My father is definitely...something, alright,” Draco acknowledged with a laconic smile. “Trust me when I say, Harry, that I had not *faintest* idea he was going to—”

“Where were you?” Harry asked, turning to look up at him. Draco’s hand settled on his trouser leg. He rubbed at the expensive black material distractedly.

“Tied to a chair in the panic room,” said Draco.
Harry eyes widened. “…The needle?” Unconsciously, his own hand lifted to rest on Draco’s leg too. ‘No need to fret. This wasn’t meant for you,’ Lucius had said.

Draco pursed his lips. It made his cheekbones appear razor sharp. “Nothing serious. A short-lived cocktail of mild sedatives. Enough to keep me cognizant while buying Father enough time to play his little games without my interference.”

“I thought he was going to drug me,” Harry confessed, averting his eyes to the floor. “I…”

Draco reached out and placed a hand on Harry’s shoulder. “You stood your ground. I’m proud of you.”

“How the hell did I stand my ground?” Harry asked him, shaking the hand off him in his frustration. “He hooked me up to a bloody lie detector test and I let him.”

“My father has made the strongest men roll over in fear with a single look, Harry. You didn’t. You wouldn’t. Your compliance in this case doesn’t make you weak. Despite yielding to the polygraph test, I daresay that you beat Lucius at his own game. Don’t you see? He wanted you to cower and he wanted you to fail.”

“Because if I failed, that would mean I did have the Map…and he would have me.” It wasn’t a question.

“Not to mention, I would be the fool who vouched for your character.”

Realization crept up on Harry and he jumped to his feet again; the way Draco was propped on the armrest put them at about the same height. “You saw everything.” It wasn’t a question. He swirled his finger in the air in a small circle. “The security cameras. From the second I walked through the front door, he had you watching everything from the panic room, didn’t he?”

“Yes,” Draco confirmed and then he smiled a more genuine smile. “Even under deplorable circumstances, I must say, I was very impressed by the way you handled yourself against my father’s men. Karkus is practically inhuman. I think he's been fed steroids since birth.”

Harry grinned for a moment but it faded quickly when his thoughts drifted to the elephant-in-the-room. He met the light grey of Draco’s eyes self-consciously, “I didn’t want—of all the ways—I mean. To say—”

“Are you referring to your declaration of undying affection for me?”

Harry bristled, “You—!”

“I love you, Harry.”

Harry visibly wavered.

There were two steps between them. Or one, if he was feeling ambitious, which decidedly, he was. Draco reached out and Harry, without a second thought, was drawn to him like a magnet; he gripped Draco’s shoulders and connected their mouths. It was a warm press of lips, languid and sweet. It felt like coming home. What it lacked in tongue, it made up for in desire and a profound connection that transcended anything and everything. Here, Harry thought to himself as his mouth moved gently against Draco’s, Right here. This is where I want to be.

Draco’s hand cupped along the side of Harry’s neck. His thumb brushed lightly against Harry’s cheek.
When they separated, that same thumb ran along his lower lip instead, and the simple action filled Harry’s head with white noise. “Say it again,” Harry heard himself say, breathless and foolish and relieved.

Draco kissed him, more thoroughly this time. His tongue snuck into duel against Harry’s as he pulled him into the juncture of his legs. Harry met him with enthusiasm. His arms wound around Draco’s shoulders in a combination of an embrace and a tackle. The force of it sent the blonde toppling from his perch.

Draco fell sideways into the chair, dragging Harry down with him. He landed a bit hard, his back hitting one arm rest and his long legs draped over the other. Chuckling softly, Draco situated Harry on top of him in a haphazard straddle before resuming their feverish snogging.

The angle was all wrong. Their position in the armchair was borderline painful and being bent unnaturally had both pulling away to refill their lungs with air.

Draco’s lips were redder than normal and his hair was unusually disheveled. He had the bloodstain on his shirt: evidence from where he clearly slammed Karkaroff’s head into a monitor after breaking free from his bonds, which Harry couldn’t say was undeserving. His pupils were darkened, blown wide in arousal and he was smiling and he was gorgeous and he was Harry’s.

“I love you,” Draco repeated against Harry’s mouth. It was said so quietly but it resounded in every corner of the spacious room. Harry lowered his head to Draco’s ear. He let his tongue flick against it, let his teeth graze the soft flesh is his earlobe and reveled in the blonde’s small shiver.

Then, Harry opened his mouth, of course, to say, “I lo—”

Ring.

Ring.

Ring.

Harry’s jaw snapped shut as he straightened himself in Draco’s lap.

“Damn it,” Draco growled, reaching into the interior pocket of his suit jacket. He answered his phone by the fifth ring. “I pray, for your sake that you—what?” The curve of Draco’s spine grew rigid and his hand fell to the outside of Harry’s thigh, staying him, though Harry hadn’t moved. “When?”

Draco’s eyes slid shut. Harry took that as his cue. He scrambled from arm chair and watched warily as Draco rolled onto his feet in one fluid motion, landing on his feet with feline-like grace. When Draco exhaled sharply through his nose, Harry knew he was witnessing the calm before the storm. He pressed a quick kiss to Draco’s shoulder before retreating to the master bedroom.

He hadn’t quite made it to his destination when he heard Draco’s sharp voice. “Allocate operatives to look into…yes. If there’s even the smallest possibility of a leak, I want it plu—” the door to the study slammed shut.

…

“Well, don’t you look comfortable?”

Harry opened his eyes and saw the fuzzy silhouette of Draco leaning against the door frame with a faint smile on his face. Harry reached over and turned off the air jets so he could hear Draco better.
“I am. Is everything okay?”

Draco came into the bathroom and sat down on the ledge of the tub. Reaching out with his hand, he brushed Harry’s damp fringe from his forehead fondly. “Nothing I can’t handle. Do you remember the first time I tried to get you to take a bath with me? You mocked my bath salts. I believe your exact words were, ‘I’m not a poncey snob.’ Now look at you, soaking your troubles away with those same bath salts and the jets on. Oh my, are those candles lit on the counter? Why yes, I believe they are.”

Harry flicked the surface of the water, sending a few droplets at Draco in retaliation.

“I was hoping you would join me. I mean, if you weren’t busy,” Harry stated. His heart stuttered beneath his ribs in nervousness, but his stomach skipped with eager butterflies.

“How could I refuse such an offer?” said Draco, loosening his tie and pulling it over his head. Within a couple of minutes, he was in all his naked glory and Harry was silently wishing that he’d taken today of all days to try out the contact lenses sitting in the guest room. Surely reaching for his glasses now, would be too obvious…

Harry scooted his rear back and opened his legs for Draco to settle between. The offer had Draco’s eyebrow arching in amusement but he said nothing as he climbed into the bath. Harry marveled at the weight of Draco’s body pressed against his.

From behind, he wrapped his arms around broad shoulders protectively and wondered when, if ever, was the last time someone had truly protected Draco. It was clear his lover was strong and formidable on his own. He also had bodyguards around the clock to watch over him. Nevertheless, while Draco was the boss, Lucius was The Boss.

And no one was going to protect Draco from his own father.

Except for me. I’m here now, and I’m yours. Not Lucius Malfoy's. And you're mine.

Draco was solid and warm as Harry trailed his hands up sinewy arms, letting the wetness of them slick Draco’s skin.

Harry reached over to pump some bath oil into hands and rubbed them together. Slippery palms and fingertips pressed into Draco’s shoulders, working and kneading the taut muscles there.

Draco let out a small, pleased hum. “What’s this about?” he asked.

Harry shrugged absently. He used the pads of his thumbs to press along the base of Draco’s neck. “You seemed tense. I wanted to take care of you,” Harry mumbled. His cheeks pinked in a sheepish flush. “And I…I missed touching you.”

Draco fell silent and Harry couldn’t see his expression from his place behind him, so he simply pressed on, digging the heel of his hand into a particularly stubborn knot. Draco’s head lolled forward. “Will you let me return the favor?” he questioned after a few minutes.

“I—well, sure, if you want. But don’t feel like you must. I just wanted to…” To feel you against me like this, to see if I could handle it, Harry’s brain supplied, but he couldn’t bring himself to admit it aloud. Draco turned at the waist to claim Harry’s mouth with his own. Between the lip lock and their naked proximity, Harry felt his arousal climb. If Draco shifted back any further or glanced down, he’d be made aware of it.

“I want to take care of you too,” said Draco. His face was more relaxed as he observed Harry
through his lashes. “Will you let me?”

Harry kissed the back of Draco’s wet shoulder. “Yes,” he whispered against him.

...

Twenty minutes later found Harry laying prone on the master bed. The lights were low and the curtains drawn. His head was propped on a single pillow and his mind and body were a skirmish of eagerness and unease, dueling for control. For a moment, his unease prevailed when Draco straddled the backs of his thighs.

Every vertebra snapped to attention and Harry’s glutes tightened up involuntarily, his body expecting the worst. He must have felt the ripple beneath him, because Draco propped himself on his hands and leaned down. Harry could feel Draco’s erection against his hip.

Humiliated, he buried his face into the pillow. This was ridiculous. He was being ridiculous. He and Draco had had sex dozens of times before. It had always been mind-blowing. How could a few measly hours with Riddle make him react like this now?

“Say my name,” Draco commanded gently in his ear. Harry turned his head. A surprised snort burst forth from his disbelief.

“You’ve got to be—”

“Kidding you?” Draco interrupted smoothly, “No, I’m not. Say it, Harry.”

Harry’s eye twitched. “Draco,” he said, voice muffled somewhat by the pillow. “You perv—”

“No, no. None of that. Just ‘Draco’ will suffice, for today.” Hands drifted down his spine, massaging him in graceful strokes. His skin was flushed and damp from the bathwater and it occurred to Harry that Draco must’ve swiped some oil from the bathroom on their way to the bed.

Similarly to Harry’s ministrations in the tub, Draco’s hands worked at his body, skillfully pulling him apart. A quarter of an hour ticked away beneath Draco’s touch. His back and shoulders and arms were loose and pliant. By the time Draco reached his bum, Harry was too relaxed to tense again. His breathing hitched, though, as he waited for whatever else he had planned.

Draco made his way down Harry’s spine with carefully placed kisses until he was at the crest of his buttocks. His breath ghosted against Harry’s tailbone suggestively.

“Harry?” he whispered, “Yes or no?”

Swallowing, Harry nodded in acquiesce. “Yes.”

”Tell me to stop and I promise you I will.”

Draco’s prized apart his cheeks carefully, exposing him. Draco licked a path over his hole with the flat of his tongue. Harry keened as his lower half shuddered again, this time from anticipation. That sinful tongue extended to a point, traveling the valley of his arse until it circled and flicked around his rim.

Draco worked him open, poking in and out with increased urgency in an imitation of true fucking. Harry’s nerves were on fire; he could feel Draco’s face buried against him, breath coming in hot puffs when he wasn’t lathing Harry’s hole and perineum with his tongue.
On their own accord, Harry’s legs spread wider and he shoved his knees into the mattress for leverage. He rocked back into Draco with an embarrassing whine, causing the other man to pull back and bite at the meatiest part of Harry’s arse in chastisement.

“Who am I, Harry?” Draco pressed huskily, squeezing twin globes of flesh in his hands.

All of Harry’s senses seemed to be heightened. He missed this. Harry fist the duvet and made an inarticulate noise. Finally he managed, “Draco.”

“Good boy.” Behind Harry he was straightening up. "Harry,” he added softly, "May I...with a finger?"

Harry nodded again. His heart rate sped up and heat bloomed in his face and his groin. A finger, he thought, it’s just Draco’s finger. It occurred to him then, why the other man insisted on Harry saying his name.

It wasn’t a kink, or rather, it wasn’t just a kink.

Draco needed Harry to know who was touching him…because Harry needed to know who was touching him.

Harry smiled against the pillow and then his lips parted in a little gasp when the nozzle of the lubricant tube pressed against his entrance. Draco squeezed the gel directly into him. With unhurried fingers, Draco smeared it over Harry’s crease. There was an excess of oil and lube on Harry’s body, so much so, that when a single digit slipped inside him, it took a second longer for him to register its presence.

Draco’s free hand was busy caressing Harry’s lower back soothingly. The finger within him slid deeper until it grazed over Harry’s prostate, swollen in his arousal. When he found it, Draco stroked that spot in a steady circular motion.

Little waves of pleasure sprouted through him, originating in his pelvis and unfurling beyond. All of Harry’s previous hang-ups flitted out the window. Draco’s touch was a welcome one. This was far from the first time they had done this, yet Harry felt like he was being rewritten by Draco’s hands, heart, body, and soul.

Harry pushed back onto Draco’s finger with a small roll of his hips. A minute more of it had Harry growling unhappily when Draco stopped abruptly and pulled right out. A greasy hand patted his hip.

“Roll over for me? I want to see you,” Draco urged. Harry complied. All the oil from the massage had his back sticking to the duvet beneath him. It was a little uncomfortable but he ignored it because Draco was guiding his legs open just enough for his hand to snake between them and his middle finger to slide home once more.

Draco was on knees beside his outstretched body. Blonde hair was hanging in darkened eyes. Like Harry, his skin was covered in a thin sheen of sweat. His prick was raring to go and Harry’s mouth watered at the sight of it. Hard. Flushed. Perfect.

Recalling how it felt inside his body, how it would drag against his inner walls, wasn’t unnerving to Harry. He thought it might’ve been; yet, in that instant with Draco, Harry’s horrible memories were dwindling down into nothing. Tom Riddle may have brutalized him, but Draco, Draco never would.

“God,” Draco muttered, “Look at you…”

Harry was positive that he wasn’t much to look at: sticky, beet red, and leaking steady, copious
amounts of translucent precum onto his own belly. He bit his lower lip and reached for his cock for some relief. Draco, however, had other ideas. He batted his hand away.

“No, no,” he admonished, the words coming out a little raspy from exertion. “If you’d let me, I’d like to try something.”

“You’re not going to let me cum?” Harry complained.

“Oh, you’re definitely going to cum,” said Draco. The corner of his mouth raised smugly. “Another one?” He tapped a second digit against Harry in question.

“Fuck. Do it,” Harry replied, choking on moan when Draco did. The stretch was greater, not as easily ignored, but his body had become lax enough to allow it without resistance. Draco sank into him, and the pressure doubled and intensified. He moved them in an inviting come hither motion that had Harry’s legs quivering and more precum bubbling from the tip of his cock.

Where was it all coming from? he wondered in his daze. His head was soaring but his body was melting into the mattress and he needed nothing more than to touch himself, if only Draco would grant him that much. Whenever Draco pushed on his glad, Harry sobbed. Tears of pleasure were leaking from the corners of his eyes, trickling down the side of his face and into the pillow underneath his head.

“Please, please, please…”

“Shh, I’ll get you there, love.” Harry’s hand shot down to grasp Draco’s engorged prick. It was like a bar of heated iron in his hand. He didn’t jerk it so much as squeezed it in desperation, maybe a little too hard or maybe just enough—Harry couldn’t quite decipher the nature of the hiss coming from Draco.

Draco responded with another deliberate, circular rub into the frenzied bundle of nerves. His treatment of it turned relentless and Harry let out a cry louder in volume than he was sure he’d ever emitted in bed before. The amount of fluids Harry was covered in was obscene and Draco did not let up on his prostate, determined to milk Harry dry.

“Oh God,” Harry breathed. With every delicious crook of his finger, Harry watched the muscles in Draco’s arm flex enticingly. Harry surrendered to carnal desire, allowing it to build in his pelvis and encompass him, scorching his blood until he was consumed with it. He laid, splayed out on the bed like a sacrificial offering to the gods. Without any stimulation to his cock, Harry’s hips began to twitch in needy, searching little thrusts.

Then, like a bomb detonating, Harry felt the explosion. His mouth opened in utter shock and silent scream and his eyes rolled back as he came. His body gave way to irrepressible spasms; the sensation was everywhere and it was so much more, like going from plain old audio to surround sound and Harry wasn’t sure he’d survive it.

“That’s it, let it all out for me, Harry.”

"...Fuck, look at you, you’re still cumming, aren’t you?” Draco purred. He stroked Harry’s pulsing gland until Harry couldn’t take it any longer.

With eyes, glassy from bliss-turned-overstimulation, Harry shook his trembling head and attempted to twitch his hips away.

The blonde must’ve took pity on him because he immediately pulled his fingers from Harry’s filthy body and wiped them casually on the bedding. Harry’s brain couldn’t have been more than a puddle
of goo but he was aware enough to recognize the prominent erection Draco was sporting.

His lover had stretched out beside him on his side. He didn’t appear to be bothered by the soiled blankets or the tackiness of fluids on Harry’s own body. He made no move to touch himself, either. Instead, he propped his head in one hand and gazed down at Harry’s stunned face.

“Are you alright?” he asked quietly.

“I…” Harry began, his throat hoarse, “I’m…*holy fuck*, I…”

“A simple *yes* or *no* will do, darling.”

"You sound like Inspector Snape," Harry chuckled. It was a breathless, trembling sound.

"Way to kill my erection," Draco scoffed.

Harry glanced down and wet his lips absentmindedly. "Looks just fine to me."

Though he was satiated beyond compare, Harry rolled onto his side, so his back was to Draco’s front and then wriggled his arse to meet Draco’s weeping arousal. It was Draco’s turn to groan. He gripped Harry’s side.

“Do it,” Harry whispered, peering at the man over his shoulder. “I want you to.”

Draco’s hand tightened: the only sign of his diminishing restraint. “Harry,” he started.

“It’s okay, Draco. I want to feel you.” He punctuated his words with another backwards roll of his hips.

Another strangled noise and suddenly Draco was leaning in and turning Harry’s head for a snog. His hand reached back to grasp Draco’s arse and guided him closer. Harry exhaled softly when the blunt head of Draco’s cock pushed into his already slick hole, carving his inner walls to fit the shape of him. It was more of a stretch than Draco’s two fingers but there was no pain.

For a while, they simply spooned, bodies connected but not moving. They traded lazy kisses. Draco’s hand slid down Harry's front, almost *petting* his chest and stomach as he waited for Harry to adjust.

If anything, his body felt tired and sensitive. Still, the sensation of being filled had always been a pleasing one to Harry. Taking initiative, he gyrated back and clenched around Draco’s cock in encouragement. The older man cursed under his breath and shuddered against him. His mouth latched onto Harry’s neck, sucking lightly at his pulse point as he began to move. Shallow thrusts turned into long, unhurried ones.

It was sex in a way Harry never experienced before. He didn’t care if he wasn’t really hard and he was truly thankful that Draco made a point to avoid his prostate altogether. He knew he wouldn't find release from this but Draco, *Draco* would, and Harry wanted him to seek it within him. Until he did, he was content to lay there as Draco fucked him.

Draco’s arm hooked behind Harry’s knee and lifted it for easier access and a better angle. He undulated into Harry as his thrusts picked up speed. Harry laced their fingers together.

It didn’t take much longer for Draco to reach his climax. He did so with a stutter of his hips against Harry’s arse and a breathy sigh along the column of his throat. He held Harry to him like he was his life line and letting go was not an option.
Harry turned his head to see Draco’s flushed face and lust-blown pupils. His own satisfaction was bone-deep. They both were playing on the edge of exhaustion and Harry had no doubt they could fall asleep like this.

"I love you,” Harry mouthed against Draco’s lips, loud enough for him to finally hear. “I love you, Draco.”

Chapter End Notes

Hello. Remember me? I'm the asshat who made y'all wait 2+ weeks for this update. Sorry 'bout that...What's worse, is that there's still probably mistakes I overlooked. Sorry 'bout that, too.

This chapter was for LittleOdessa, who wanted Draco to give Harry a prostate massage. I hope it worked for you! <3

If you're interested, you can find the floorplan to Draco's penthouse and the floorplan to Harry's old studio apartment on the cover page (first "chapter"). It's not perfect by any means. I don't build/design houses for a living. But, I'm a visual person, so I had a lot of fun slapping that thing together. Unfortunately, the resolution looks shitty (on my phone, at least)...but, you'll get the gist. :)

Anyway. There's plenty of more fluff ahead. Romance. And sex.

They're in love now. How cheesy.

Until next time!!

xx

CJ
Harry woke up several hours later, plastered to both the top of an overpriced luxurious duvet and to the man who owned said duvet. Though Draco’s body was warm, the thermostat in the master bedroom was turned low to counter the end-of-summer heat.

Harry squinted at the clock on the nightstand but couldn’t make out the time without the help of his glasses.

“It’s half-past four in the morning.”

Harry started for a moment, trying to blink the sleepiness from his eyes. Then, he relaxed once more and pressed back against Draco’s body heat. “It’s freezing in here. How long have you been awake?”

“About a half hour, or so,” Draco murmured, placing a kiss to the little spot on his jaw, right behind his ear. Harry smiled and rolled over slightly to face him.

“You should’ve woken me up. Aren’t you cold?”

“No. I prefer the temperature as it is,” said Draco. “Did you know that you snore?”


“You do. You’re not exceptionally loud, though, so don’t fret. You also tend to root around a bit in your sleep, looking for warmth. It’s quite endearing.”

“You’re lying.”

“I am doing no such thing. Shall I call Severus?”

“Only if you want a good, hard kick to the bullocks,” Harry groused. “What’s that man’s deal, anyway?”

“His deal?” Draco repeated as Harry shifted around and sat upright.

“Yes. His deal. He loathes me and I’ve never once laid eyes on him. Plus, he’s a police officer and it looks as if your father has him in his back pocket.”
“Severus has been with the family for years.”

Harry gnawed on his lower lip as he glimpsed down at Draco who was reclining lazily on the bed, his arms bent behind his head. He looked up at Harry.

“Like, the Malfoy family or-or the San Drac, family?” Harry questioned. His fingers twisted uneasily in the upturned edge of the bedspread.

“…Both.”

Harry swallowed. “Do you think he…do you think there’s a chance he knew my dad?” Draco sat up beside him and leaned against the headboard. He reached for the iPad on the bedside table. The screen lit up, illuminating his face in the darkness of the bedroom. Every pale edge and angle of his face and body could have been chiseled from marble, flawless even after a night of debauchery. Harry didn’t need to look in the mirror to know he looked like week-old left overs.

“Severus and your parents would’ve been the same age,” Draco informed him after a couple of minutes. “Your father joined the force in the same year.” Harry leaned over to look at the tablet in Draco’s hands. Staring back at them was a headshot of James Potter, dressed in uniform. Like Harry, he wore glasses, though the frames were different. Different times, different styles.

At first glance, Harry thought they looked like one another, with the same thick, unruly black hair. His brows were a bit thicker though, and his lips lacked the more prominent Cupid’s bow that Harry had. His nose was slightly wider. Still, the resemblance was apparent. In the picture, James couldn’t have been more than twenty, twenty-one.

“What is it?” Draco asked him quietly.

“I was just thinking…I’m older now, than they were when they died. I’ve lived more years than they ever got to.” Harry smiled sadly and then he added, “This is the second picture of my dad I’ve seen.”

Draco’s expression slipped into a puzzled one for a moment as he turned to Harry. “Only the second?”

Harry nodded, eyes fixated on the screen. “My aunt and uncle never kept pictures of them around. One time, I discovered a couple of my mum and aunt when they were girls when I was cleaning the attic. They were estranged, I guess. I was always taught to never ask questions growing up so I suppose I’ll never know why…but when I was twelve, I found their obituaries online. That was the first time…Was Inspector Snape part of the group, then? That made the Map?” Harry pressed.

“From what I’ve been told, Severus was never a part of the group. He was informed, in confidence by the Commissioner himself, of the investigation…but only after the deaths of your parents.”

“You mean, murders,” corrected Harry dully. Draco set the tablet down and settled back against the pillows. His arm reached out and guided Harry to lay down against him.

“You’re right.”

Harry shook his head faintly and then rested his cheek against Draco’s chest. “Do you know how—how Riddle found out about it, then?”

“Someone in the group was a rat. He sold them out,” Draco said, stroking the top of Harry’s head. “That’s all I know.”

Harry’s eyes screwed shut. “Everything is different now…” he trailed off.
“Tell me. Tell me.”


Harry’s head raided and fell with Draco’s chest as he breathed. The hand that had been playing with his hair stilled but didn’t retreat.

“Would it have been better for me to have never told you?”

“Probably. No. No, not better. But it would’ve been…easier, at least,” Harry said. "...But then everything, our future, it would’ve all been built on lies. And that would be so much worse.”

“Our future,” Draco repeated softly and Harry felt his face grow warm from his choice of words. “So, you want one? With me, that is.”

Harry avoided Draco’s eyes while he spoke, keeping his gaze trained on the door to the walk-in closet instead. “I wouldn’t be here, if I didn’t, Draco.”

“Yet, this is hard for you, to stay with someone like me.”

“Yes,” he said honestly. Draco was silent for a minute but Harry could hear the steady pounding of his heart beneath his ear. Harry wondered if he lay there long enough, if his own heart would fall in sync with it. “I’d be lying if I said it didn’t freak me out. Knowing.”

“Then, why do it? Why put yourself through all of this?” Draco asked. His voice was calm and aloof, like they were discussing what to have for breakfast instead of Draco’s hand in running a crime syndicate, but Harry could sense the vulnerability behind the question.

“Haven’t you been listening, you prat?” Harry said thickly. The backs of his eyes burned but tears never broke through. “I love you.”

“Is love for me worth rewriting your morals?”

“I don’t think I could ever really rewrite those. My sense of what's right and wrong hasn't changed. I know you've done things that I could never approve of. Things that I'd hate. But try as I might, I can't label you as one of the bad guys, either. I can't walk away,” Harry said after a while. “You...I hadn't realized how monotonous my life had become, living the same day, over and over again in a continuous loop. I wasn't truly happy. I wasn't really living. And then you walked through those pub doors and turned everything on its head and--well, I'm not going to lie and say everything is sunshines and daisies now. Nor is it any easier. But you make me feel alive again, Draco.”

Harry finally met Draco's eyes. "Stronger, too. Capable. Happier. So much happier. And this love, you and me, it is worth fighting for, and..." Harry inhaled deeply, then took the plunge."...And if I must learn to-to live with the rest of it, then I'm going to. I can handle it, Draco. I will."

“...Even if you see a side of me you’re unused to?”

“You mean your ‘break his hands’ side?” Harry muttered, looking at his own, unharmed hand resting on Draco’s chest. “Because I’ve seen that already.”

“What if that was just the tip of the iceberg?”

“I don’t want to see more than the tip of the iceberg, Draco. Keep that part of you and me at a distance, if you can. Is that foolish and crazy? Would something like that even be possible?”
“My mother,” Draco began, resuming his gentle stroking of Harry’s hair, “She doesn’t get involved. She knows what goes on, and she’s seen plenty over the course of the years, but she prefers to stay out of San Drac’s affairs. As much as she can. She and my father, believe it or not, are quite happy together. Even after thirty years of marriage.”

“Proof that your father does in fact, have a heart?” Harry lowered his head back down and snorted against Draco’s bare skin in disbelief.

“He does. Buried under layers upon layers of icy exterior.”

“…Am I going to turn into one of those mob wives?” Harry groaned. “Mob husband. Sounds like a really rubbish reality show.”

“Is that a marriage proposal? Because you’ll have to do much better than that, Potter,” Draco said smoothly.

“I know I’m not a poncey snob like you, but even I have more tact than to propose to someone while starkers and covered in at least four different substances,” said Harry, glancing down at their filthy bodies. “Do you feel half as disgusting as I do, right now? I think I’m glued to the blankets.”

“I’ll make sure Doris does the linen this afternoon.”

“What? Lazy arse, I’ll wash it myself. Don’t make that poor woman touch these—”

“It wouldn’t be the first time,” Draco sighed, “You’ve been unusually affectionate tonight; so much so, that I nearly forgot about your penchant for name-calling. Perhaps it would be more sensible that we part ways now, and see other people.”

Harry sat up suddenly and threw a leg over Draco’s waist in a straddle. He glared down teasingly. “Too late,” Harry said, leaning forward to kiss his lover’s lips. He caught Draco’s lower lip between his teeth and tugged it lightly. “You’re stuck with me, Malfoy.”

Harry wiped his hand across the mirror to clear it of the fog accumulated there. His towel was wrapped low around his waist but he scooted the edge of it down further to expose the entirety of the mark there.

It was fully healed.

It was still ugly.

Draco was already stepping out of the shower behind him, securing a towel of his own around his wet hips as he let the water continue to run for Harry’s turn.

“Have you decided what you want to do with that?” Draco asked carefully. Harry didn’t take his eyes off the tattoo.

“I hate it. I don’t want it on me, anymore. It’s like this constant, ugly reminder of him, but I suppose that was the point, right?”

“We’ll have it removed whenever you want to go. Say the word, and it’s gone.”

“There will still be a mark afterwards, won’t there? A scar.” Harry brushed his hair from his forehead. “I guess, in a way, Riddle will have left a scar on me twice.”
“He will never harm you again,” said Draco severely.

“Would you kill him?” Harry whispered, the words sounding strangled.

“I think you’re straying from the tip of the iceberg, my love,” Draco told him, his voice equally as soft.

“Just this once, then. Tell me.” Harry pulled the towel up to cover the tattoo with a shaking hand.

“Would I kill Riddle for hurting you? Would I kill him to keep you safe? Yes. In a heartbeat.” At that, Harry turned to Draco. His expression was calm but his grey eyes were the shade of rain clouds. “Does that bother you?”

“Yes,” said Harry honestly, “But not as much as I think it should.”

... 

“That shirt is Gucci.” Draco’s eyebrow arched wryly as he took a drag on his cigarette. He was lounging on the outdoor sectional on the terrace, looking up at the dark sky. Harry looked down at the button-down shirt he wore over his boxer briefs. The shirt was jet black, covered in a dark grey geometric pattern. Along the hem that the buttons were sewn to was a strip of red and green fabric that would have been concealed if the shirt was buttoned from top to bottom completely. It was a nice shirt but Harry couldn’t understand the significance a brand name made. A shirt was a shirt. “I paid over four hundred for that.”

Harry’s eyes widened, “Four hundred pounds?” Harry looked down at the shirt, plucking at the fabric. Immediately, he spun around to go inside and change into something else. Something that didn’t cost more than his monthly groceries and utilities combined.

“Well, don’t go taking it off now. I like you in my shirt and nothing else,” Draco murmured, giving Harry an appreciative once-over. Harry tugged the hem of his shirt over his pants. “Come sit with me.” Feeling somewhat disgruntled, Harry walked over to him and climbed on the other half of the couch.

“Who spends four hundred quid on one bloody shirt?”

“It’s Gucci,” Draco repeated, like that should’ve been enough of an explanation.

“It’s insanity,” Harry corrected. He tucked his feet beneath him, curling up in a nest of pillows and Draco’s side, which was much more solid but no less comfortable. The blonde exhaled a stream of smoke.

“Hmm,” Draco hummed, tilting his head upward to look at the sky. It was dawn; though the sun wasn’t above the horizon yet, the sky was beginning to lighten. Harry let out a lengthy yawn. “Don’t tell me you’re tired. I have your gym session scheduled for seven today.”

“You and your schedules. Can’t we postpone the lesson until tomorrow? Oh, don’t give me that look. I can’t go to work all day running on three hours of sleep. Aren’t you tired?”

“Knackered. I’m suffering from jet-lag and haven’t slept well over a day, now. However, I am confident that I still have enough in me to kick your arse around for an hour and still make it in time for my meeting at nine without complaint.”

Harry scoffed. He puffed out his chest a little.
“Kick my arse? I fought off two assailants and managed to get Karkus on his knees.”

“Yet, you still managed to get pinned by Montague.”

“I could’ve gotten free if your father hadn’t called him off,” said Harry, crossing his arms defensively. Draco kicked his legs off the couch and sat upright. The cigarette was dangling from his lips, burnt down halfway and Harry reached over to pluck it away. Instead of stubbing it out in the ash tray, Harry stared at it between his fingers.

“That’s an awful lot of talk coming from someone who’s only been training for a few weeks,” Draco mused.

“I’m a quick study,” Harry stated cheekily and brought the cigarette to his own mouth. Draco reacted quickly, his hand coming up to snatch it away just as he inhaled.

The smoke burned Harry’s throat and the taste, oh, the taste was atrocious. *Acrid*. Harry keeled over and coughed roughly. Eyes watering, he stole a glance over at Draco. He was stubbing out the cigarette and glaring back at him, unimpressed.

“Fuck—that’s foul,” he wheezed between hacks.

“Of course it’s foul,” said Draco waspishly. “What the bloody hell were you thinking?”

“I wasn’t,” said Harry, rubbing at his chest.

“Clearly,” Draco sighed as he stood up. “Come on, I think you would benefit from more sleep. Evidently all common sense has eluded you.”

“I want to stay out here, outside.” His lungs were still protesting but Harry laid back on the sectional, tucking a pillow beneath his head. “The sun is coming up.” Harry reached for Draco and pulled him down on top of him. His hands came up to cradle his head. Harry moved in for a kiss as Draco moved into the juncture of his legs. Harry’s legs wound around the backs of Draco’s pajama-clad thighs. He was shirtless and his skin felt warm to the touch. Half-hard, Harry shifted their groins to meet.

“Again?” Draco asked him. He threaded his fingers in Harry’s dark locks of hair and tugged. Harry shivered. “We just got cleaned up from the first round.”

“Yes, I know. I don’t care. I want it. Want you,” Harry rocked against Draco, gripping his arms needy with newly burning desire. Draco buried his face into the crook of Harry’s neck.

“You are either deliriously tired or tremendously insatiable, Harry.”

Harry chuckled, “I think I’m a little bit of both right now.”

They were snogging again, hot and heavy, and when they paused, they were breathing in each other’s air until it was stifling. The sun was over the horizon by the time Draco tore off his briefs, dragging them down Harry’s legs and tossing them to the side. The button down shirt remained on, as did Draco’s pajama bottoms. The blonde slipped them down just enough to release his cock from the confines of silky material. He propped himself on one arm over Harry.

“I need to go get the lube from the bedroom,” Draco murmured. Prick in his free hand, he dragged it down Harry’s crevice, the blunt head brushing against his entrance teasingly. Harry grinned as Draco’s eyes widened. Harry watched, mesmerized, as light grey was lost to an infringing sea of black.
“You planned this, didn’t you?” Draco asked in a husky voice, pushing forward with his hips a little. Harry moaned into Draco’s mouth and nodded. While he was in the shower, he’d started prepping himself before he even realized what he was doing. It was like he couldn’t get enough of Draco now that he finally had him again, and his body knew it before his mind had caught up. Heat was flooding his ears and fogging his mind. Draco’s cock popped through the slick ring of muscle.

"Ah!" Harry gasped at the slight burn, nails digging crescent moons into Draco’s arms as he sank into him slowly.

“Little minx.”

“You don’t…think…anyone…can see us up here, do you?” Harry managed, holding on to Draco tightly. At first, Draco barely thrusted; he undulated his hips instead, pelvis flush against Harry’s arse, screwing him deep into the couch. Birds were chirping in song and the sky was brighter than it had been just minutes ago and Harry was half-naked, getting fucked on the terrace. They were far past public indecency, and too shamelessly wanton to bring it behind closed doors.

“The surrounding buildings aren’t high enough, but do try to keep your voice down,” Draco said throatily, punctuating his words when he pressed his hand over Harry’s mouth to muffle a particularly loud moan. Harry placed his own hand over Draco’s and clutched it in place. “Normally, I would have no objections to you being loud, but we don’t want to be caught now, do we? Imagine what the neighbors below might say,” he continued, a sultry smirk growing on his lips.

Their half-dressed bodies were writhing and heaving together on the sectional. If someone were to stand on the roof and peek over the edge, Harry imagined they’d be greeted with Draco's partially concealed arse flexing as it gyrated into him. Draco’s hand was soon replaced with his lips and tongue and teeth. He whispered words of encouragement and debauchery in Harry's ear when he increased his pace. He angled his thrusts to drag against his prostate.

Harry’s body tilted and arched to meet the deep drives into him. No doubt, he’d feel this later, in his arse and in his hips. Every time he moved or sat, he’d remember Draco inside him, recall the pleasing stretch of being filled and fucked within an inch of his life. The thought, along with the building pleasure, had Harry’s body propelling closer to the edge.

As if sensing the end was near, Draco lifted himself up on one hand and shifted so his hand could snake down between their stomachs. Fingers gathered the smattering of precum dribbling down his prick, using it as makeshift lube to slick his grip. Harry’s lips parted in a noiseless cry. He clenched sharply around Draco.

The friction within him combined with the friction of Draco’s hand on his cock lit his body on fire. It scorched every fiber in its path. It hurdled Harry to his peak. When he reached it, it was milder than it had been a few hours ago but had him gasping in pleasure as he was fucked through it. Draco swore softly. He laced their fingers together. A few seconds later, Draco was coming too, spilling deep with a staccato of movements. Afterwards, he sagged on top of Harry.

“Fuck,” Harry breathed as he sucked in an unsteady lungful of air. He stroked Draco’s spine, hands trailing through the moisture of his sweat gathered there as Draco peppered kisses from his shoulder to the line of his jaw. He placed another, lingering and promising, on his lips. “That was brilliant.”

“Isn’t it always?” said Draco smugly, finally pulling out. He shifted back onto his knees.

“True. We deserve a medal. Is sex an Olympic sport? It should be. We’d bring home the gold, for sure,” Harry babbled, stretching his body along the sectional.
“The fact you’d be willing to, even *theoretically*, fuck on live, internationally broadcasted television is surprising to me. And incredibly kinky,” Draco smirked down at him. “I can work with those voyeuristic tendencies of yours. Within reason, of course. You are still mine, after all.”

“Hey now. I am my own,” said Harry. Despite his declaration, the side of Harry that *desired* to be possessed and dominated by the other man practically *preened* at the claim.

He peered up at the sky. The sun was higher, but somewhat concealed by large clouds. A few birds flew overhead.

Then, he processed the rest of Draco’s words and the risqué possibilities behind them. Harry was a lot of things, but on his slowly expanding list of proclivities, he wasn’t certain *exhibitionist* would hold a spot. He didn’t know if he would even want to find out.

Suddenly, he was all too aware of his current state of undress. The shirt was partly unbuttoned and soiled with cum. His inner thighs were becoming sticky with it. A wave of shyness swept over him and Harry found himself tugging the shirt down over his bits the best he could. His cheeks burned.

“…Perhaps I should’ve thought this through.”

Draco chuckled darkly.

... 

Harry looked at the box placed in front of him. Made from a light wood, it was the length of his forearm and narrow. Engraves into the lid there were three black symbols, something written in Japanese.

“Open it,” said Draco, glancing at Harry’s reflection where he was sitting on the bed behind him. Draco popped his collar up and draped his tie over his neck to tie it. Harry shimmied the lid off with little effort; laying on a velvety interior, was a dagger.

The hilt itself was black, but it was wrapped in red, braided fabric. The butt of it had a golden, scrolled design. It matched the small little embellishments peeking through the openings in the braid.

The sheath was also black. Gingerly, Harry slipped it from the sword to reveal the single-edged blade. It had a faint curve and glistened it caught the sunlight.

“It’s a Japanese sword called a *tantō*. A *short blade*. I had it made for you while I was away.”

Harry smiled as he replaced the dagger back in the sheath. “You brought me home a souvenir?”

“I did.”

“Wow. A prostate massage and a fancy sword? You must have really missed me,” Harry quipped. His grin broadened.

“My, you are rather *cheeky* today. But yes, I did,” admitted Draco. He straightened his collar. Walking over to the bed, the tall man sat down behind Harry and looped his arms around his waist. Draco placed his chin on his shoulder and peered down with Harry at the sword. “The handle. The *menuki*: those little ornaments mounted on either side there. Look closely.”

Harry lifted it to his face, eyeing the gold trinkets nestled beneath the wrapped fabric. “It’s a bird?” He felt Draco’s chin press into him as he nodded.

“A phoenix,” Draco clarified.
“You mean that mythical bird that catches on fire?”

“Yes. They catch fire and are reborn from their ashes.”

“You picked these out for me?” Harry asked, running his thumb along each phoenix. “I’m surprised you didn’t choose a dragon,” he added as an afterthought.

“I did consider it. However, I came to the conclusion that a dragon would’ve been more for me, than for you, and I wanted something that reminded me uniquely of you. So, I chose a phoenix, instead.”

“Is this your backhanded way of telling me I’m flaming?” Harry asked, craning his neck to look at Draco perched on his shoulder.

“No, you brat,” he scoffed. The arms tightened around him slightly. Draco was silent for a beat. Then, “…A phoenix never truly dies. It may catch fire and burn, but it always rises again. A new beginning.”

“Oh, okay. I do like your interpretation better,” said Harry. His voice was tight, emotion mounting in his throat. Draco, despite his flawed and precarious lifestyle, had single-handedly kindled a brand-new type of happiness in Harry. A happiness Harry hadn’t realized had been eluding him his entire life.

Leaning into Draco’s embrace, Harry examined every detail of the tantō in his hand. He memorized the different textures. He marveled at the colors.

*Red.*

Draco remembered his favorite color.

Red, made rich with golden accents; bold and hot, like fire, passion…*love.* It was an attractive gift and Draco had it customized with *Harry* in mind.

A sword; a symbol of courage, strength, protection...

And a phoenix, rising from the ashes of a previous life.

*Beginning anew.*

He turned his head again, to brush his lips to Draco’s. Though it was innocent, Harry poured into it everything he had.

“It’s perfect, Draco. Thank you.”

Chapter End Notes

Ugh, remember when I said I wouldn’t make you guys wait long for an update? Sorry. Next update should be quicker. I’ve already written some of it and I have more time to write over then next few days! :)

This chapter feels way too fluffy for the nature of this story. Oh, well...LET THEM BE
HAPPY AND IN LOVE. For now. I'm feeling generous.

A great big hug and smooch to all you wonderful readers who've officially survived through 100,000 words of this story and are still with me. <3

xx

CJ
Two days later…

Harry toppled back onto his arse and the room around him capsized. It took him a moment to gather his faculties but then he rolled over quickly to avoid being pinned. From his spot on the floor, he spun his body around and brought his foot down behind Draco’s knees and grinned proudly when Draco fell back too.

“Hah! Is that all you got, Malfoy?” Harry panted out as he lurched up to pin the man with his body. He wasn’t fast enough this time, however, because before he knew what was happening, Draco had him once more on his back as he straddled Harry’s waist. His hands were pinned on either side of his head.

“That was cute,” Draco said, leering down at him from above.

“Shut it!” Harry grit out, yanking his arms and bending his knee. It didn’t dislodge Draco’s hold on them, but it set his equilibrium off long enough for Harry to rotate his hips and shove the taller man off him. Harry rolled again, snapping his leg out to kick at Draco. “Don’t underestimate me—agh!”

The blonde seized his ankle and threw Harry off balance. Within seconds, Draco had him falling arse over tit until his cheek was pressed against the floor with his arms pinned behind him.

“Come on, sweetheart, is that all you’ve got?” Draco drawled. “And you were so sure of yourself a minute ago.” He leaned down to peck Harry’s cheek mockingly. Harry snarled at him in frustration and snapped his head back, harder than was probably called for.

He caught Draco on the chin and the older man swore. He shifted but didn’t release Harry’s hands. Instead, he transferred both wrists into his left hand, pressed his knee into Harry’s lower back, and brought his free hand down against Harry’s arse.
Harry gasped and stilled. “Seriously?” he yelped when Draco spanked him again. He tried his best to ignore the heat flooding south. “Draco!”

“Harry,” Draco retorted, punctuating his name with several more swats. To his horror, Harry couldn’t stop the soft moan from escaping his mouth. The muscles in his arse twitched in response. Draco chuckled as he finally released him and rose to his feet. Harry remained where he was, trying to reel in his stirring arousal. Embarrassment coursed through him as Draco stared down at his prone form.

“You’re turned on, aren’t you?” Draco murmured after a moment.

“No.”

“Then stand up.”

“Bugger off,” Harry grunted even as his cheeks flamed.

Draco chuckled low in his throat again as he walked away to get a drink of water. The desire to retaliate encroached Harry and he leapt to his feet. He ran and lunged bodily at the blonde. The tackle sent them toppling to the ground near one of the treadmills. If they’d been a few centimeters closer to the left, someone would’ve hit their head against it.

Harry’s attack must’ve sparked something in Draco because he growled dangerously. They tussled about haphazardly, fighting for dominance. Draco would win, and Harry knew it—but that didn’t mean Harry was going to make it easy for him. Something about the weight of Draco’s body, the pull of limbs, the animalistic power behind their movements, kindled a thrill within him. He could tell Draco felt it too; a testosterone-fueled contest made bubbling hot with their sexual chemistry. Every position they landed in was suggestive and meaningful.

After a while, winning their sparring match became less important. Harry knew he had a long way to go. Nevertheless, he felt more capable and stronger than ever before, and Draco it seemed, realized that, as well. He seemed to appreciate Harry’s newly cultivated skills.

The atmosphere in the room was muggy, despite the central air pumping throughout the penthouse. Harry was dripping sweat and his glasses had ended up in some unknown location. They were twisted like a pretzel and Harry couldn’t move much. His hand managed to wriggle around and find its way to one of Draco’s thighs where he dug his nails in roughly. Draco hissed in pain. Harry, despite the fight he was putting up, was no longer balking at the idea of submitting. He just wanted Draco to make him.

Finally, Draco, his breaths labored and his skin dampened from exertion, pressed Harry firmly into the floor. His hand gripped the back of his neck.

“Do you yield?” he asked, his words liquid heat.

Harry licked his lips and turned his head so that his cheek was pressed into the ground. “Make me, sweetheart,” he sneered.

“Make you?” Draco repeated evenly, “I have you pinned to the ground. I believe it is more than apparent who has the upper hand, here.”

“Then maybe I just need to be reminded who’s in charge,” Harry suggested. His stomach squirmed eagerly. His cock was hard and trapped between the floor and his own body. Understanding the implications behind Harry’s words, Draco shifted behind him suddenly and lowered his head to speak directly into Harry’s ear.
“Are you sure you want that from me?”

“I want everything.”

“That is a foolish assertion, darling,” he admonished, a hand traveling down the length of his spine thoughtfully until it rested right above the swell of his backside. “‘Everything’ is an ambiguous term. You don’t know what I could do to you. You don’t know what exactly you are asking for. I won’t take advantage of your naïveté. We all have our limits, Harry.”

At first, Harry bristled and opened his mouth to object, to tell Draco he wasn’t naïve and he wasn’t afraid. No longer being held down, Harry raised his head up and looked behind him to Draco. He too, was sweating, his blond hair darkened with moisture and hanging in lust-blown eyes. Draco’s mouth was set, though, and serious. Perhaps there was truth to Draco’s words. Harry knew deep down that there were plenty of lines he would never want to cross. Lines where Riddle lurked on the other side of. Nevertheless, he wasn’t going to let Riddle ruin what he wanted from Draco. Harry simply pressed back into the hand at the base of his spine and met his gaze.

“Like—like before, then?”

Draco pursed his lips. His erection was pronounced in his compression pants, no doubt straining painfully against the snug material as he stood up. Reaching down, he lifted Harry to his feet, his hands lingering on Harry’s body while he seemed to settle on some unknown conclusion.

Draco turned on heel.

“Follow me.”

Surprised, Harry trailed after him wordlessly. They were, thankfully, alone in the penthouse so no one saw them as they passed through, hard and sweaty, to the study. Draco was pressing something into his phone as soon as they entered. Like the bookshelf in the master bedroom, Harry watched, stunned as the unit on the left side of the room, slid over. It was a noiseless and swift motion but it had Harry blinking owlishly.

As it turned out, the entrance was simply a second access point to the panic room. Draco took Harry’s hand and led him through the short, narrow hallway. They stopped at the door closest to the kitchen area and suddenly Harry knew—he knew it wasn’t the simple closet he’d assumed it was when he had first stumbled across the hidden room. For a single, fleeting moment, Draco appeared to hesitate.

“Open it,” Harry told him. “I’m not afraid.”

Both aroused and curious, Harry held his breath as the older man unlocked the door and pushed it open.

The room wasn’t large by any means. In fact, in all respects, it was nothing more than a walk-in closet. On one side, there were racks of equipment, for lack of a better term. Leather straps and ties, ropes, chains, gags, and clamps—objects that Harry didn’t even know the names for. There were cabinets lining the wall and he could only imagine, with his limited knowledge, what was inside.

On the back wall was a big black wooden structure, in the shape of an X. There were metal hooks along it and Harry deduced that it was meant to tether a person to. Harry fidgeted from foot to foot as his eyes roamed the space. His eyes fell on a padded bench or table of sorts.

“Are you sure you aren’t afraid?” Draco’s voice was quiet. Harry threw him a cheeky smile over his shoulder that hopefully hid his nerves.
“No,” he said truthfully. “More like…intrigued. I knew you had to have some kinky shit like this laying around here, somewhere. I’m surprised you don’t have some sort of a sex dungeon, honestly,” Harry decided as he walked over to the bench. He ran his hand around the black leather of it.

“What’s this?”

“You put your knees here, and here,” Draco told him, touching a hand to two platforms, “and rest your arms here,” he finished, gesturing to the two platforms a bit higher up.

Harry knelt on it and bent over the bench. It held him on all fours. Though he was fully clothed, in this position he felt vulnerable and exposed. His heart stammered and Harry unconsciously rocked against the leather padding he straddled.

He was still hard.

By the way Draco cursed under his breath, Harry assumed his lover wasn’t fairing much better. He climbed off and turned to face him. He licked his lips. “Can we? I want to—try—like before, but over this,” Harry managed to say. He was blushing heavily and he was sweaty and wound up. His heart rate was elevated, pounding away like a drum and he wondered if Draco could hear its resonance in the electric silence between them.

“I have no objections. Only…stipulations,” said Draco carefully. He leaned against the door frame and crossed his arms like he didn’t have a raging hard-on and they weren’t standing in a room of sexual depravity.

“Like?” Harry asked, licking his dry lips again.

Draco’s exhaled loudly and averted his eyes that until now, had been looking at him hungrily. It seemed as if he was trying to reign in his usually steadfast control.

“Come,” he said, turning around and leaving. He opened the entrance—the one leading to the bedroom—and beckoned Harry after him. “Let’s take a shower, shall we?”

Harry sighed in content as nimble fingers massaged shampoo into his scalp from behind. They were standing off to the side, away from the raining water from the showerhead above. His scrubbing had been momentarily neglected; Harry’s sponge dangled at his side, the string looped over a single finger while Draco worked at his hair. After a minute more, the presence of the slippery, hard body behind him disappeared, leaving him to wash away the suds himself.

He rinsed before turning to see Draco’s hands in his own, dripping hair. Gloriously naked, his cock was left untouched, flushed and glistening. All it would take for Harry to have it against him were three meager steps. He wanted to wrap his hands around it—or maybe his mouth, tasting Draco, savoring the salty essence against his tongue, feeling the pulse of it as he stroked in time with—

“Calm yourself,” Draco’s voice echoed over the streaming water.

“I’d already be calm if you weren’t stalling,” Harry muttered with obvious petulance.

“I am not stalling.” Draco’s eyes were closed and his head was tilted back as he washed away the shampoo from his blonde locks. “I’m waiting on you.”

Hand braced against the shower wall, Harry scrubbed the bottoms of his feet, one at a time.

“The-the traffic light thing is fine,” Harry said quickly. The tips of his ears burned as he spoke but he was fast becoming too horny to get hung up long on safe words.
Draco seemed content with his answer. He nodded his head and removed the hand-held showerhead from the wall. He reached out for Harry. Harry let himself be rinsed off, warm water cascading in rivulets down his body. All the while, the hand not holding the showerhead was dragging along the expanse of flesh. Water streamed down his chest as Draco replaced the hand-held.

Tucking his hands at the backs of Harry’s thighs, he lifted and pressed him against the wall. Harry hissed as his spine made contact against the cool tile. It was almost harsh in contrast to the steam rising around them and between their bodies.

Their hard cocks were nestled between their stomachs. Water eased the slip of them against one another. Harry cradled Draco’s head and snogged him heatedly.

“So,” Draco murmured against his lips. “We’re in agreement, then. Tell me what you want.”

“I told you before.”

“Yes, but now I want you to ask me for it,” Draco commanded lightly. He tilted his pelvis into Harry’s and grinded their bodies together. Harry gasped and dug his fingernails into Draco’s shoulders, arching his neck as it was sucked at.

“The bench. Please. Bend me over it.”

“F-four!” Harry gasped out. The muscles in his thighs jumped and twitched. Sweat beaded at the base of his spine and the backs of his thighs. Another slap cracked across his backside, robbing him of his breath and making his body burn.

It did hurt; not unbearably so, but enough that he couldn’t ignore. Yet, every slap against his skin, every caress and knead into the flesh of his stinging arse converted into strange pleasure.

“Five,” Harry groaned against the black leather padding of the bench. He could sense Draco’s presence behind him, even when he wasn’t making contact. It was overwhelming, dominating, and even though Harry could accept that he liked this, he still couldn’t understand why. Typically, a domineering man was never an attractive quality to Harry. It reminded him of the bullies he’d gone to school with, lived with. Yet, with Draco, Harry wanted to give himself over like a wanton whore to be wrecked. It couldn’t be natural, Harry thought, but it felt so, so good.

Another smack fell, harder than before and landing near the sensitive part where his arse met thigh. Harry choked on air and his head dropped back.

“I can’t,” he said, thrusting against the padded surface desperately.

“You can.”

“Please…the ring. The ring was a bad idea,” he whimpered out. He was so hard it hurt; the cock ring staving off his release was getting to be too much to handle. He’d been waiting too long for release.

“We agreed after ten, Harry. We’re only on five.”

“Six! That was the sixth, just now.”

“Ah,” Draco hummed, “See what happens when you forget to count aloud for me? I lose track. Since you broke our rules, I don’t think that one should count. Now, are you ready for an upgrade?”
Desperation swelled further in Harry. “I can’t—”

“Color, Harry.”

“Please let me cum,” Harry begged him. “Please—”

“That is not a color.”

“Green,” Harry whined, head dropping down on the bench in defeat. The touch of the riding crop had Harry’s stomach and arse tensing. He had been the one to select it from Draco’s collection. He’d held it in his own hand with a blend of eagerness and apprehension billowing through him.

He had tapped it against his own palm.

He had handed it to Draco.

And now Draco was dragging the leather tip down the curve of his backside, lightly caressing the already warmed up skin. It was soothing, almost tickling. Slowly, Harry felt himself relax from the gentle contact.

_Thwack._

“Ah!” Harry gasped as an experimental stripe of fire licked across his arse. It was sharp and deliberate. The pain waned into a dull twinge. Pressure, in his groin. “Fuck. Six!”

“Color?” Kindly.

“Green,” he choked out.

A series of caresses of the crop against his balls had Harry squirming and jutting forward into the bench. His fingers curled around the platforms they rested on as the whip swooshed a few times through the air, not hitting him at first, then—

_Thwack._

“S-seven! Oh, God…”

_Another._

Tears prickled his eyes but didn’t fall. His mouth fell open.

“E-eight—! Draco, I need to cum, _please_, just let me!”

“Color.”

“G-green, damn it, green—”

_Another._

“Oh _fuck_, oh—n-nine. Nine.”

“One more…” Draco crooned, resuming his gentle caressing. This time, the folded tip scraped between his cheeks, teasing over his hole. “God, you look so gorgeous bent over for me like this. Look in the mirror, Harry.”

Harry wagged his head wildly. He’d been pointedly avoiding a glimpse in the mirror to his right.
“I suppose you really don’t care if you cum, do you?” Draco said with an infuriating nonchalance. The crop ran along his straining Princeton.

“I do!” Harry all but growled.

“Then obey me. Look at yourself, Harry.”

Harry’s head raised to peer over at the mirror. He hardly recognized the face reflected back at him and he was more than a little grateful he ditched his glasses, because without them he couldn’t see himself too clearly. Still, the wild hair was hard to miss, and the rosiness in his face didn’t come to a surprise. He hadn’t stopped blushing from the moment he presented his arse to Draco. His lips were bitten and red and his eyes were glassy and he looked...wanton.

Behind him, Draco seemed as composed as ever, despite his obvious erection. He wore no shirt. He was hard lines and angles, powerful and sexy. His fair skin was a shocking contrast against the dark slacks he wore and the black rod in his hand. The image of his lover was doing nothing to help ease Harry’s aching arousal.

“Look at yourself, Harry. You really do like this, don’t you? You’re practically gagging for it.” Harry couldn’t refute the claim. He couldn’t do much of anything but feel; his brain felt foggy like he’d been soaking it in a heady cocktail. He was getting drunk from it all.

And he really, really needed release. He shoved harder against the bench, chasing his desire for friction.

“—lor?”

His hands weren’t tied, per his request. He could easily reach down and remove the cock ring…

Thwack!

Harry jumped as the crop smacked against the bench, narrowly missing his hip. The threat of it sent a shiver down his slick spine.

“Color,” Draco repeated calmly.

“Green,” Harry breathed, a trembling hand coming up to wipe his wet mouth.

When he lowered it back into place, the tenth landed, a last, sharp stroke against his rump. Harry counted it with a broken cry and then he slumped against the cushion. Over the thundering of his own heart, Harry heard Draco discard the crop and move between his spread legs. With both hands, he rubbed at his tender arse.

“You did so well,” he whispered, massaging lightly. Harry wondered if Draco could feel the heat radiating from his punished flesh. His thighs twitched with another spark of desire. “Would you like your reward?”

“Fuck—please!” Harry implored.

“Stand up, my love. Come to the bed. I’m going to take good care of you,” soothed Draco. He guided Harry off the bench and practically carried him to the bed. They laid down facing each other, Draco arranging Harry so that his leg was draped over Draco’s hip. There was the faint snick of a tube of lubricant opening. He didn’t waste time releasing the ring and taking Harry’s dick in his hand. Harry’s mouth dropped open in relief and his hips jerked into the touch.
“I’m not going to last,” he warned him through heavily lidded eyes. Draco’s hand moved along his shaft in languid pulls, using the substantial amount of clear fluid on his palm to slick the way. His thumb toyed with his sensitive slit as it dribbled precum. The other hand slid between his legs to rub at the spot directly behind Harry’s balls.

“That’s okay. Cum for me, Harry. Let go…” said Draco in his ear, jerking him a bit faster. His breath was warm against the side of his head. Harry buried his face against a hard shoulder and his body tensed. It stole the air from his lungs as he came in spurts over Draco’s fist. “Good boy. So, so good, just like that.”

Harry felt submerged with bone-deep satisfaction; sated in a way that penetrated every single atom that made up his existence. His body went slack in Draco’s arms. Between their sparring match and a wild round of—whatever this was, he felt like sleeping for the next two days wasn’t too far out of the question. Harry closed his eyes and sank back into the pillows and finally let himself drift away into a peaceful slumber.

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Harry woke up in a sea of blankets he had no memory of climbing beneath. He was still starkers, but felt clean and refreshed and new. The lights were off but the faint glow of sunlight coming from the drawn windows told him it was sometime in the afternoon. He rolled over to look at the clock just as Draco walked in carrying a tray.

“You let me sleep for nearly three hours?” Harry asked, shifting up. His arse felt sensitive but not unpleasantly so. His lids fluttered shut and he let himself call to mind, for just a sinful second…

“I figured you could benefit from some rest,” Draco replied. He set the tray on Harry’s lap before settling down on the edge of the bed. He surveyed Harry carefully, his grey eyes shrewd. “How are you feeling?”

“Good, I feel good, Draco,” Harry reassured him.

There was a plate of eggs and toast, a side of mixed fruit, fresh and colorful. Harry’s mouth watered; until now, he hadn’t realized how hungry he was. They’d completely skipped breakfast with their…

“Drink your tea and eat everything on the tray,” Draco said. “I fear we may have overexerted you this morning.”

Harry frowned as he picked up his fork and stabbed a piece of honeydew. “The nap was more than enough to recuperate, I think.”

“Perhaps. However, exercise, sex, and pain-play all tend to saturate your brain with chemicals, endorphins. I don’t want you to crash later when they wear off.”

“I feel fine. I promise, Draco.” He spooned a heap of sugar into his tea and stirred it.

“Still, I would rather err on the side of caution.” Draco leaned back on his hands and crossed his legs. "There's an energy drink for you in the fridge if you feel you need it later on.” Harry nodded absently.

“…I never took care of you,” said Harry after a pause. The blonde quirked an eyebrow.

“Take care of me?”

“I fell asleep and left you, well…unsatisfied.” Harry gave him an apologetic smile. Draco didn’t look
offended in the least.

“I was more than enough satisfied. But if it bothers you, you can always make it up to me some other time. Now, eat.” He stood and pressed a kiss to the top of Harry’s head, and then his lips, when Harry tilted his face up. It was casual and sweet and routine, and Harry didn’t know how he lived so long without kisses like that.

“You’re heading to work?”

“Yes. I’ll likely be home a bit late tonight. I have a dinner scheduled at seven with a potential investor,” Draco said. He buttoned the jacket of his suit and smoothed out invisible wrinkles.

“Just you and some-some wealthy bloke?”

“Wealthy woman,” Draco corrected. "You shouldn't assume genders."

“Ah, right,” said Harry. Draco cocked his head to the side as he regarded him. Harry poked around his tray.

“Are you jealous?”

“No,” Harry said. “Should I be?”

“Not in the slightest.” Draco crooked a finger beneath his chin to kiss him more thoroughly. When they broke away again, Draco said, “Let’s go to dinner tomorrow night. Just you and me, and some French cuisine from Alain Ducasse at the Dorchester. Maybe a bottle of Chateau Lafite—”

“You know I don't speak snobby git.”

Draco sighed. “Hush. Just let me romance you without your incessant cheekiness.”

“You don’t have to spend a fortune to romance me, Draco. I just need you.”

“Oh my, you’re so dreamy, Potter,” he said dryly. "Perhaps you are trying to be the one to romance me?"

Harry raised a brow arrogantly. Or rather, tried to. “Bout time you noticed my charm,” he deadpanned around a mouthful of toast. Crumbs sprinkled onto the bed. “And all this time you thought you were the suave one, Malfoy.”

Draco didn't even try to hold back his eye-roll.

Chapter End Notes

Sooo, once again, not a very plot-heavy chapter. It's more or less an intermission chapter, but Draco and Harry needed some alone time, I think. I hope no one was too bored by this one. You'll get much more plot very soon, though, I promise. Next chapter. ;)

Until next time!
The next day…

Harry spun on his left foot, trying to plant a kick to Draco’s gut with his right. Although Draco made no real effort to move out of the way, his toes barely grazed the fabric of his grey, body-hugging shirt.

“Better form, but you’re too far away,” Draco observed. Harry bent over to catch his breath, resting his hands on the tops of his knees. He curved his spine to realign it. “Always be sure you are close enough to land a hit. Otherwise you’ll end up expending all your energy fruitlessly. Remember, even if you’re too close to extend into a kick, a knee works, too.”

Harry straightened up and dragged an arm across the sweat on his forehead. He pushed his fringe out of his eyes and went to push his glasses up the bridge of his nose instinctively, only to remember he wasn’t wearing them.

It’d taken him several attempts to stick the contact lenses in his eyes. While it had been an almost disorienting experience seeing with them at first, he couldn’t deny how easier it was to spar without them sliding about on his face. Or worse, falling off and reducing his world to a blur.

“But if I get that close, you’d be able to grab me,” huffed Harry. “Don’t I want to leave enough space between our bodies to avoid that?”

“In some cases, yes. When you’re fighting like this, you want to be both offensive and defensive. Never stop moving, either. The last thing you want to be in a fight, is predictable. The moment you slow down, your opponent will be able to see what’s coming next—a punch, a jab, a kick—and counterattack.”

Draco circled him. He rolled his shoulders to keep them loose but if he was becoming even half as fatigued as Harry, he gave no indication of it, which just seemed unfair.

”However, if you stay light on your feet and keep your body moving, he can never relax. He can
never anticipate your plan of attack. It's easier to catch him by surprise, and while you might not have an immediate size advantage, you are very quick on your feet." Draco snapped his fingers in a sharp command. "Now. Again."

The sly remark about his height reignited the aggression in Harry. Nevertheless, it still took him seven tries before he got what might’ve been a good hit if Draco hadn’t moved out of the way at the very last second to avoid it. The blonde nodded his praise before tossing Harry down and pinning him to the mat in a headlock.

They wrestled for several minutes, most of which consisted of Harry trying to worm his way out of a series of holds until he ended up in a particularly painful position that even his reasonably flexible form couldn’t endure comfortably for long. His back protested and his shoulders ached as Draco pinned him down.

“Bloody hell, Draco! Ease up, would you?”

“No. Break free.”

“We’ve been—at this—for an hour. I’m tired,” he grunted.

“Oh, poor baby. Shall I come back and kill you after you’ve had your nap?” Draco drawled, but he loosened his grip on Harry’s arms somewhat. Gritting his teeth, Harry squirmed unsuccessfully and then stilled.

“Get stuffed…Is that a gun in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?”

“It’s a gun.”

“Draco!”


“What? Do you mean to tell me that I have to play fair with my opponent?” Harry questioned, blinking up at Draco innocently.

“Good point,” conceded Draco, rolling up onto his knees and rubbing at the area. He lifted the hem of it, revealing small indentations in his alabaster skin that matched the outline of Harry’s mouth. He looked back at Harry with a mix of exasperation and approval. “Well I can’t honestly say I didn’t know you were biter,” he added dryly.

Feeling victorious, Harry bent his arms behind his head in a casual pose as he lay sprawled out on the floor.

“Takes one to know one, Malfoy.”

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“Run, Harry!”

From his crouched position, Harry’s head snapped up to discover Ron’s freckled face peering over the edge of the bar.

“What? Why?”
“Mum said she’s going to come see if you can stay ‘til closing. Fred’s home sick with the flu, I guess. I did tell her that you’ve been trying not work yourself into an early grave but I think she’s desperate. I’d stay, but—”

“You have class tomorrow,” Harry finished for him. He pulled out a drink tray and stood back up. “I know. Don’t worry about it, Ron. I don’t mind. I can text Draco and see if we can do dinner tomorrow, instead.”

“Aw, but we don’t want to ruin date night,” Ron teased, making kissy faces at Harry. Harry swatted at Ron with the tray.

“I feel sorry for Hermione if that’s what you look like when you’re snogging her.”

Ron snickered and snatched the offending platter. “Fine, I’ll let her know you’ll stay, then. You know, this do-gooder rubbish is precisely why you’re my mother’s favorite kid.”

“I’m mum’s favorite kid,” Ginny cut in, coming over and wiping something from her hands onto the apron tied around her waist. Her red hair was starting to fall from the messy knot at the top of her head. Like Ron, classes had started back up for her as well, and Harry knew she’d also made her University's football team this year. These days had Ginny looking as drained as her older brother.

Cold guilt trickled up Harry’s spine. Lately he hadn't picked up any extra shifts to help out the Weasleys. As kind as they all were, no one had asked him to stay any longer than he was scheduled for. All because they knew he was now in a relationship and were giving him space.

He’d been too preoccupied to notice, spending his free time staying cozy in a lavish home, working out, taking spa baths, and fucking his boyfriend.

Harry mentally kicked himself and opened his mouth to apologize for his selfishness when Ginny reached over, yanked the tray from Ron, and handed it back to Harry. Ducking his head, Harry placed three tankards of beer on it for her. “Harry’s a close second, though. For sure.” She winked at him as she left with the drinks. Ron shrugged.

“She’s right. Perks of being the only girl in a house fueled by testosterone. Oye! ’Dung, wake up! You can’t sleep at the bar,” Ron said, slapping the countertop with an open palm near Fletcher’s head. The man jumped up with a choked snore and wiped the drool from his mouth with the back of his hand. Grimacing, Harry slid him a napkin before pulling his phone from his back pocket to text Draco.

[HP 3:49 pm] Fred’s sick. They need me to stay until closing...

[DM 3:51 pm] Are you cancelling on me, Potter?

[HP 3:52 pm] I’m sorry! I know getting reservations there can’t have been easy. I don’t want to leave the Weasleys without help though.

[DM 3:54 pm] Not easy? My sweet, naïve Harry, this is me we are talking about—Harry rolled his eyes—Reservations were not an issue. There is no need to apologize for being your usual valiant self, either. But, if it puts your mind to ease, I can think of plenty of ways for you to make it up to me later.

Harry flushed. He glanced around the pub discreetly. Ron had disappeared into the kitchen and Ginny was clearing a table. Fletcher had passed out on the bar again, the scratched wood collecting a puddle of drool. Harry scrunched his nose in distaste.
I’m at work Draco.

Yes, you are, which is why I specified ‘later’. For the record, in my head, you’re sitting on my face. Or maybe on your knees with my cock in your lovely mouth…Have you ever tried to 69 before?

Harry jerked the phone to his chest and looked around wildly once more. It took him a moment to recollect himself. He reread the message twice and then typed a feverish reply.

DRACO. NO. I’ve got to get back to work! I’ll see you at home.

…I wouldn’t be opposed to it.

After sending his final message, Harry stuffed his phone back in his trousers. He slapped the bar several times, harsher than necessary. “Fletch! You can’t sleep here!”

Fletcher sat up ramrod straight. He blinked bloodshot eyes blearily. “I wasn’t sleepin’ ar’y. Just restin’ my eyes. That dodgy bloke, Stan, y’know? I don’t trust ‘im. He’s got sticky fingers. Tried to swipe my las’ couple o’ notes when I was asleep las’ night,” he mumbled, scratching at the unkempt scruff on his jaw.

With a sigh, Harry handed him another napkin. Worrying his lower lip, he rummaged in his pocket for the key he carried with him but hadn’t used in weeks. He handed it to Fletcher after a moment’s hesitation.

“Take it. Go get some sleep, Fletch,” Harry said quietly.

The blood is gone, he reminded himself. The mess was cleaned and Draco said everything is good as new and Fletcher needs a place to stay.

“Wha’s this?” Fletcher asked groggily, studying the bronze key attached to a worn leather key chain.

“The key to my flat. There’s a futon there you can crash on. A pillow and a blanket, too, though it might be a bit hot for that. I’m not sure if the lights are on anymore but there’s a flashlight in the drawer closest to the front door. I doubt there’s much in the way of food, but I remember there were a few cans of soup and tuna that should still be good…I, er, I haven’t been there in a couple of months, so I’m not quite sure what state the place is in.” He shook his head quickly. “But while it’s still being paid for you might as well use it to get some rest.”

Fletcher eyed him. “Are you havin’ a laugh?”

“No, I’m not,” Harry assured him. Ignoring the grime on his sleeve, he patted the man’s arm once. “Now go away and get some sleep. I need to sanitize the bar.” He watched as Fletcher stumbled out the pub with a haphazard but grateful wave in Harry’s direction.

“Are you and Draco living together?”

Harry jumped.

“Buggering hell, Ron! I swear I need to put a bloody bell around your neck one of these days,” Harry groused. The ginger traipsed over to clean the puddle Fletcher left behind with a moue of disgust.

“You just gave ’Dung the key to your flat, Harry and we both know that man is madder than a bag of ferrets,” said Ron skeptically. “You said you haven’t even been there in a couple of months! So, all
this time you’ve been shacked up with Malfoy?"

Harry had the good grace to look ashamed. “Yeah. I, er, didn’t think it was a big deal?”

Ron leaned in and hissed under his breath, “I told you about the ring the same day I bought it!”

“This isn’t the same thing as marriage!” Harry whispered back. “We—we sleep in the same bed. I have a toothbrush and the tiniest bit of space in his closet for clothes. It’s his place, I’m just… frequenting it.”


“I’m sorry!”

“Months, Potter!” Ron called over his shoulder before stalking off into the kitchen but Harry knew his best mate well enough to know their discussion was far from over. Harry’s fingers twitched with the urge to pour himself a shot or six from one of the bottles behind him.

…

There was nothing Harry could’ve done to prepare for the shock he received when Draco appeared through the pub doors precisely three minutes before his dinner break. Like he had been many months ago, Draco looked out of place in a humble establishment like Weasley’s.

Also, like before, he seemed to catch the eye of every patron within and passerby outside.

He wore a more simplistic grey suit over a stark white shirt. Instead of a tie, the top couple of buttons were undone, showing off the slender column of his throat. His pocket square matched his shirt. A modest look by Malfoy-standards. Harry blinked at him stupidly.

“Ah, perfect,” Draco said. He ignored the curious stares being thrown their way, he came to stand by the bar closest to Harry. “I’m just in time for your dinner break, correct?”

“Y—you—” Harry began, baffled by Draco’s presence. “But we missed our reservations.”

“We did,” Draco agreed. He turned to an equally bewildered Ginny who happened to be walking by. “Excuse me, Miss…?”

“Weasley,” Ginny offered. “Ginny’s fine.”

Draco gave her a charming smile, “Ginny’s fine.”

Draco gave her a charming smile, “Ginny, then. May we see one of your menus?”

“Uh, yes, of course, sir.”

Harry reached for one of the menus on the shelf behind him and thrust it at Draco. “Here you go.”

Unaffected by Harry’s erratic behavior, Draco took the menu. It wasn’t an extensive list by any means, printed on a single sheet of thick paper smudged by greasy fingers. It was pub grub, after all. A glass of scotch was one thing; he doubted if Draco had ever eaten pub food a day in his life.

Harry rounded the bar and herded an amused Draco into one of the booths in the corner. He pointedly avoided eye contact with Ginny or anyone else as he plopped into the booth across from him. His heart was beating rapidly and stomach was busy simulating an intense round of hop-scotch.

In some ways, it was a strange relief. He’d kept Draco camouflaged under the façade of 'Damien' for
so long and now he was going to have to come clean to his loved ones. The secrecy could end. Still, that fractional relief didn’t outweigh his nervousness.

He was backed into a corner and had no choice but to face reality. He was going to introduce Draco to the only people he’d ever truly considered family.

As his boyfriend.

“So, um,” Harry began, squirming slightly in his seat. “You’re here...?”

Draco arched an eyebrow but his eyes didn’t stray from the menu he was reading. “I am. How is the chicken?”

“Fantastic. But...you’re here,” Harry repeated.

“Did we not just go over this?” Draco asked mildly, setting the menu aside to gaze at him. “I am here. You are here. We are here, together, about to have dinner...together.”

“Look, I love this place but it is no...” he glanced around and leaned in, “It’s no Alain Ducasse at the Dorchester,” Harry admitted.

“That’s of little importance. If all you have is an hour for dinner, then I can meet you halfway, Harry.”

Harry softened. Slowly, he relaxed into the booth and grinned at Draco. “I...The chicken is great but Mrs. Weasley’s shepherd’s pie is my favorite.”

“I’ll take your word for it,” Draco told him. Harry stood up and took the menu from him.

“I’ll go put the order in. Eliminate the middle-man. Or woman. Draco...” he moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue, “Even if this isn’t really your scene, I, um—I’m really happy you’re here.” He didn’t wait for Draco’s response as he turned on heel and retreated into the kitchen.

The instant he set foot inside, he discovered Ginny, Ron, George, and Charlie congregated in the middle of the kitchen. Their chattering ceased at the very sight of him, which only confirmed Harry’s suspicion of their topic of discussion.

“Draco Malfoy, Harry?” Charlie called to him with a grin. “You’re dating a Malfoy?”

“Yes,” Harry said briskly, “Let’s not get hung up on his surname, yeah? He’s just a guy I’m seeing and we’re going to have some dinner if that’s alright with you nosy lot.”

“I thought his name was Damien?” Ginny said, crossing her arms as she rounded on Harry. “Liar.”

“I wasn’t—okay, I didn’t want to make this a big deal, okay?” He held his hands up in surrender and looked to Ron for help. He was the only one amongst the group who knew of the job Harry had taken on to keep the pub afloat. Ron, bless him, seemed to have enough compassion in him to show mercy.

“Okay, okay, let’s not badger him. It’s none of our business,” Ron said. He turned red when his siblings all gaped at him in disbelief. “What?”

“You’re the one who couldn’t keep your mouth shut in the first place about Harry’s new rich boyfriend, little brother,” Charlie said wryly. He slung an arm around Harry’s shoulders and squeezed. “He’s a little older than you, isn’t he? Not to mention, he’s got a lot of power with his
family. I hope he’s not pressuring you into anything or taking advantage—”

“No, Charlie, he’s been the perfect gentleman,” Harry sighed.

For a second, his mind flashed with images of bondage equipment hanging in a hidden closet and then to a hundred compromising positions Draco had had him in since March. He could feel his blush spreading and put a tight lid on his straying thoughts.

“Can we not do this right now?”

“Is he good in the sack?” George asked. Ginny elbowed him.

“What? It’s a fair question. It’s not as if I’m asking for the gritty details.” He turned back to Harry. “On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate him, Harry?”

“Remember our discussion about personal boundaries, George?” Harry groaned. He rubbed his furrowed brow in an attempt to stave off the headache starting to form.

“Hmm, I don’t believe I recall. Must’ve been Fred you talked to.”

“It was the both of you,” Harry replied, keeping his features carefully blank.

“You sure it wasn’t just Fred standing next to a mirror?”

“Bloody hell,” Ginny swore. She took Harry’s arm and ushered him away from the group. “We can talk about this later. I’ll bring you guys some dinner. What did you want to eat?”

“Two shepherd’s pies would be great, Gin, thanks. Some water, too?” She nodded and retrieved two glasses. She filled them with ice and fresh water.

“Go back to your boyfriend,” she said, handing him the drinks. “He really is a looker,” she added in a whisper. “By the way…last time I checked, Mum was in the loo. She’s probably back out there by now.”

Harry stilled. “Oh boy.”

“Good luck!” Without a shred of sympathy, Ginny pushed him through the doors. Harry grimaced as one of the glasses splashed sloshed a bit of cold water down his front.

Sure enough, across from Draco in their selected booth sat Molly Weasley, submerged in conversation. Despite her no-nonsense personality, Mrs. Weasley was always a lovely host, warm and welcoming to whomever came into their quaint little pub. She was the closest thing to a mother Harry had ever known. In the blink of an eye, two of the most important facets of his life were coming together. Harry wasn’t too confident how seamless it would go.

Have faith in Draco, he told himself as he approached the pair. Sure, he can be smug and aloof at times but he can also be very charming when he chooses. He knows what the Weasley’s mean to me. He’ll be good.

When he reached them, Mrs. Weasley was chuckling over something and Draco offered her a polite smile in return. Harry found himself breathing a little easier.

“Ah, Harry, dear,” Mrs. Weasley said. “I was just introducing myself to Mr. Malfoy, here.”

“Draco, please, Mrs. Weasley,” Draco insisted.
“Draco. I hadn’t realized that this was the young man you’ve been going with. Such a lovely pair the two of you make.” She stood up to let Harry reclaim his spot across from Draco, pausing only to take his hand in hers.

She patted the top of it gently.

“Thank you for covering for Fred, dear. Poor lamb has the flu, it seems.” She cast her eyes back to Draco. They were suddenly shining. “You should know, Draco, that this boy might not have been born a Weasley but he is as good as a son to me. You won’t find another soul as kindhearted and genuine as him. Please, do take good care of him.”

Draco, who had stood at the same time Mrs. Weasley had, inclined his head. “Of course, Mrs. Weasley. I couldn’t agree more.” Mrs. Weasley squeezed Harry’s hand one last time before letting go.

“Well, then! I will let you two get back to your dinner. Has Ginny come around, yet?” She asked as she looked around for her only daughter. Only George was up front now, manning the bar while Harry was on break.

“Yeah,” Harry told her. “Shepherd’s pie.”

“Ah, yes, of course. Your favorite. Please let me know if I can get the two of you anything else. It was a pleasure meeting you, Draco.”

“The pleasure was all mine, Mrs. Weasley,” Draco said. He gave her another dazzling grin that seemed to win her over with incomprehensible ease. Harry wondered absently if the Malfoy heir had simply won the genetic lottery or if the Dark Side came with exceptional dental care. When she left, Harry turned to Draco.

“Is there anything you can’t do?”

“If there is, I have yet to discover it.”

Harry shook his head but couldn’t keep the pleased look off his face.

“I’m sorry about all that,” Harry began.

“Don’t be. She seems like quite the force to be reckoned with. Seven children? Really?”

“Six boys, one girl.”

“Never,” Draco said, taking a sip of his water. “One is plenty.”

“One seems lonely.”

“Two, then, if we must. No more.” Harry’s brows shot up into his hairline. Had Draco just implied…?

Harry cocked his head to the side. A sly grin spread over his face. “Two is good. Adopted, though.”

“What a shame. I really wanted to take a stab at getting you pregnant.”

“Adopted,” Harry repeated with an unimpressed scoff.

“Perhaps we should start on a smaller scale? Maybe get a puppy first,” Draco said mildly. Harry straightened up.
“Speaking of dogs,” Harry interjected as he glimpsed around the dimly lit pub. “Where is Zabini? He didn't come here with you?”

“He is in the car waiting, of course. Observing the ah, scenery.”

“Oh, got it. It's a bit muggy out today. I hope you cracked the window open for him. Actually—no I don’t.”

Draco surveyed him with a small, amused smirk before his expression became serious once more. “How are you?” he asked, grey eyes dropping down low for a minute, pointedly.

Harry cleared his throat in a failed effort to expel the self-consciousness starting to creep in. “I’m fine. Same as last night, same as this morning. Really. You need to relax.”

“I’ve never been one to relax. You can chalk up the habit to my upbringing.”

“I don’t mind your need to make sure I’m okay. I—” A shrug. “I feel the same way. I think that’s normal when you…care about someone. Your upbringing though, I can only imagine what that was like,” Harry said. He tied his discarded straw wrapper in a knot with idle fingers.

“Much like any other childhood.”

“Really?”

“…No, not really,” Draco said with a tight smile. “I was raised in a very different environment with rather high expectations. However, that is one topic I'd prefer to save for another time and place.”

“Oh, right.”

He tried to contemplate what it would’ve been like to be the son of, not only a billionaire, but the Head of an entire criminal organization. It wasn't as if Lucius Malfoy exuded the fatherly type, either. Just how exposed to his father's crimes had Draco been growing up? How many had Draco committed under his command? On his own accord?

He suppressed a shiver and shoved his thoughts from the forefront of his mind. He couldn't bring himself to delve too deep.

“See, with me, my aunt and uncle had zero expectations. They believed I would amount to nothing…which…” Harry trailed off as he shredded the straw wrapper between his fingernails. “…Are you sure you want to raise a puppy together despite our very different upbringings?”

“You are not ‘nothing’ Harry. You’re...”

“…I’m what?”

Harry watched in fascination as his lover’s cheeks tinged the faintest shade of pink. It was gone as quickly as it appeared. Draco cleared his throat softly and changed the subject.

“Any puppy of ours would no doubt be a remarkable specimen.”

“You do realize a puppy wouldn’t be biologically related to either of us, right? It could turn out to be a total heathen.”

Draco arched an eyebrow again but his snarky little comment was left unsaid between them.

“Don’t even,” Harry warned, flicking the scraps of paper across the table at his lover who simply
brushed them off with a soft chuckle.

“You two are getting a puppy, now?”

The backdrop of the pub suddenly slid back into focus and Harry started at the sight of Ron and Ginny carrying their dinner. An unnecessary action, considering Ginny was more than capable of carrying two plates on her own. He fought the urge to kick Ron in the kneecaps.

“What about Hedwig? She still hasn’t turned up?”

Harry’s guts writhed at Ron’s question. He felt his hands tremble and he placed them in his lap beneath the table.

“No. Not yet,” Harry said shortly. He glanced at Draco across the table. “And we were just…kidding about the puppy. I’m not ready for another pet. Not yet. Er, Draco, this is Ron. Ron, Draco.”

“Pleasure to meet you Ron,” Draco said neutrally.

“Likewise,” Ron replied. He was sizing up Draco with critical eyes. Harry’s nerves ticked away at him as he watched the exchange, silent but apparent in its meaning: there was distrust there, on Ron’s part. Indifference mainly, on Draco’s.

Ron had made the ‘mob’ comment as soon as he caught sight of the Malfoy heir leaving his family’s pub all those months ago. Although he hadn’t mentioned it again upon learning of their relationship, Harry knew it was only a matter of time before Ron made another remark. Tact had never been his best mate’s strong suit.

But then Ron was setting Draco’s plate in front of him with a surprising amount of civility and asking if he needed anything else. Harry felt himself releasing the breath he hadn’t known he’d been holding.

Ron and Ginny dispersed. Harry glanced at the clock. “I only have thirty-four minutes left of my break.”

“That’s plenty of time to eat. It was nice to finally have the opportunity to meet your friends.”

“They were all very…eager to meet you. I adore them, but they are…let’s just say most of them don’t always manage to grasp the concept of personal boundaries. Everyone knows what’s going on in everyone’s life. Usually. And you’re well, you.”

“Me?”

“You know what I mean. You’re you,” Harry said. With a flourish of his hand, he gestured to all of Draco. The blonde was placing his napkin on his lap and tucking into his meal. Hyper-aware of himself, Harry scooted his elbows off the table. Then he thought oh fuck it, and put them back on. He was in a pub and smelt like ale and grease and chips. Fortunately, Draco didn’t seem to be bothered by his lack of etiquette.

He wondered, though, if Draco’s standards would have been higher, were they at Alain Ducasse at the blah-blah-blah. Probably...

“You were right,” Draco murmured after he swallowed his first bite of food. “This is quite good.”
Warmth spread through him at that. Sure, there was still plenty to concern himself with.

He couldn’t exactly picture Draco attending Sunday dinners with the Weasley family yet, or wearing one of Mrs. Weasley’s infamous Christmas sweaters. But maybe…maybe it wasn’t completely out of the realm of possibilities for them.

Maybe he could love his chaotic clan of Weasleys and Draco Malfoy, and all would be well.

...

Two days later...

Harry placed fervent, open-mouthed kisses along the hard planes of Draco’s stomach until he reached the neatly trimmed trail of hair. He raked his fingernails through the light shade of golden blonde, that lead to his prize. The man’s cock was fully hard and ready for the attention Harry was more than willing to give.

Bracing himself on one hand, he took Draco in the other and leaned down to press a kiss to the flared tip, the rosy hue of it a sharp contrast to his normally pale skin. Harry dragged his lower lip against the sensitive frenulum. His tongue swirled around the head in a modest tease before dipping down to take in more of that heated flesh.

Between his own legs, his prick was engulfed in the hot cavern of Draco’s mouth and his thighs jumped and strained against the urge to thrust down into it. Harry moaned his appreciation around the length in his mouth. Nails dragged up his hips and kneaded the meat of his arse as he was swallowed to root. When Draco's throat constricted around his cock, Harry back off, gasping. He dropped his head down and whimpered against Draco's hipbone.

A light smack against his arse was his not-so-subtle reminder to get back to work. Harry brought his mouth down once more to encircle Draco’s prick, drawing in as much as he could until it hit the back of his throat and he breathed through his nose, trying to suppress his gag reflex. When he couldn’t any longer, the sound of Harry choking on his cock seemed to only stimulate his lover’s perversions. Draco’s legs shifted on the bed in a spasm of pleasure he too, was trying to reign in.

With skillful fingers, Draco rolled his balls in his hand before dragging a single finger up to the valley of Harry’s arse cheeks.

Harry made a keening noise but forced himself to continue, bobbing his head in sync with his hand along Draco's erection. At this rate, Harry knew he wasn’t going to last long. He never seemed to be able to outlast Draco which niggled him a bit if he dwelled on it too much. His focus was always waning with every touch, every lick...

Harry twisted a fist into the duvet and dragged his tongue along the head to press into the slit for a taste of the precum gathering in white pearls there. It was salty and warm and Harry couldn’t get enough of it, because it was Draco.

Draco’s thumb pressed firmly into his perineum and massaged the area. Harry’s mouth retreated with a wet pop; the pleasure amalgamating in his groin too much for his multi-tasking to continue fluidly. His toes curled and he rocked a little on all fours over Draco's body. He tilted his hips eagerly into that mouth while his head fell back.

His lover smacked his arse again in reprimand, eliciting a horrifyingly slutty moan from Harry's throat. In a feeble attempt to quell anymore shameful sounds, he wrapped his lips around Draco's cock, hollowing his cheeks and sucking hard. He felt it pulse and thicken further in his mouth. He
caressed Draco’s balls in his hand, taut and heavy and watched as the muscles in Draco’s legs clench some more.

His body thrummed from intensity and when Draco swore against his erection, the very motion of his lips forming a curse word stimulated his own overheated flesh between his legs. “Don’t stop, please don’t stop,” Harry groaned when the finger rubbing light circles against his opening left.

“Oh, I have no intention of stopping, my love,” Draco murmured. Seizing Harry by the hips, he spun them around and rearranged Harry on his back. He turned himself around and slid down Harry’s body to lay between his legs on his belly.

That slick mouth returned like a starving man intent on devouring him. Draco’s lips and tongue and teeth, _God help him_, they were everywhere, almost worshipful and demanding.

Draco licked the flat of his tongue behind Harry’s balls in firm strokes. His teeth bit into the meatiest part of his arse and Harry’s stifled noises became increasingly pronounced. Heat pooled, his orgasm was rising inside of him and threatening to spill over the edge. He wanted to _drown_ in it. Harry canted his hips towards Draco’s face, legs locking around his head. His fingers scrambled to grasp at blonde locks. For once, Draco didn’t seem to mind him mussing his hair. He seemed pleased and _encouraged_ by Harry’s desperation.

“I-I’m going to cum,” Harry warned him through hooded eyes and whimpered gasps of breath.

Draco’s smirk was coy, lustful, and he reached up, long fingers encasing Harry’s erection and squeezing at the base firmly. The building pressure waned back from the edge. Harry slammed his heels into the mattress, the lack of gratification making him sob and squirm in discomfort.

“Fuck, Draco! Fuck-why?!” Harry pulled at the tuff of hair in his hand until Draco knocked his arm away and sat back up on his heels.

“I’m not done with you, yet.” Draco’s hands stroked either side of Harry’s hips, a lascivious promise in his eyes as they dropped down to his own glistening erection and then back to Harry. “Far from it, I think.”

Harry gulped.

...  

Draco shifted in the armchair situated at the end of the bed. His cock was hard between his crossed legs as he watched and _appreciated_ the image his lover made on the bed.

Harry was a vision, spread-eagle on the bed, his wrists tied with leather straps to the headboard. His legs were bent at the knees with his ankles also bound and he was _writhing_ with every little thrust he made with his pelvis.

Draco licked his lips idly when Harry made a needy whine around the ball gag in his mouth. Tears leaked down either side of his face—but Harry hadn’t dropped the little rubber ball he’d given him to hold onto during their little game so Draco made no move to release him.

The black and red tab on the prostate massager pressed into the smooth skin of Harry’s perineum with every delightful clench of his tight hole around the toy. The muscles in his stomach rippled as he chased his own pleasure. He had little choice; the _aneros_ toy was his only source of stimulation and Harry, despite his feeble protests, was loving it. Moreover, Draco loved _watching_ it.

After weeks of hard work and exercise, Harry’s body was showing more definition than ever. While
the brunette had always been lithe and fit, the lines of abdominals now held a more distinctive appearance. Part of Draco was tempted to return to the bed just so he could trail kisses along the faint line leading from Harry's ribs to his naval. His intense desire to kiss the cute little freckle right beside Harry's belly button was borderline pathetic.

Draco was pulled out of his thoughts when Harry's thighs strained against the ties and fell closed at the knees. His back arched off the bed.

“Legs open,” Draco admonished, his hand drifting to his prick and pumping it a few times when Harry parted his legs and displayed his arse once more.

He was almost tempted to take pity on his boyfriend—release a hand for him, maybe—but watching Harry's entrance contracting around the little toy in an effort to bring himself off, was too delicious a show to rush. Another minute of stimulation later, and the younger man cried out, muffled only by the gag, and his body shook but didn't ejaculate.

Excellent.

Draco’s hand found his erection again and squeezed it much like he had done to Harry’s earlier. His own endurance was being tested from the show, as well as his patience. The payout though, the payout would be well worth the wait.

“Legs, Harry,” Draco reminded him when they shuttered closed again. “Or I’ll have to punish you.”

The brunette’s wild hair flopped against the pillow pitifully and he thrusted in the air, seeking friction for his cock that he wasn’t going to get anytime soon. He was hard, precum spattering occasionally, balls tightening up and swollen from lack of ejaculation.

Harry’s physical reaction to the word ‘punish’ had Draco chuckling darkly. Propping an elbow on the support of the chair, he rested his chin in his hand.

Harry Potter, you kinky little minx.

“Shall I, anyway? You’d like it, wouldn’t you, getting off on a good spanking, just like before. Do you want me to fuck your red, punished arse, Harry? Make you throb and ache from the inside, out? My naughty little voyeur. Despite your protests, I believe you’re enjoying me watching you like this.”

Harry’s eyes were screwed shut and he let out a sharp cry around the gag as he vibrated against the duvet, toes curling, body shivering in ecstasy.

“You poor thing,” Draco cooed. “You must be feeling so worn out.”

Draco stood and planted a knee on the bed, crawling in between parted legs. He brought his fingers down against the curved handle of the massager and wriggled it lightly, teasing Harry who let out another shrill noise.

"You are so sensitive here."

After a few more seconds of what had to be nearly unbearable overstimulation, Draco withdrew the toy completely and tossed it aside. The emerald green in Harry’s eyes was eclipsed by black. Dampness clung to his eyelashes.

The lubrication left behind from the massager eased the way when Draco slipped two fingers inside him at once. He dropped his mouth to Harry’s, kissing the lips stretched around the gag, and then the
gag itself. He licked the salty sweat collecting along his collar bone and grazed his teeth down across beaded nipples.

The response was instantaneous: Harry jerked up roughly against Draco’s body, seeking contact for his cock.

“No, no.” Draco fisted a hand in Harry’s hair and tugged it warningly. “You will cum only when I say you can. Obey me, Harry.”

Removing his fingers, Draco reached over to pour more lube onto himself. He guided the blunt head of his cock to Harry’s opening and eased in carefully. Harry’s slick heat was sucking him in like a vacuum, deep, deep, all the way to the hilt. Harry’s arse rested in the cradle of Draco’s pelvis. Beneath him, Harry’s chest was heaving much like his own.

Holding steady to Harry’s waist, he glanced at the hand holding the ball tightly within it. Harry knew his limits. Draco wouldn’t cross them.

He withdrew his cock completely, lined back up, and pressed in again.

And again.

And again, all the while savoring in the clinching of muscles around his prick as Harry's passage worked to accommodate being breeched repeatedly. The little moans coming from him were pornographic without trying to be. One thing was certain about Harry Potter—he never really tried to be somebody he was not. After a lifetime surrounded by two-faced people, it was one of the many qualities Draco loved about him.

Harry’s body squeezed Draco’s cock like a hot vice. He wasn’t going to last much longer than he’d already had. The expression on Harry’s face confirmed all he needed to know: he wasn’t going to last, either.

Throwing their game out the figurative window, Draco held himself over Harry. He fucked into him with quick, controlled thrusts that became more frantic as just seconds ticked away.

At a particularly firm jab to his swollen prostate, Harry's body jerked, the top of his head coming up and slamming into Draco's jaw. The sharp ache was a small price to pay in exchange for the brunette's desperate "mm-mm-mm's around the gag that followed when Draco shifted his legs, from his waist to his shoulders, and pressed in deeper.

Finally, when everything was becoming too much, he brought his still-greasy hand down to Harry's aching arousal and stroked in time with the fervent snapping of his hips. He could feel Harry tense around him and his eyes flew open in a silent plea.

“Now, Harry,” he managed to say as his stomach tightened, the built-up pressure making him feel like he was on the verge of shattering.

Peaking was a joint experience, drowning each other with cum and sweat and ragged moans as they rode out their highs. He let Harry's legs drop from their perch. Winded and sated, but still seated in Harry, Draco first pressed a kiss to his forehead, a gentle graze against the faded scar there.

Then, a kiss to each of his tear-stained cheeks, tasting the salt Harry’s bliss left behind.

He unstrapped the ball gag last. He removed it and threw it over his shoulder so he could give his undivided attention to that beautiful swollen mouth.
Lips met his eagerly.

Half-asleep, Harry rubbed his bleary eyes beneath his spectacles. Rising to the tips of his toes, he reached into the cupboard and retrieved a small glass.

The light from the fridge was nearly blinding in the darkness of the kitchen and Harry snatched the pitcher out, shoving the door shut quickly with his hip.

He filled his glass with cold water and downed it in one gulp, cursing Draco for making him sweat out all the moisture in his body hours before. His thirst had been so intense that it had woken him from a sound sleep. One of these days all this monkey sex is going to kill us both, he thought with a barely audible snort. What a way to go, though.

A noise shuffled from around the corner. Yawning, he poured himself another glass.

“Draco? Did I wake you?” Harry called in a soft voice. “I was just getting a—”

The blow to the side of his head jarred him. He fell to the floor, his face slamming into the cupboard on the way down. For a moment, the world around him was blanketed in total darkness.

Chapter End Notes

*blows kisses*

That's all for now, folks.

xx

CJ
**ARC FOUR: Run, Harry (Part II)**

Chapter Summary

Harry and Draco have a rough night.

Chapter Notes

All mistakes are my own.

**This chapter is very much inspired by the Viewfinder manga by Yamane Ayano.**

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Little spots danced around Harry’s vision. The air was successfully knocked from his lungs. He couldn’t do much more than lay on the ground in a daze, blinking furiously to get his eyes adjusted to his dark surroundings. Harry rolled over and hissed in pain; the glass Harry had been holding shattered when he fell. Shards of it stabbed like needles into the back of his leg.

“What—”

A gunshot, only a tad subdued with the help of a suppressor, rang out in the penthouse, followed by a solid *thud.*

Unnervingly close by.

Instinct took over his actions. Harry shrank away and scrambled to seek refuge in the corner between the cabinets. With his back now covered, Harry inspected the kitchen. Sprawled scant meters from where he’d been was a motionless body dressed head-to-toe in black.

*Bleeding.*

The figure wore a hood. Moonlight glared violently off an eerie, bone-white mask.

He surged back as horror, cold and daunting, threatened to choke him.

“Stay where you are, Harry!”

*Draco!*

There was no time for relief to settle in. Harry drew his knees up to his chest and covered his head with his arms as soon as more shooting began. A dozen more gunshots resonated, back-and-forth, each one followed by the sound of things breaking, crumbling, shattering, until everything fell to silence once again bar the irritating buzzing in Harry’s ears.

He almost failed to hear the victor of the stand-off draw near. With bated breath, Harry raised his head to face the man stooped before him.
“Can you stand?” Draco whispered to him. He wasn’t looking at Harry though; even in the shadows, Harry could see his lover’s eyes scanning for more intruders. When he saw none, a hand wrapped around Harry’s bicep tugged him up to his feet.

“Watch out for the glass there—”

A bullet met the edge of the granite countertop. Draco pushed him down again and squatted behind the peninsula once more for cover. “Fuck,” he heard his lover growl. “They must’ve gotten in through the study as well as the gym, then.”

With the hand not wielding his gun, he snatched Harry by the chin and yanked him close, putting his mouth directly at Harry’s ear. “When I tell you, you are to run and get yourself into the panic room. Press the button I showed you before, to seal it. You are not to move from there, no matter what you hear or see on the monitors. Do you understand me?” his fingers dug into Harry’s jaw.

Harry’s brow furrowed but he nodded shakily against the hand gripping him. Draco finally let go and they cautiously made their way down the length of the counter on crouched legs. There was a noise at the main door, the faint sounds of someone trying to get in.

“They have us surrounded and I’m almost out of rounds. Stay alert,” Draco murmured so quietly that Harry struggled to hear him. He motioned over his shoulder for Harry to follow. His body was slick with sweat from the bout of anxiety consuming him. He could feel the moisture gathering unpleasantly behind his knees as he crept beside Draco.

The master bedroom was at the far end of the hall. They would have to pass the breeched study to reach it…

Harry couldn’t deduce an outcome in which they got away from this unscathed.

A bullet hit the drywall behind them and Harry moved himself in front of Draco to shield him from harm. Draco all but growled at him.

“Run!” Draco urged, shoving him away with one hand and spinning around to find the source. Harry stumbled slightly but bolted down the hall into the bedroom. No one stopped him, no one got in his way. It was almost too easy…

There were more gun shots beyond the bedroom. Easy for Harry, it seemed, but not for Draco… Harry faltered, nearly tripping over his feet, but then Draco’s words were echoing loud in his mind to get inside the panic room.

He was slamming his hand on the notch in the headboard when his eyes landed on his backpack. Over the chaos in his mind, Harry remembered his gun. It would still be in there from last time he and Draco had gone to target practice together.

Harry snatched up his bag and tumbled into the hidden passageway. He pressed urgently on the button. As soon as the door sealed shut, the room was enshrouded in utter silence. The only sounds to be heard now were his own wheezing gasps of air.

Harry dropped his bag on the floor and ran to the monitors. Shaking like a leaf, he clambered to turn each one on and swore up and down when they couldn’t seem to blink on fast enough.

He was panicking.

How agonizingly appropriate.
His eyes landed on the monitor that showed the study. In the gray-scaled room, Draco was in a tussle with another masked figure—and winning by the looks of it. Harry let out a thankful breath and sucked it right back in when his peripheral detected movement in one of the other cameras.

Another gunman was making his way to the study.

And Draco, his Draco, was mere seconds away from being outnumbered—and he would have no way of knowing until it was too late.

Harry’s was leaving the sanctuary of the panic room before his mind could make sense of anything else. His feet carried him down the hallway just as the masked-man caught sight of him barreling towards him in a sprint.

Harry tackled the gunman to the ground right outside the door to the study.

They crashed to the ground. Harry’s head collided against the door when they fell into the study. For the second time in less than ten minutes, he was left disoriented. His ears were ringing. The man was on top of him suddenly. Thick fingers wrapped around his throat and squeezed. Everything grew hazy around Harry.

As soon as he was there, he was gone, being hauled back by Draco. Draco placed his hands on the sides of the man’s head and twisted hard. The snap of a neck breaking was stomach-turning to Harry.

The body collapsed to the floor, lifeless and then Draco was heaving him up and propelling him into the panic room. They were shut in within seconds, panting and dirty and trapped, but alive.

Draco turned on him with his flashing eyes. Harry had to take a step back. He held onto the back of the couch to steady himself and prepared for the tongue lashing he knew Draco wanted to give.

“You’re bleeding,” was all Draco said.

Harry gave him a blank stare in return.

As if on cue, he felt the trickle of blood run down the side of his face. Draco retrieved a towel from the small bathroom and pressed it against the wound. His expression was clouded with displeasure.

“It doesn’t look deep. Head injuries always tend to bleed more. Hold this and turn around so I can check your leg.”

“My leg?” Harry repeated while turning. He’d forgotten about the glass on the kitchen floor. He tried to look at over his shoulder at the back of his leg with little success.

“You have glass in your thigh,” Draco told him as he knelt. He pulled out a sliver of glass with a gentleness that didn’t seem to match his feelings, nor the situation they were in. Draco set it on the desk and inspected the skin closely for any other shards. Without the spike of adrenaline numbing the pain, the cut stung and itched. His head hurt from the multiple blows he’d taken to it.

“I’ve removed all the glass that I can see. I’ll have a look at it more closely when I get an opportunity to patch you up. Next time, do as you’re told and we could avoid all this.”

Harry bristled at the patronizing comment. Draco went over to the desk and pulled a phone from the top drawer. He was making a call before Harry had the chance to defend his actions. He had been just trying to help.
“Status?”

“Seven minutes, Master Draco.” A man’s voice sounded through the com on the desk.

Draco said nothing in response. He was studying the security monitors with a clenched jaw before he turned and leaned toward the computer to look at an ominous sequence of popups taking over the screen there. Draco began to type some sequence of letters and numbers in with fast fingers but the monitor suddenly faded to black. He froze and leaned back with a wary frown. A single symbol appeared on the blank screen, glowing in vivid contrast.

It was a match to the symbol branded on Harry’s skin. His hand dropped down involuntarily to cover the mark on his hip.

Morsmordre.

Draco slammed his hands onto the keyboard and cursed under his breath. He reached into the bottom drawer of his desk looking beyond furious. Neatly folded inside was a single outfit: a simple button-down shirt, trousers, briefs, socks, and shoes. There was even a leather belt and watch to complete the ensemble. Harry had an inkling he was going to be staying in his underpants.

“How did they get in without setting off the alarms?” Harry dared to asked him.

“Davis?” Draco snapped as he slid on the trousers.

“It appears that they used some sort of advanced program to override security, Sir,” A woman’s voice came through, along with the sounds of rapid typing on a keyboard. “Something I’ve never come across before and it’s—it’s remarkably sophisticated. It’s created multiple OVs in the database. The viruses are deleting everything, crashing your entire security system. I have my best programmers on it, but I don’t know if we’ll be able to fix the problem in time.”

“They’ll be able to get in here?” Harry whispered in horror, throwing glances towards each entrance.

Draco was putting on shoes and tying them. He nodded curtly, his body emanating his ire. “Can you put a trace on whoever is behind this little cyber-attack?”

The sound of more frantic typing was their only reply.

Harry paled and took the shirt Draco handed him.

“Thanks,” he mumbled almost incoherently. The shirt-tails met his legs above the knee, just long enough to cover his underpants. It would have to be enough. Harry’s fingers fumbled to do up the buttons. At least I won’t be caught only in my pants when help comes.

Draco was securing an earpiece in his own ear.

“I’m getting coordinates in South Korea, Sir, the eastside of Incheon,” Davis said.

“Riddle is in cahoots with Yoon, then?” Draco said.

“It would seem Chang-woo doesn’t handle rejection well.”

Harry turned his head at the sound of Lucius Malfoy’s voice coming through the com.

“Clearly,” Draco muttered. “ETA?”

“Two minutes, Sir,” the first man stated.
Draco turned on his earpiece, eliminating Harry from the conversation.

“Listen to me very carefully,” he began. It took Harry a second to realize Draco was speaking to him. With one hand holding the rag to his temple, Harry peered up at the shirtless man who in turn pointed to the ceiling. His mouth and eyes were severe. “That hatch there gives this room access to the roof. You will climb the ladder after me, and you will run like the devil is on your heels to the helipad. Help is on its way.”

Draco fastened his harness over his chest and was reloading one of his guns as he spoke. “Look at me, Harry. You are to run to the helipad. None of your heroics this time. Run. Do not look back. Are we clear?”

Harry nodded.

“Good. Put this on,” Draco commanded, tossing him the thigh holster he withdrew from Harry’s backpack. Harry caught it with a scowl but he put it on without protest. He slung his backpack on and took his own weapon, small as it was, in hand. For once, he was grateful for the size of it. Anything heavier, Harry feared he may have dropped under these circumstances.

He hoped they would be able to get away without having to kill anyone. His thoughts wafted back to Draco shooting unflinchingly in the kitchen at their attackers. His ears echoed with the sounds of bones breaking. It hit him then, that Draco had just killed people in front of him—killing, but protecting, too. Deep down, Harry knew if it came down to it, he would pull the trigger to save a life as well. Especially if that life belonged to someone he loved.

“What about you?”

“I’m going to be right behind you. Just run, Harry. Shoot only to protect yourself. Don’t focus on trying to help. Promise me, you’ll get yourself into that helicopter.”

“I promise. But I’m not going to leave your side just to save my own arse, Draco,” Harry said.

“You will do as you’re told, Harry. For once, please, just listen to me without arguing. I’m trying to keep you safe.”

“You’ve been training me. You said yourself I’m a good shot!”

“You’ve had mere weeks of practice. Right now, you’ll only get in the way—Don’t look at me like that, Harry. You know it’s true. I just want you safe.” Draco’s hands framed his face and he kissed Harry, hard, fast, consuming, desperate. It left him breathless and not entirely in a good way. It felt… too final.

Draco held him tightly against his body, nose buried in Harry’s wild bedhead for several beats before releasing him. A weight on Harry’s chest lingered after they parted.

The ceiling opened and Draco pulled a retractable ladder down. He climbed up and Harry followed him. The thick, hinged door was right above Draco’s head when the blonde answered someone speaking in the earpiece.

“Thank you, Dobby. We’re on our way up.”

He looked down the ladder at Harry.

“Get to the helicopter. Promise me you will.”
“I promise,” Harry repeated, his voice hoarse.

Draco pressed his hand to the lever. His lips parted to add, “I love you, Harry.”

“I love you too—”

He cut off with the cocking of Draco’s weapon, loud in the shallow space of the tunnel. The sky was still dark when Draco threw open the door and heaved himself up and out. Harry’s ears swam with the telltale sounds of propellers whirring nearby and when he popped out of the hole on Draco’s command, Harry ran toward the raised platform of the helipad, his legs stretching in the longest stride he was capable of, his bare feet barely touching the cement as he moved.

He didn’t see anyone in their path as he ran but he didn’t see or hear Draco, either, which failed to inspire confidence in Harry. He tripped on the very last step and stumbled onto all fours meters away from the helicopter. His Beretta Pico spun away from him upon impact, coming to an abrupt halt after hitting the metal of a landing skid. He knew without looking that his naked knees were scraped.

He ignored the ache because in that very moment, further across the rooftop was his lover, knelt on the ground.

With his arms pinned behind his back.

Draco was surrounded by six other men, weapons drawn and trained on the Malfoy heir.

One had a gun to his head. A couple masked faces were turned up to the helicopter but made no move to shoot Harry or stop the escape. Harry screamed his name but it went unheard over the noise from the spinning blades of the helicopter. He lurched to his feet to get back down to him.

Arms seized him around his waist and wrenched him back.

He was dragged up into the helicopter and dropped mercilessly onto the floor. The door was slammed in his face. It was Avery all over again; Harry banged on the glass with a fist, shook the handle to the door and threw his weight against it with all his might. It didn’t open. It didn’t even budge.

“No, no, no, no!” the helicopter rose into the air. “NO! Draco!” he shouted louder, voice breaking at the end. He fell back onto his arse and planted his heels into the door and kicked at it with all his might. “My gun, where’s my—!”

“Try to refrain from further destroying my helicopter, Mr. Potter. You’re already bleeding on the carpet. Dobson has strict orders to take off and he will abide by them.”

Lucius, in the flesh.

Harry choked on air as he turned to look at the man sitting on one of the white leather seats. The interior of the helicopter was rather large for what it was; six seats, three on one side and three on the other, facing each other.

“You son-of-a-bitch!” He spat, not at Lucius, but at the second man occupying the seat opposite him.

Zabini.

Harry lunged at him, fists and rage in full-swing. Zabini grunted when Harry’s hand met his
cheekbone. His advantage didn’t last long before Zabini had him pinned to the floor, a knee planted against his lower back. He felt the helicopter take off, pulling away from the ground with them inside…and Draco not.

“How could you? Bloody traitor, you just left him there, you just…” fresh tears leaked from his eyes onto the carpet.

“What would you have us do? They had Draco at gunpoint and larger numbers. We shoot at them, they plant a bullet in his head.”

“Riddle will kill him!”

“Riddle wants the Map. Not Draco,” Lucius said coolly.

“Pull yourself together, Potter,” Zabini hissed low in his ear. “Now is not the time for theatrics.” Zabini released Harry and yanked him back into one of the seats. He settled down beside him, calm and collected, as if an altercation hadn’t just happened between them.

“I don’t have the fucking Map!” Harry snapped. He paused to brush away his tears brusquely, embarrassed to have Lucius witnessing him cry. “Didn’t we have this chat days ago? But Riddle has your son. Your only son—”

“I am aware of the situation, Potter,” Lucius replied. His tone was like ice. He was rigid and unapproachable and his intense gaze bore into Harry even as he raised his phone to his ear.

Self-consciously, Harry tugged the shirt down over his underpants and scraped knees the best he could. He averted his own gaze to the window, slumping his forehead against it in defeat. The London skyline would’ve been a sight to see if the circumstances were vastly different; he’d always wanted to experience flying in a helicopter. As a kid, he used to run too fast or swing too high and imagine himself taking off in the air, free like a bird.

This wasn’t freedom though—it was a prison. And there was nothing more Harry wanted in the world, than to be back on the ground with Draco. His nostrils flared and his eyes prickled with unshed tears but he refused to let any more escape. Curling his arms around himself, he tried and failed not to dwell on any worst-case scenarios.

He tried not to think of Draco at all, because it hurt.

But he couldn’t, because Draco was irrevocably rooted inside of him, each word ever spoken, every smile and kiss and touch…they were all captured in his mind and written at the very base of his soul.

And it hurt.

‘…Scotch. Neat…please.’

‘…Did you come here looking to be satisfied?’

‘…let someone else take care of you every now and then.’

He bit his lower lip to keep it from trembling.

‘…Stay with me.’

‘…Our future. So, you want one? With me, that is.’

‘…I love you, Harry.’
The coppery taste of his own blood filled his mouth. He’d bitten down too hard.

Still, the pain in his lip couldn’t outweigh the pain in his heart. Not by a longshot. Harry wiped his mouth, smearing a streak of red along the back of his hand.

“Severus,” Lucius said across from him, speaking into the phone, “I need you to set up a meeting with Remus Lupin. Immediately.”

END OF ARC FOUR

Chapter End Notes

Whew. I can't believe we only have one arc left of this story! Thank you to all the wonderful people who've stuck by me this long and have put up with my frequent cliffhangers. It means a lot. :)

xx

CJ
Harry dried himself with the towel Zabini handed to him, pressing the plush material into his tired face for only a split-second longer than necessary before shoving it aside. He twisted his head around to look at Nott’s knelt form behind him.

“Surely that’s good enough?”


“I’m fine, the cuts weren’t that deep. I’ve survived worse,” Harry said.

Zabini was quick to snap at him for his lack of patience and gratitude but Nott cut over him with a mild, “I wanted to be sure there wasn’t any more glass.”

“I’m sorry.” He averted his gaze, chastened, his shoulders drooping. “I’m just…”

“I know. Don’t worry about it. I’m almost done. Luckily, your injuries have only been superficial,” Nott murmured, rubbing antiseptic on the last of the cuts with a cotton swab. “I still think we should call in Pomfrey. Make sure you didn’t get a concussion when you hit your head.”

"No time for all that," said Harry hurriedly. "I'm fine."

With both hands digging into the countertop, Harry found himself staring into the mirror in front of him. Dark circles were starting to form under his eyes from lack of sleep and his hair was still in a state of unkempt bedhead, but at least the dirt and blood was gone from his face now. Three small butterfly bandages closed the cut on his head, close to his hairline. His lip had been split at some point but Harry couldn’t quite remember when he’d acquired that injury. He ran his tongue over it to soothe the pull whenever it dried.

“…You really don’t know who Remus Lupin is?” Harry asked again.

“For the last bloody time, no,” Zabini said through gritted teeth. He was leaning against the bathroom counter beside him, holding an icepack against his own cheekbone where Harry had
slugged him thirty minutes ago. The skin had started to swell and Harry couldn’t help but feel some satisfaction at the sight of it.

“That’s enough. Both of you need to pipe down and relax,” Nott said, tone calm but firm enough to cut through the tension between them. “You’re set, Harry.” He finished placing the final plaster to the cuts on the back of Harry’s leg and straightened up from the ground to toss the bandage scraps into the bin.

“Thank you.”

“Go and get dressed. I left the change of clothes for you on the bed.” To Zabini, Nott added, “Let me have a look.”

Harry left the bathroom and returned to the adjacent bedroom. Apparently, the Malfoys had long ago procured several condos all over. The one they were currently occupying was one of the smaller ones, a ‘modest’ three-bedroom, two-and-a-half bath flat. It was lavish, but nowhere near as extravagant as Draco’s penthouse…his now very broken penthouse.

Choking a little, Harry forced a stopper over his thoughts before his emotions could bubble through the surface once more. He couldn’t afford to have a meltdown.

He had to handle this like Draco would. He had to handle the situation with a level-head, calm, collected, and prepared for whatever came next.

But I'm not Draco, a niggling part of his subconscious reminded him. We are nothing alike, because Draco would know what to do right now. I don't even know where to start.

"...you’re entirely too soft when you need to be hard..."

Draco was right, Harry thought. I don't know if I'm made for this.

He squeezed his eyes shut tightly, reaching a hand for the bedpost to keep himself anchored.

...But why do I feel like I was made for him?

With one hand still on the post, Harry reached for the folded pair of trousers and climbed into them, careful not to catch the material on any of the bandages. His scraped palms and knees stung a bit still, and the cuts on his thigh itched but it was nothing life-threatening and nothing he couldn't handle.

It was the furthest thing from his mind.

Despite the ungodly hour, Nott had met Harry, Lucius, Zabini, and the family butler-slash-pilot, Dobson, at the flat within twenty minutes' time. Ever the mother hen, Nott arrived with a bag of clothing for Harry in hand and a first-aid kit in the other. Within five minutes Harry found himself unceremoniously shoved into a warm shower and then cornered in his pants and patched up.

The clothing was, thankfully, a simple selection of plain jeans paired with a thin, gray Henley shirt and trainers but did nothing to warm the chill in his bones. Harry finished dressing and raked his fingers through his hair in a futile attempt to flatten it.

Sighing, he headed back to the bathroom only to find Zabini and Nott huddled together amid whispered discussion. Their conversation came to an abrupt halt when they spotted him, Nott responding to the interruption by taking a step away from Zabini. The sandy-haired man seemed to falter for minute before giving Harry a small smile.
“I better go check on things. I imagine you’ll be boarding the jet, soon.”

Harry watched him leave before turning back to Zabini with a furrowed brow. “I don’t know, I think Nott could do so much better than you,” Harry decided after a few beats.

“Piss off.”

“Nott’s worried.”

“...We all are.”

“...Do you think he’s okay?” He loathed the way his voice cracked at the end.

For a split-second, the normally unimpressed glaze in Zabini’s eyes seemed to recede enough to show a sliver of empathy. Harry only had it in him to be vaguely unnerved by it.

“Don’t forget this is Draco Malfoy we’re talking about,” Zabini said bluntly. He folded his arms over his broad chest and inspected Harry closely. “You do realize the boss has always pulled his punches with you, yes? Every single time. He filtered his words and his lifestyle for your sake. I don’t think you have any grasp on just how deadly he can be when provoked.”

“Even against a man like Tom Riddle? Even when he’s outnumbered and unarmed?” Harry questioned.

“Especially so. He wants Riddle to pay for what he’s done. Plus...I don’t think there is anything he wouldn’t do, to get back to you.”

Harry’s expression crumbled before he could stop it. He glared down at his shoes to keep Zabini from seeing. He felt skittish and raw and angry, and it felt like a dangerous combination stirring inside of him, bidding for time to grow and intensify before inevitably detonating. Tears welled up in his eyes and he exhaled sharply, still looking down.

“I’m not about to hug you.”

“Thank fuck, for that,” Harry snorted through his grief. Mortified, he buried his face in his hands and willed himself to settle down once more. A tentative hand reached out and squeezed his shoulder briefly before dropping away.

“...Brat.”

“Tosser.”

...
nestled between the seat and the door. He earned himself an irritated scowl from Inspector Snape who hadn’t said a word to Harry since he’d shown up. Which was fine by Harry, because they didn’t need to speak on top of his already suffocating discomfort.

When they finally parked on the side of the road, Harry let out a sigh of relief. Peering out the far window, he could see the grey brick of a cookie-cutter set of attached homes that looked well-maintained but with an aged charm.

Dobson came around to open the door. Snape exited after Lucius, and Harry followed suit, mentally wishing Nott was with him. He wouldn’t have even objected to Zabini’s company if he’d been given a choice of a traveling partner.

Inspector Snape lead them up the stone steps and rang the bell. The low rumble of a dog barking resonated from within the home just as the door opened.

The first thing that came into view was a large husky dog barreling down the steps past the three of them. It stopped in its tracks right before it reached the road and then proceeded to lap back around. The dog stopped closest to Harry and snuffed a breath at him.

“Oh, hello there,” Harry murmured, holding out his hand to allow the furry animal a preemptive sniff. It pressed into his palm as Harry scratched beneath his chin. The canine was shoving its nose into Harry’s crotch when an aghast voice spoke from above.

“Moony! No. Get down! I apologize, Mister—” The man, cut off abruptly as soon as Harry glanced up. Honey brown eyes widened and a hand trembled on the doorknob. On appearance alone, Remus Lupin didn’t look like the type of person who’d associate himself with people like the Malfoys or Snape. He carried himself too humbly to be like them.

Judging by the faint lines of age and grey hair, mild, but interspersed with light brown, Harry pegged him somewhere in his late thirties or early forties. He was wearing a simple cardigan sweater and loose trousers that gave him the air of a university professor, but despite the weary visage, he could have still been considered handsome.

“Harry?” Lupin breathed, eyeing him in what could only be described as astonishment.

“Er, I’m sorry. Have we met before?” Harry wracked his brain for any recollection of his face but came up emptyhanded. Lupin shook his head faintly, blinking out of his stupor.

“I imagine you wouldn’t remember me. It’s been, ah, it’s been a very long time.” His adam’s apple bobbed as he swallowed and he finally tore his eyes from Harry to acknowledge Lucius and Inspector Snape. “Severus, Lucius,” he greeted with a tight smile. “Do come in. Have a seat in the lounge. I can tuck Moony away in the study so he doesn’t disturb us.”

He held the door for them to step into the foyer and guided them to a seating area surrounding a brick fireplace. Lupin whistled for the husky, who came right to him, tail wagging, and trotted after him down the hall.

Harry was relieved that Lupin wasn’t there to witness the disdainful look on Lucius’ face as he selected an armchair, a worn blue but the nicest of the furniture. While Snape chose to stand, lingering with his arms folded and a sour look on face, Harry sat down on the couch.

“Can I get you anything?” Lupin asked them when he returned. “Tea?” His eyes landed on Harry again and drifted up to the Steri-Strips on his forehead, but it was Severus who spoke for the lot of them.
“No thank you, Lupin. We are here on borrowed time. When we spoke earlier—”

“Why do you have Harry?” Lupin interrupted with a new sharpness to his voice. Harry’s eyebrows rose. “If you’ve somehow gotten him involved because of—”

“The boy has landed himself in this mess on his own volition, Lupin.”

“I’m right here. Please don’t talk about me like I’m not,” said Harry.

“You’re right,” Lupin agreed, “I’m sorry, Harry.”

“That’s enough.” Lucius interrupted in cold finality. “Lupin, Tom Riddle has taken my son and is holding him in exchange for your little Map. He believes young Mister Potter, here, has it but he says he does not. You, too, claim ignorance.”

Harry’s heart skipped several beats, his head volleying back between the two. “Your map? You—did you know my parents, then?”

Remus surveyed him with sad eyes and nodded once, carefully. He turned to Lucius. “What is it that you want from me, Lucius?”

The blonde stood with swift grace, rebuttoning his jacket.

“Time is of the essence, Lupin. James Potter was the last one to have that nuisance of a Map in his possession. Tell the boy everything you know. Perhaps together you two can figure out its whereabouts…Preferably before I have to make funeral arrangements for my only child.”

The bottom dropped out of Harry’s stomach at Lucius’ insensitive remark. He swept out of the room, with Snape not far behind.

“We will wait in the car.”

…

Harry and Lupin regarded each other in a tense silence. He knew his uncertainty had to be evident in his posture but despite his efforts to remain calm, he couldn’t stop fidgeting. A pitiful whine emanated from down the hallway and claws scratched feebly at a door. Lupin’s mouth twitched in a small smile as he inclined his head.

“Moony hates when I lock him in.”

“You can let him out,” Harry offered. “I don’t mind.”

Remus nodded, a little less strained, and disappeared from the room momentarily. Moony came bounding around the corner into the living room before Lupin. He came right up to Harry and let himself be petted. His fur was long and plush and Harry was tempted to bury himself in it; it reminded him a little too much of Hedwig, but relaxed him at the same time.

Moony proved himself more than useful, the fluffy icebreaker they needed to open a line of communication between them.

“He’s lovely.”

“He’s a wonderful companion. We don’t get many visitors, I’m afraid. I’ve lived here in Aberdeen for nearly twenty years, but my heart is still in England.” Lupin said wistfully, sitting back down and crossing his legs.
Scratching Moony behind the ears, Harry glanced up at Lupin. “Why did you leave England? You really knew my parents, then?”

“Yes, I knew James and Lily. We were…friends. We went through school together, grew up together.”

“And worked together,” Harry finished.

“And worked together. I wasn’t a police officer like James or Sir—” He cleared his throat. “Investigative journalism was more my niche, as was your mother’s. There was very little Lily couldn’t dig up when she set her mind to it. I specialized in investigative photography.”

“And you helped create the Map.” It wasn’t a question.

“I did. Harry, I don’t mean to pry but why are you with the Malfoys? Are they…are they hurting you? Blackmailing you?”

Harry shook his head, throat tightening as he said, “No. Nothing like that. Draco Malfoy—he’s my boyfriend.”

“Your boyfriend?” Lupin leaned back in his chair, puzzled.

“Yeah.”

“But if you know about the Map, then you must also know…”

“About San Drac? Morsmordre? Yeah, I know. Look, Mr. Lupin, you seem nice and it’s been really great to meet you, but please don’t judge me for—”

“I’m the last person who should be judging you for having ties to the mob, Harry,” the man said pointedly.

Harry absorbed that. Until now, he hadn’t thought to question why someone who used to actively oppose San Drac was now taking house calls from them.

“You made the Map to bring San Drac and Morsmordre down, didn’t you? To expose them? So why are you here? How did you end up working for Lucius Malfoy?”

Lupin exhaled softly. “I’m here for my own protection, Harry…I think, for any of this to make sense, we must start from the beginning.”

... 

“San Drac and Morsmordre have been operating under the radar for decades. San Drac extends back over multiple generations. Morsmordre, while a younger organization in comparison, gained influence and a following disturbingly fast.

“Despite endless speculation and rumors, no one had ever been able to bring them down. You must understand, Harry, Lucius Malfoy and Tom Riddle were implicated plenty of times in the past, but no charges could ever be brought against them and stick. The power of bribes and promises of influence and position far outweighed most people’s desire for justice. They were (and still are, to be honest) untouchable.”

Slowly climbing to his feet, Lupin’s eyes scanned around the room as he seemed to consider something. He walked over to one of the tall bookshelves occupying the far wall and retrieved an
old, leather-bound book. It wasn’t until he settled back into the arm chair closest to Harry that he spoke again, the book held in his lap.

"Commissioner Albus Dumbledore. Have you heard of him?"

"Yeah, I’ve seen him on the telly a couple times,” Harry said. Moony plopped down at Harry’s feet and rested his muzzle on Harry’s knee. Harry stroked the top of his sleek head gently.

"Commissioner Dumbledore is a brilliant man. Back in his younger days, he was the one who finally put Gellert Grindewald behind bars."

"The name sounds familiar. What was he guilty of?"

Lupin grimaced. “He was the head of a human-trafficking ring across Europe. Among many other terrible crimes.”

Harry couldn’t suppress his disgusted shiver as Lupin flipped through the book, which wasn’t a book at all, but a photo album.

"Commissioner Dumbledore organized a select group of trusted individuals to investigate the two groups. James Potter, Peter Pettigrew and—and Sirius Black. In turn, they recruited your mother and myself to assist.

"Together, the five of us documented the evidence on a CF card that we jokingly dubbed the ‘Marauder’s Map to the Underworld’. We spent nearly a year accumulating information against San Drac and Morsmordre, every shred we could get our hands on, no matter how small. We’d even managed to find a couple witnesses willing to testify—do you realize how rare it is to get someone to take the stand against powerful people like that? Most would never dare. It can be a death sentence…for some, it was a death sentence."

"For people like my parents? Draco told me that—that they were killed for it. That someone betrayed the group."

"I know more now, than I did at the time,” Lupin murmured. His eyes were over-bright, glossy with emotion he was trying to reign in. “Sirius Black was discovered at the scene of the accident—trying to get to you. The only survivor.”

"Me? Why?” At Lupin’s expression Harry paled. "Was he trying to hurt me?"

"Many believed so."

"Do you disagree?"

Lupin swallowed heavily and was quiet for a while. “I thought I knew Sirius. Better than anyone in this world, I thought I knew him. The Sirius Black I knew, loved you like his own. He was—is—your Godfather.”

Harry jumped in his seat, upsetting Moony’s head in his lap. “What?”

"He was institutionalized, now. He’ll die in there."

"My Godfather,” Harry repeated, his mind spinning off in a hundred different directions. “And he tried to-to kill me?”

“He wasn’t a suspect at first. He had begged with first responders to give you to him right then and
there, but legally they couldn’t release you. So, Sirius left the scene and was found a few blocks away, unconscious from a minor explosion outside an old, rundown shack. When he came to, he just started laughing. He was covered in blood, and he was laughing.”

“…Blood?”

“Peter Pettigrew’s.”

“He killed him?”

“He slaughtered him and set fire to his remains.” Harry watched as Lupins hands trembled in his lap, his face grim. “But…the dental records matched those of Peter’s. The blood did too. And all Sirius could do was laugh.”

“You said he’s institutionalized?”

“His Defense team took the insanity route. I saw him right after he’d first been arrested. Sirius told me—he told me he didn’t do it, begged me to believe him, but in the end, he pleaded insanity and was locked away.”

Harry observed the man across from him closely. There was something haunted in his face. Something that ran much deeper than a man who’d lost a friend…

“Were you and Black…?”

Lupin gave him a pained smile. “I loved him. With everything I had. You see Harry, that’s why I said I’m the last person who should be judging you.”

The silence between them lingered for several, solemn minutes until Harry pressed quietly, “Why do you think he did it? Why did he betray his-his friends to Tom Riddle?”

“The only reason I could possibly fathom was for his brother, but even that feels so far-fetched. James was more of a brother to Sirius than Regulus. Reggie was a year younger than Sirius, and growing up they’d always been at odds. The worse of it started when we were in high school and Reggie started mingling with the wrong crowds. It is a common strategy; target them young, foolish, and naïve and ensnare them for life.”

Harry’s mind drifted to Zabini and Nott. Had they been young, unassuming teenagers when they started getting mixed in with San Drac’s affairs?

“I know the facts. I’ve spent sleepless nights pouring over every aspect of Sirius’ trial, the Prosecution’s arguments as well as those of the Defense. The evidence was in surplus, and it was ugly and loud, but it all…never sat right with me.

“I remember Sirius mentioning it to me once, about his brother’s increasingly bizarre behavior. He didn’t want to delve into it much with me, or anyone else for that matter. But after everything, I couldn’t help but wonder if Regulus had done something to pull Sirius in.” He shrugged. “Maybe I was trying to cushion the blow of my own heartbreak. It suppose it’s easier than surrendering to the notion the man I loved was criminally insane.”

“So, you left London and moved here to Aberdeen?”

“After the deaths of your parents and Peter, and then Sirius’ indictment, I was sent here for my own protection.”
"Witness Protection? But they didn't do their job too well, did they?"

"Well enough, considering the, ah..."

"Corruption of certain grouchy police officers?" Harry offered wryly, eyes darting towards the closed entrance in case Snape decided to suddenly show his face. Lupin's smile was grim.

"I think you'd be horrified if you knew the true extent of these groups' control, Harry. The government may run our country but have you ever stopped to question who's running them? Politicians are often nothing more than a puppet for the even more powerful to play with."

His words, though not entirely surprising, still made the hair on Harry's arms stand on end. Lupin flipped open the album and thumbed through it before handing it over to him. Harry peered down at a photo taken of a group people at a wedding which, with further inspection, belonged to his parents.

Lily Potter was radiant in a satin gown, her hair a waterfall of red just passed her shoulders. His father beside her, dapper in his tux and his wild hair barely controlled for the occasion. Lupin was there as well, framed by two other men; one a tall bloke with shaggy black hair and a dazzling grin, and the other, with the same youthfulness as the rest but more on the portly side.

“Groomsmen?” Harry asked.

“Yes,” Lupin leaned in and pointed to the shorter man to his left in the picture. “Peter Pettigrew.”

Harry’s breathing hitched, a haze of red blood and fire flashing across his mind like a horror film. Peter Pettigrew had been massacred, Lupin had said. His eyes drifted to picture-Lupin’s right, followed the line of clasped hands up the arm of who he knew, by process of elimination, was undoubtedly his godfather.

Sirius Black.

He tapped his finger over the two-dimensional figure absentmindedly.

“He was your father’s best man. Go on and flip the page.”

The next page was not as brutal, but just as painful.

“The day you were born. They were so proud.”

Harry traced the lines of his parent’s faces which were less polished than on their wedding day but happier too, if that was even possible. The budding lump in his throat became too large for him to swallow. His mother was holding him as a newborn, swaddled tightly in a receiving blanket. His father sat beside them on the hospital bed, an arm around his wife’s tired shoulders.

“There’s plenty more,” Lupin informed him.

“Did you take all of these pictures?”

“I did.”

A series of black and white portraits soon followed, mainly featuring a newborn Harry snoozing in nothing but a nappy.

“Blimey, my hair was hopeless even back then, huh?”
Lupin chuckled wistfully. "You certainly inherited that bit from James...but your eyes, you have your mother's eyes."

Harry paused in his page-turning to study a photo of baby-him with a wrinkly arm draped over a plush toy. It certainly wasn’t the only one of him posed in that way but it caught his attention over the rest. The stuffed-animal he was holding was the same one currently shoved in his bag back in the Malfoys’ jet. The same one, albeit twenty-two years younger, cleaner, with the stitching less pulled.

Harry shut the album and set it to the side. “I’m sorry. I just can’t do this all right now.”

Lupin nodded, scratching his jaw tiredly. “I understand. It’s all a bit much to take in, isn’t it? I just want you to know Harry, that even though I haven’t been able to be around, I’ve always been in your corner. I only wish we’d met under better circumstances.”

“Me too,” mumbled Harry. He stroked his hand along the top of Moony’s head, scratching between his ears.

"I’m sorry couldn’t be of more assistance in locating the Map. Truly, I haven't any idea where James put it. He was always a crafty fellow. Clever as they come. Whatever he did with it though, managed to ensure it remained hidden for two decades. I think he'd be quite pleased with himself for that one."

Harry hesitated. "Can I ask you something, Mr. Lupin?"

"Anything."

“I just was curious as to why, after everything...why are you in cahoots with Lucius Malfoy now?”

“Because Lucius Malfoy is Tom Riddle’s biggest adversary.”

“So, this is all for what? To spite Riddle?”

At first, the man didn’t speak and Harry wondered if he offended him with his question. At long last, Lupin said, “You’re dating Draco Malfoy, even though you know who and what he is, where he comes from. Why is that?”

“I love him,” Harry said. The honest declaration felt strange between them as two virtual strangers but it was the only defense Harry had. “I know he’s capable of terrible things, but I love him and I… I’m choosing to take the good with the bad. I know it’s not right. It’s something I have to learn to live with.”

Lupin quirked a smile but his eyes were distant and bleak. “Exactly. Frankly, I want to hate Sirius. I want to put him in my past and lock him there and move on. I want to stop thinking about him and convince myself he was nothing, that he means nothing…but it isn’t always that simple, is it? Not everything in life is so black and white. Regarding San Drac—do I agree with what they do, what they stand for? Heavens no.

“But if Lucius Malfoy can outmaneuver a man like Tom Riddle, well, he’s got my cooperation at the very least. I’ve seen evidence against both groups, Harry. Lucius Malfoy is not a good person. Far from it. But Riddle…Riddle is the devil.”

Harry couldn’t argue Lupin’s convictions.

“I’m sorry for your loss,” Harry whispered. Moony tilted his fury face up at him with forlorn eyes, like he could sense just how bereft Harry was feeling. Harry stroked him between his pointed ears.
Chapter End Notes

WARNING! Long note ahead! Feel free to skip my rambling.

First of all...Sorry folks. I know it was awful of me to make you guys wait over three weeks for an update, especially after the way the last arc ended! It was supposed to be up last week, but I ended up getting sick and my muses wandered in other directions. Thank you for your patience and continuous support. It means the world to me.

Second of all...over 1800 kudos? That also means the world to me. THANK YOU to those who've taken the time to read this and leave kudos behind. Not to mention all the lovely comments. It's overwhelmingly wonderful. :')

* I always know when I'm getting to the end of a story solely because my mind is starting to form new ideas for other works. I might've wasted time writing a general outline and prologue to an HP fic that involves Harry growing up in a Vampiric Realm and is slowly transitioning into a vampire (via an ancient blood-adoption ritual). One day he spotted by wizards outside of the Realm and from there is forced to attend Hogwarts for his final year (for political reasons). It will be a m/m pairing but idk with who, yet. TBH, I also have no idea if I'll even post it or if I'll just play with the characters for my own amusement. Maybe a co-authored thing. We'll see. I think I just wanted to write a shameless, badass Harry.

¯\_(ツ)_/¯

Anyways. Time to shut up now.

Until next time!

xx

CJ
The iron gates parted in the instant they approached. Dobson steered the car through them, driving between tall fence-like hedges up into the circular driveway of the Malfoy estate: a massive, three-story and very white mansion sitting atop a perfectly manicured lawn. It extended to a wooded grove in the distance and formed a privacy wall at the back of the property.

In the center of the circular turf, that the driveway wrapped itself around, was a large fountain; a multiple tiered structure of pale stone spouting streams of clear blue water. Beds of flowers and neatly trimmed shrubbery thrived wherever Harry turned his head.

Even though he was both exhausted and discouraged by the lack of headway made in his meeting with Mr. Lupin, he couldn’t stop the awe from seeping in as he absorbed his impressive surroundings.

It was the kind of place featured only in films -- a place found in pictures and dreams but never to behold in real life, because it was so...much.

Dobson stepped out at once to open the car door for Lucius and Harry, dutifully leading them up the set of steps just as the double doors were opened by two other attendants from the inside, one male and the other female, both wearing clothing reflecting their status as hired help. Draco’s personal maid, Doris, wore the same uniform.

When they stepped into the foyer, he sent an appreciative smile to the nearest worker, though he doubted she saw, since her eyes were downcast and her head bent in a small bow.

The interior of the home was as beautiful as the exterior suggested. The entrance hall was almost as wide as it was tall, the ceilings vaulted two stories. From it hung an enormous fixture, a crystalline chandelier catching and reflecting the buoyant sunlight pouring in from the windows, making Harry resort to squinting to take in the rest. Ascending from the marbled flooring were two curved staircases leading up to the second floor.

So much white, pure and serene and innocent.

*How ironic.*

Several more attendants pooled in from all directions, down the stairs and through the archways on the sides that likely lead to a maze of corridors and additional elaborate rooms. Another girl immediately took Lucius overcoat for him and Harry was grateful he wasn't wearing one as well. He wasn't keen on others waiting on him. It made him uncomfortable, made him want to apologize and leave a tip for being a bother, but the blonde man didn't so much as bat an eyelash.

Harry scanned his surroundings more closely, this time with a heavier heart. He was standing in the same place where Draco was raised; where he learned how to fight, where he was taught by private
tutors during the summers between semesters at boarding school. Draco had taken to sliding down these same curled banisters when no one else was around, which at one point resulted in a broken collarbone.

In his rebellious teen years, Draco had mastered the art of sneaking out of his bedroom window past curfew, scrambling along the rooftop until he reached the latticework near the back gardens which apparently made for a rather convenient ladder. Because of this, he would come to learn the placement and timing of each camera and security guard like the back of his hand.

Harry had been told stories, though few and far between, on lazy nights curled out on the terrace sipping tea or during a relaxing soak in the tub, and now he was finally seeing where the majority of said stories took place.

In Draco’s home.

The novelty of it all wore off quickly though, when Harry remembered that he was also standing in the place that housed multiple generations of San Drac. Crime undoubtedly happened here, still happened here, however indirectly. Yet it was pristine and lovely -- not covered in blood and empty shell casings and dead bodies.

Harry gnawed his bottom lip uneasily, taking pause to wipe his damp palms on the sides of his jeans just as he spotted Zabini traveling down the stairs to meet them with Nott in tow. Before he could feel the touch of relief from seeing their familiar faces, another presence caught his eye.

A woman appeared at the top of the opposite staircase. Her blonde hair was pulled back in an elegant braid that fell passed her shoulders.

She wore a dress made of a pale blue, sheer-like material that ended just below her knees. The skirt of it was A-lined, looser on the bottom and flowing with each step she took down the stairs. It was more form-fitting at the top: cap sleeves and a modest neckline, hugging her curves without being overly-revealing. Her high heels clicked along the floor as she reached the bottom and she approached Harry and Lucius with a schooled expression. The severity in her blue eyes, however, revealed her displeasure.

“Lucius.”

Her voice was melodic and soft with an undertone of danger that might've gone unnoticed to an untrained ear. However, Harry was growing used to typical Malfoy behaviors and as it turned out, Draco’s mother was no exception, even if this was the first time they'd come face-to-face.

“Narcissa, dear,” was the murmured reply. Lucius regarded his wife almost cautiously.

“Leave us,” Narcissa commanded to the bystanders who scattered and dispersed with haste. Her eyes never left Lucius’, even while he took her hand and brushed his lips against the back of it.

Unlike the others, Zabini and Nott remained a few paces away and Harry shifted from foot to foot, unsure if he was supposed to be there or not.

“Where is my son?” she asked.

“I believe it would be in everyone's best interest that we avoid doing this here, Narcissa,” Lucius said calmly.

“Then let us take this conversation to somewhere more discreet, my dear husband,” she replied just as coolly, turning on heel and making her way to the left, down one of the hallways without so much
as a glance toward Harry.

“Come,” Zabini muttered. “We’ll get you some breakfast while they sort things out.”

“I’m fine. I’m really not hungry,” said Harry, his gaze still locked on the place the elder two Malfoys vanished from. “And I don’t want to waste any more time. The meeting with Remus Lupin got us nowhere and took nearly four hours of our time. Time that would’ve been better spent searching for Draco’s whereabouts. Honestly, I’d just like to know what Lucius is planning to do to—”

“Right now he is with his wife and it isn’t our business what is said between them. Nor is it our place to barge in and start making demands. Right now, the only thing we have been assigned to do is to make sure you don’t collapse. Come.”

“If Lucius thinks for one second that I’m going to just sit on the sidelines like an obedient little puppy while Draco is in Riddle’s grasp, I’ll—”

“You’ll what?” Zabini asked, turning on him and propping a hand on his hip in annoyance. “Kick your feet and cry? Go after him and get yourself killed? Newflash, Potter, you’re playing with the big boys now. Show some bloody respect.”

The base of Harry’s spine twitched in anger, his shoulders drawing back and tightening. “I’ll give respect to those who have earned it. Who deserve it,” Harry retorted. Zabini closed the short distance between them before Harry even registered the movement. The thin material of his shirt was gripped in one fist as he was tugged forward, and Zabini leaned down to hiss in his ear.

“Have some common sense then, would you? Lucius Malfoy is not to be taken lightly, even if you are his son’s boyfriend. Keep your mouth shut and fake some humility and respect if you must.” He released Harry with a slight shove and stalked away. Harry was left reeling for a second before begrudgingly following behind him. Nott fell into step alongside Harry.

“Though his attitude right now leaves much to be desired, Blaise is right, Harry,” the other man whispered. “You must tread carefully here.”

Harry glared bitterly at the floor. He had swallowed his pride for far too long, obeyed orders and humbled himself at the looks of scorn his entire life. After his encounter with Riddle, Harry had promised himself he would take back the reigns of his own life.

And he bloody well meant it.

...
a united front, they’d manage to stay happy and healthy and *okay*.

There was nothing okay about this.

Harry dragged his hand across his furrowed brow, trying and failing to soothe the tension from his ever-growing headache. Evidently his own brain was struggling to keep up with the turbulence of his thoughts.

*Where are you, Draco? If that bastard’s hurt you, I’ll--*

A knock drew his attention to the open door. He lifted his head to see Narcissa Malfoy standing there with an ivory-colored tray in her hands.

“May I come in?”

*It’s your house,* Harry wanted to tell her, but opted for a quick nod instead. It was with stiff, uneasy movements that he shifted upright on the bed, letting his back press against the headboard.

“Blaise has informed me that you’ve declined our invitation to join us for brunch. I have also been told that you refused anything on your trip to and from Scotland,” she began, walking into the room with elegant and calm poise. She set the tray on the bedside table. “May I sit?”

He nodded again, drawing his legs up to his chest to make room in his bubble of seclusion, even though the bed was large enough to host a dozen of her comfortably and there was a chair at the desk as well. Still, she sat down on the edge of the bed, one leg crossing and she rearranged her dress before turning to observe him more closely. A small smile graced her lips.

“So you are the boy who’s captured my boy’s heart,” she surmised.

Harry cleared his throat. “Harry, ma’am. Harry Potter.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you Harry Potter. I’ve heard quite a bit about you. I was rather hoping we would be meeting under more agreeable circumstances but, *c’est la vie.*” She reached over and picked up a glass of orange juice from the tray. “You should drink this.”

Harry took the offered beverage but didn’t move to sip from the glass. “Quite a bit about me?”

“From Draco, mostly. Some from my husband.” Harry failed at holding back his grimace. Narcissa lips turned up again in that temporary hint of smile.

“Lucius is a rather difficult man to please, isn’t he? But then again, the same can be said about my Draco.” Harry looked over at her inquisitively. Sure, Draco could be a bit particular and fussy about certain things, but to be compared to someone like *Lucius* seemed like a stretch. His reaction wasn’t lost on her. “Draco is very much his father’s son, Mr. Potter. You may not see it as clearly from where you stand, because with you I imagine he's more at ease, less hardened and aloof, wouldn't you agree?”

“I guess...”

“They may not always see eye-to-eye on many things but at the core, they are wired much the same.”

Harry bit back his urge to refute her claims, to insist Draco could never become so cold and callous as his father, but what right did he have to tell Narcissa otherwise? Draco was her son and Lucius was her husband and Harry, Harry was just a wave in the vastness of their ocean.
“With all due respect Mrs. Malfoy, what does this have to do with helping Draco right now?”

The way her eyes flashed didn’t surprise him. He knew he was coming across as rude and impatient and in hindsight he reckoned it wasn’t the best first impression he could have been making, but hadn’t they wasted enough time? He wanted some hustle. He wanted to storm in, guns blazing, and get to Draco, like Draco had done for him only a few months ago. But nobody was moving and it was driving Harry mad.

“I am helping Draco by helping you. When it comes to business, my husband may have the control and power, but I know this side of things.”

“This side of…” he trailed off, understanding. “Oh.”

“I know my son better than anyone, Mr. Potter. I know when he’s made up his mind. You’ve drawn him in, in a way no one else has ever managed to. Whether you like it or not, as of right now you are a part of this: the good, the bad, the ugly. If you choose to stay with Draco henceforth, you must come to accept it all. There will be aspects of this life that will threaten to keep you awake at night. It is the price we pay for love and family.”

“I didn’t know what I was getting into,” Harry muttered, idly swirling the orange liquid in his glass and watching the shallow whirlpool it created. “Not at first.”

“And yet, you are still here. After everything you’ve been through and seen, do you plan on leaving now?”

“No,” said Harry. “I really do love your son, Mrs. Malfoy. I might not fancy the lot of this, but I can handle it.”

“It’s a relief to hear that. Your resilience will be what keeps you upright. I was informed you’ve been taking self-defense lessons. Good. Be independent. Be formidable, be a threat in your own right. Out of his love for you, Draco will always try to protect you but you mustn’t rely on him to save you, if you can save yourself.”

“I’m trying. Trust me, ma’am...I don’t want anyone else to get hurt because of me.”

“Good. Draco needs a capable partner. An anchor of sorts, not to weigh him down but to keep him focused and prevent him from...drifting too far.”

She paused for a minute, scrutinizing him in a way that felt like she was trying see into his very soul. Draco had inherited that same trait; that penetrative, soul-searching look that left him feeling like his walls were being stripped down to the studs, leaving him exposed and vulnerable.

“...The best piece of advice I’ve ever received was from my own mother-in-law right after Lucius proposed to me, and now I pass it on to you, Mr. Potter: If you want to survive in this life, you must learn to stand strong but smile pretty.”

Harry’s brows raised into his hairline in his bewilderment. He wasn’t certain what he expected but the advice seemed borderline silly. Her smile broadened slightly, mildly amused. She leaned back a fraction, one perfectly manicured hand pressed against the bedspread for support.

“When people see me, they usually just see another pretty face. They see designer clothing and expensive jewelry. They see me on the arm of a wealthy and powerful man. Because of this, most wish they had me or wish they could be me, and more often than not, I am looked at with yearning desire or blatant jealousy. Either way, they naturally assume that I must have little in my head. They assume I spend my days relaxing in spas and browsing shops in Paris or Milan. But do you know,
“Mr. Potter, what they do not see?”

Harry shook his head wordlessly.

“They do not see how I use their assumptions to my advantage. They do not see how many trophies I possess in fencing. They do not see that, while I may have an extensive background in ballet, I also have been honing my skills as a marksman for nearly as long. I know how to please a man, fool a man, and I know how to kill a man just as well. Because I am strong…”

“But you smile pretty,” Harry finished quietly.

“Precisely. I am sure you’ve noticed by now that my husband and son tend to keep their power at the forefront. They carry it around with them wherever they go and they wear it well and proudly, like peacocks displaying their colors. When they issue an order it is obeyed without question. When they enter a room, they command respect and attention. Lucius and Draco are not the type of people to be easily ignored or forgotten.

“I, on the other hand, prefer to keep my cards closer to my chest. I prefer to smile and nod along and speak only when spoken to, because it is far more deadly a strike, Mr. Potter, when they do not see it coming.”

Harry’s stomach squirmed and coiled like a snake. Everyone tip-toed around Lucius when it seemed like his dainty little wife was who they should’ve been wearier of.

“Draco told me once before that you don’t get involved. That—that you stay out of...you know,” he said, ruffling the back of his hair.

“Did he tell you that?” she murmured, tilting her head to the side thoughtfully. “While I do prefer to stay out of my husband’s business, you must know that you cannot avoid it forever. At least not entirely. Like I said before, this is no easy lifestyle. Eventually though, you learn to adapt to it. You learn how to light a few candles when it gets to be too dark. But you should not mistake my reticence for me being an oblivious, meek little thing. I am not afraid to get my hands dirty when necessary. Tom Riddle has taken my son. There is nothing I wouldn’t do to get him back home safely.”

Harry swallowed. His was mouth dry, like he’d been sucking on a lolly made of cotton. “Me too. I want to help get him back.”

Narcissa tapped the bottom of his orange juice glass with a gentle finger in encouragement. “Then you must know that you’re not doing Draco any favors by not taking care of yourself. Right now you look as though a mild breeze could fold you over. Drink. Eat. Regain your strength for what is to come next.”

“And what comes next?” Harry pressed after taking the smallest of sips to appease her. The cool liquid helped with the parched tightness in his throat and he took another sip, longer this time, soothing it away completely.

“War.”

“War?” Harry repeated. It didn’t come to much of a surprise, but Narcissa’s word choice he still found unsettling. “People die in war.”

“People die every day.”

They did -- on accident or of natural causes, and in some cases, on purpose -- lives ruined
intentionally, maliciously, by people like Tom Riddle, who'd stolen the lives of his parents and by extension, Remus Lupin's freedom. Even Hedwig, his persnickety but innocent little ball of fluff...and then he'd drugged Harry and raped him, leaving him with nightmares and the sensation that he'd never be wholly clean from the violation or rid of the memories and scars of unwanted touch. Unconsciously, he touched his fingertips to the faded scar on his forehead.

“...I wouldn’t mind if Tom Riddle was one of them.” There was a cold venom in his voice that shocked even him, but it was, nonetheless, his truth. His very raw and ugly truth. Riddle had to go, and there was no sugar-coating that. “Does that make me terrible?”

Narcissa’s eyes darkened knowingly, an oil-slick on oceanic blue.

“I think, Mr. Potter, that you and I will get along amicably.”

Narcissa left soon after their conversation. Two and a half cucumber sandwiches and a spot of Earl Gray tea later, Harry dumped out the contents of his backpack in search of his mobile. He rummaged through the pile -- his gun, his thigh holster, the shirt he was given in the panic room, the ratty old stuffed animal his pride never allowed him to unpack during his stay with Draco -- and finally, his phone.

The battery must have been dead for hours but after a few minutes of rummaging around, he found a charger in one of desk drawers in the corner and plugged it in. Within seconds, the device emitted a flurry of dings, alerting him of unread messages and random notifications he’d never bothered to turn off.

Ron had sent him several long, horribly misspelled passages about Percy being a disapproving ponce over Ron’s plans to propose to Hermione before finishing school. And while Harry wasn’t in the best headspace to be the supportive friend when his own life seemed to be crumbling away at its foundation, he forced himself to respond to Ron’s grievances. Ron had been there for him, even after his little web of lies about Draco and the club and the pub, and he owed it to him to be there in return.

For five minutes, Tom Riddle needn’t exist.

For five minutes, Draco was safe at home or work and Harry was just a bartender and Hedwig was asleep somewhere beneath the futon and there was no such thing as the bloody ‘Marauder’s Map’.

He took a deep breath. Percy is Percy, he began typing, He’s always been quick to judge and criticize and let's face it...trying to explain basic human emotions to him is like trying to explain colour to a blind man. This isn’t about him tho mate, so don’t let

Harry’s thumb jerked away from the keyboard when another message popped up on his screen.

From Draco.
Man, I miss Draco...impatient, bitter-boy Harry is really starting to kill my buzz...

So. Ahem. Hello there. I'm still alive! However, my laptop died a couple of weeks back and a major portion of this chapter went to the electronic afterlife with it. I had to wait for the new one I ordered to arrive before I could start re-writing it...Fortunately, this chapter isn't much of an action-packed one so it wasn't overly difficult to start over -- I was more or less just very frustrated. It's also been a process trying to get used to Google Docs after using Microsoft Word for like, half my life. Whew.

**ANYWAYS, I just wanted to say that I know the longer wait between chapters has been annoying but I thank you for being so patient. I don't mind the gentle pokes and nudges, either, but there is no reason to get worried! This story will be completed, I promise. :)**

Until next time,

xx

CJ
Time was lost on Harry as he stared at the picture. The seconds and minutes ticked by in a blur while emotion swelled in his chest, rising in his throat and pooling into his eyes. Heavy tears slipped free when he finally allowed himself to blink away from the image, streaking wet pathways down his face. Every breath he took in seized his chest with panic, colossal waves of suffocating terror that was almost too much to handle.

Harry dropped to his knees beside the bed, clutching at the bedding as he went, dragging part of it with him into a pile on the floor. The world around him was narrowed down to a single picture. Filled with dread and almost tangible pain at his core, he inspect the image of Draco, tied to a chair, legs, torso, wrists bound behind his back—shirtless, because he gave his shirt to Harry right before they climbed onto the rooftop.

Only mere hours had passed between now and then, when Harry had been so blissfully content and now...now he could hardly breathe.

With fumbling fingers, he zoomed in on dozens of cuts, shallow and perhaps none any longer than a few centimeters, but they littered his pale torso, staining a muted red with dried blood. Draco’s head was bowed and lolled partially to the side, like he’d been knocked unconscious. Bruises were already forming along his sharp cheekbone, swelling and lacerations there from being hit in the face repeatedly.

Is this what Draco felt, when Riddle abducted Harry? This terrible, hideous helplessness?

When it came down to it, Harry decided wretchedly, being the taken was far easier than being the one left behind.

Don’t say anything, a tiny inner-voice that sounded suspiciously like Blaise Zabini told him. Don’t go and piss Riddle off. Not when he’s got Draco at his mercy.

Get help, Potter.
Lucius examined the photo of his son in ominous silence. Finally, he set it down on his desk.

“Have you had any success in finding Draco’s location now that his phone has been turned back on, Ms. Davis?” he asked aloud.

Davis spoke through the speaker on the desk, the sounds of frantic typing accompanying her voice, “I’m sorry, sir. The GPS signal is being pinged off multiple towers. I’m unable to pinpoint their exact location. I—”

“Let me know when you have something worth my time,” Lucius snapped, disconnecting the call. A knock on the door followed seconds after and two men entered, dragging with them a third man with a black sack over his head.

Harry’s breathing hitched at the unnerving familiarity; though, the last time it was he, who had been on the other side of the cloth. He remembered the anxiety, drowning in dark nothingness, and then, when it was ripped from his head, it was Tom Riddle’s deceptively charming face he saw.

Harry sank further into the armchair he’d been occupying, nearest to Lucius’s massive desk. Nott and Zabini remained passively behind him, the two statues that became his only semblance of comfort.

“Ah, impeccable timing,” Lucius stated loftily, “Normally I don’t invite this type of guest into my own home, but I believe the situation called for it this time around.” He glanced at Harry before climbing to his feet and rounding his desk as the man was dropped mercilessly to his knees on the floor. He was wearing a disheveled suit and his shoulders were shaking. His hands were tied together with a thin, black rope.

Harry’s right hand drifted his left wrist absently, remembering the burn of scratchy fibers against sensitive flesh. Lucius nodded to one of his men and made a sharp gesture.

The bag was ripped off, revealing the sweaty face, busted lip, and watery eyes of a middle aged man. His hair was a greying black and his eyes were equally as dark. His features were hawk-like, sharp and severe, but currently lacked their intimidating potential due to the way he cowered on the ground.

“Rudolphus,” said Lucius neutrally, looking down his nose at the other man.

“Lucius—” He, Rudolphus, began.

“No, no,” Lucius interjected, “I do not want your pitiful excuses for why you would even dare to betray me—”

“I’ll tell you everything, I’ll —”

“Shhh,” Lucius hushed gently, unnervingly so. He reached out and laid a hand on Rudolphus’ cheek, like a parent would a child. “I already know everything. I know how your wife has whored herself out to Riddle. I know that you, and dear Bella, and sweet Rabastan, have been accepting such...tender offers. I know what he’s been scheming. I’ve known for a while now. You do not get to where I am today by not knowing how to spot deceptive fuckers such as yourself.”

“We…” Rudolphus began, pale and distraught and eyes wide as he watched Lucius stop several paces in front of him. “We’re family Lucius. Our wives are sisters, for Christ’s sake! D-Don’t do this. Please.”

Lucius’ smirk was full of cold amusement. “Family? You gave up all ties to the family the minute
you decided to assist Riddle in his little endeavor. In fact…” Lucius continued with that chilling nonchalance as he took something from one of his men and Harry caught a glint of silver as a silencing mechanism was attached to a handgun and… oh, god—beneath his shirt sleeves, goosebumps prickled up his arms and a weight manifested in his gut— “You gave up the right to live the moment you made me angry.”

Over the last several months, Harry’s previous misconceptions about firearm suppressors had been rectified thanks to Draco’s diligent and mildly dictator-like guidance. He learned quickly that television and films failed to portray them with much accuracy. They didn't make the gunshot anywhere near silent, nor did they succeed in turning the bang into that subtle little whistle sound Harry had been expecting.

As soon as Lucius pulled the trigger, it was still plenty loud enough to make Harry jump back in his seat and grip the armrest until his fingers cramped. He felt a hand descend on his shoulder, stilling him, reassuring him, or perhaps making sure he watched—he didn’t spend time on questioning its purpose there, because the man called Rudolphus slumped over onto the floor like someone cut his strings.

Dead.

His face was turned away, thankfully; the entry point of the fatal wound just out of Harry’s line of vision. And Harry, who wanted desperately to close his eyes found himself continuing to stare anyway, horrifically compelled to look at the lifeless body mere meters away from him where a puddle of crimson began forming behind his head.

‘There will be aspects of this life that will threaten to keep you awake at night.’

This is it, Harry noted dazedly. In the next second, his vision blurred, narrowing into a tunnel of murky panic and dark blotches. Everything felt so far away, noises around him plugged like he was listening from underwater...

Harry was thrust back into reality, eyes fluttering open even though he hadn’t remembered closing them to begin with. A single hand was back on his shoulder, rubbing and squeezing firmly, pulling him back into his surroundings until the haze stopped entirely and the world dropped back into focus, crystal-clear around him.

The body was gone.

He blinked several times.

Rudolphus’s body was gone but the blood remained, horrible and red and plentiful, so no, he hadn’t been imagining it. His nightmares were purely of the conscious, real-life variety.

The hand pulled away briskly as soon as Lucius walked over to Harry’s chair and stopped before him. He did nothing more than survey him, his face void of any discernible expression but Harry found himself shying away from the other man as far as the chair would allow him and goddamn—was that his own heartbeat, because surely it was hammering too hard, beating too loudly?

“...of chess.”

Harry blinked again. His breathing clicking in his throat as he jerked his head up to peer into the face of a murderer. A murderer who looked so cruelly like the man he loved.

“Huh?” he managed, his eyes swerving down to the man’s sides where he knew a holster resided beneath his expensive suit jacket.
“I asked,” said Lucius in a bored tone, “for you to join me for a game of chess if you were over your little panic-attack. Do you play?”

What?

It took a long time for Harry to process the bizarre request, his jaw opening and closing absent any words until he managed a semi-shrill, “Not-not well, but yeah. I...play.”

... Lucius eyed him over the chessboard as Harry made another move.

“Why are we doing this?” Harry dared to ask.

A beat.

“A game of chess always begins the same. Each piece has its own, proper place on the board and everything is in order, wouldn't you agree?”

“I guess…” Harry mumbled as Lucius took his pawn.

“However, after first moves are made by each of the players, there are suddenly several hundred possible games that can be played. Another set of moves, and a hundred thousand possibilities. A third set of moves, and suddenly before you, you have over a hundred million different games at your fingertips.”

The blonde man swiftly captured another black piece, barely glancing at the board as he did so.

Such arrogance.

Harry chewed on his fingernail absent-mindedly, searching for his next move. Lucius noted his uncertainty with a touch of a sneer before continuing his little speech and for once, Harry found that he did not mind not being taken seriously by the Malfoy patriarch.

“A hundred million games, but as the game goes on, your path becomes more and more defined until you reach the point of no return. It is then you face the inevitable. You either win...or you lose by defeat or a stalemate or resignation, which are all still losing, mind you. It is all dependent on how refined and clever your strategy is. It is all based on the path you take, the choices you make and how you respond to, and anticipate, the choices your opponent makes. This is why you must always, always, be thinking several moves ahead.”

“What does this have to do with Draco?” Harry asked bluntly, snatching one white pieces off the board a little more aggressively than called for. He winced after the worlds left him; although he hadn't previously had any qualms about sassing Lucius Malfoy, his more recently-scarred internal voice was shrieking at him for toeing the line. He lowered his gaze to the checkered board as a wave of nausea swept over him.

“You can tell a lot about a person by the way they play chess. You, for example, play recklessly. You're hardly strategizing and you're on the edge of your seat like you want to run away from something or...someone.” He smirked knowingly. “You're impatient and quick to run headfirst into things without first assessing for any possible backlash.”

Lucius made his next move.

“I cannot allow someone so rash and unpredictable play a role in my only child’s life.”
Harry opened his mouth to argue before his eyes caught something on the board. He moved his knight to h3.

“Check.”

Grey eyes narrowed.

Lucius’s queen swiped his knight and then a slip of paper slid across the table towards Harry.

Check.

An entirely different kind of check.

“What is this?” At Lucius’ even stare, Harry knew. He knew, and a bitter rage ignited along the length of his spine at the implication. “It’s a bribe, isn’t it?”

“Don't see it as a bribe, Potter. Let us simply call it an...incentive, if you will.”

“You're paying me to leave,” Harry whispered, his rage mixing with a bout of incredulousness.

“I dare say there's more than enough there to sustain you for the rest of your life. You should be grateful. That kind of wealth will do wonders for your mediocre little life,” Lucius replied coolly.

“You will retrieve the things you've brought here and then you will allow Zabini to drive you to wherever it is you came from.”

“You think a bloody payoff is all it takes to make me leave? I love Draco, I would never—”

“You will. Do you want to know why you will take the money and leave, Potter?” Lucius leaned forward, “Because this right here is the only option you have where you get away entirely unscathed. Do I make myself clear or do you require a more hands-on approach?”

The sound of Lucius's single gunshot to his own brother-in-law’s head echoed in Harry’s ears. Harry withheld his wince, this time. He withheld his snarl and he withheld the powerful urge he had to punch Lucius in his stupid, holier-than-thou face.

“Crystal,” he bit out, hating that he was yielding so easily. “May I be excused?”

“Do you forfeit, then? The game, of course,” Lucius gestured to the board with a tilt of his head, his face carefully schooled into a bored, unimpressed expression, like he was so used to being the victor that he didn’t have to put any effort in trying to beat someone lesser at a measly game of chess.

Harry would no doubt have to thank Narcissa later.

He might have had to force his hand steady long enough to move his bishop, but Harry never let the eye contact falter between them.

“Checkmate... sir.”

Lucius’ brow furrowed a touch, his sharp gaze lowering to the table where he found his king defeated.

Despite his bravado, Harry couldn't deny the stuttering of his own heart… He just wasn’t about to let Lucius be privy to his nerves and sweating palms brought on by his threat.

Eventually, the older man sat back in his chair. He was irritated, Harry knew as much by the way his lips pursed and his posture stiffened subtly—an almost imperceptive reaction to the untrained eye.
“Pick up the check.”

Harry did, nostrils flaring and bile rising precariously.

“You are dismissed.”

...

His triumph over besting Lucius didn’t leave a lasting impression on Harry’s mood. By the time he returned to Draco’s bedroom with Zabini as his guide through the maze of halls and doors, Harry was a palpable string of anxiety braided with irritation and horror and grief.

Zabini lingered in the doorway. His mouth pressed thin with uncertainty.

“Is it true?” he asked. “I’ve been given orders to take you...away. Not home, but…”

“Anywhere that's not affiliated with Draco,” Harry finished for him.

“Draco will never allow—”

“But we all know he's not the one who has the final say in matters, now don't we?”

“He will fight for you.”

A single tear dropped from Harry’s eye before he could stop it. He set the check on the desk, face down, unable to stomach the sight of it.

“I need a moment. Can I just…?”

He didn't turn to face Zabini.

He couldn't.

“...Yeah.” The word was almost sighed and then the door closed behind the other man.

Harry collapsed onto the bed, on top of the contents of his backpack because removing them took more effort than he could put forth, and tried to calm the tumultuous rolling in his gut and the ragged sounds of his breathing.

He wanted to throw up and scream into a pillow and maybe sob, because someone had just been murdered in front of him, and it wasn’t the same as it’d been when Riddle shot one of his people, or maybe it was—because neither man seemed to think twice about taking a life—but at least before, he hadn’t actually seen...

But now...now, he couldn’t unsee...

On top of the already heaping pile of shit that was the last nine hours of Harry’s life, Lucius was trying to coerce him out of Draco’s life. Even after everything they’d been through together.

It was madness.

...It was so unbelievably fucked-up.

Harry reached out blindly for his stuffed animal and pulled it into his chest, curling onto his side and clutching it for dear life and no, he wasn’t going to cry, he wasn’t...
And then he was, silently, furiously, because he loathed Lucius Malfoy but he loved his son, and he hated this dark and twisted world he’d been exposed to where it was apparently okay to shoot people point-blank…

Yet, another part of him was relieved that Draco had enough trust in him to bring Harry into his personal life and business and fuck—this wasn’t normal, it wasn’t. For all anyone knew, Draco was already dead…After all, it was so, so easy to kill; a finger on a trigger and bang—!

He couldn’t breathe. His hands gripped the deer, his fingers winding into the antlers and he pulled and twisted and yanked. An inhuman sound, a cross between a sob and choked scream, bubbled in his chest and worked its way out of his throat.

The stitching ripped, threads snapping and popping apart and…

And then the head was in one hand and the body in the other. Through his tears, Harry looked down at the damage. His lips writhed back from his teeth as he dropped the body onto the ground. He hurled the head across the room next, where it bounced off the wall and landed, defeated, onto the ground.

It did nothing to satisfy the fury inside of him.

On the contrary; in the next instant, Harry was filled with horrific regret.

The only thing left of his parents, and Harry had ripped the thing in half like a toddler throwing a tantrum. Like it had no meaning or value, when in fact, it was the most valuable thing Harry had ever owned.

It was worth so much more than even the bloody check sitting on the desk.

“No, no, no, no,” he mumbled, slipping off the bed onto the floor, kneeling and clutching the body of his stuffed animal, “I’m so sorry, fuck, I’m so sorry…” he crawled over to the wall where the head lay, apologies spilling from his lips on a loop, and he wasn’t positive if he was apologizing to the stuffed deer or…or his dead parents.

Harry wasn’t even sure if he was apologizing for beheading the deer or for turning out to be a miserable disappointment of a son.

What would they say, if only they could see him now? If only they could see how he’d fallen in love with the heir to the very family they died trying to take down, or how he watched people get killed and wished the same for Tom Riddle, bleeding, dead, dead, dead…

“Don’t hate me,” he whispered imploringly. “I’m so sorry.”

Harry’s teary gaze landed on the white pulled stuffing because amongst the time-worn cotton filling was a black…something.

At first he jolted a little, thinking it was an insect, and nearly dropped the head. Upon further inspection it was, at the very least, not alive. He poked it, feeling something smooth and hard against the pad of his index finger. Frowning, Harry carefully withdrew it.

It was a small memory card with the words CompactFlash© printed on the front in white text and two initials handwritten below, in bold red marker.

M.M.
‘Together, the five of us documented the evidence on a CF card that we jokingly dubbed the ‘Marauder’s Map to the Underworld’.’

Harry’s racing heart skidded to a halt as he stared at the memory card resting innocently in the center of his palm. The Map...this whole time, he really had had the infamous Map?

The Map he’d been abducted and tormented for?

The Map Hedwig had died for?

...The Map James and Lily Potter had died for twenty-one years ago.

Harry was a split-second away from breaking into peals of manic laughter and tears at the damned irony of it all, when the subsequent knocking at the bedroom door snapped him out of his drunken-like stupor.

“J-just a minute!” he called out, his voice at least two octaves too high. He scrambled to his feet, shoving the card back into the deer’s decapitated head. He shoved both halves of the ruined toy, along with the rest of his belongings, into his bag. He met Nott at the bedroom door, trying hard to rein in his anxiety. “I’m ready to go.”

...

“Left up here,” Harry said to Nott who merely nodded his head and took the next turn. He’d barely spoken a word to Harry since they left the Malfoy’s estate. Harry’s knee bounced agitatedly. He clutched his backpack securely to his chest.

They pulled up to the Weasley’s house, an attached home that, regardless of the crumbling brick and chipped paint, was one of Harry’s favorite places on earth.

Neither of them moved to get out of the car, yet. Harry’s shoulders dropped forward a bit.

“Thank you, you know, for everything you’ve guys done for me. I know I must’ve cause a lot of trouble for you and—”

“This isn’t the end,” Nott murmured. “So don’t start with the goodbyes, okay?”

“Lucius said he’d—”

“Draco won’t allow it.”

“Zabini said the same thing, Theo,” Harry muttered. “But what can we do against a man like Lucius Malfoy? He-he killed that man, he—”

“Draco will come back for you.”

“If he’s still alive.”

Oh, god.

“Don’t think like that. We’re going to get him back,” Nott told him firmly. He handed Harry his phone back.

“But how?” Harry pressed, not bothering to conceal his desperation.

“Blaise and I will stay in touch. Just stay safe until then, alright?”
“And by safe, you mean ‘try not to attract any stalkers or sociopaths’?”

“Pretty much.”

Harry gave him a feeble nod. He slipped out of the car before Nott could unbuckle his seatbelt and open it for him.

Nott rolled down the window. Harry walked around it until he was standing on the sidewalk and peered down at him. He shoved his fists into his pockets as he awkwardly kicked a pebble from the path. If only his emotions were so easily tossed away.

He was utter rubbish at this part.

“I bet Zabini’s thrilled to have me out of his hair, yeah?”

“Not quite,” Nott glanced up at Harry. “Why do you think he made me bring you here, in his place?”

Harry’s eyebrows shot up. “You mean he’s actually upset or something?”

“Like someone stole his puppy, to be quite honest. But if you tell him I told you that, I’ll deny it until the day I die.”

Nott gave Harry a small but reassuring smile, shifted gears and pulled away from the curb. Harry stared at the retreating BMW and hated how much he wanted to chase after it.

All his life, Harry had been searching for a safe place to call home just to discover that home didn’t necessarily have to be restricted to four walls and a roof.

Home could be a person. Or better yet, people.

Even when homeless, Harry had always had home.

And it was something worth fighting for.

Grasping the iron railing, Harry dragged himself up the steps and knocked on the maroon front door. Ron answered it with a sandwich in his right hand. “Hi, Hawwy!” he said around a mouthful. “Whatchoo bother knockin’ for?”

“Hi. I wasn’t sure if anyone would be home at this time,” Harry said, shutting the door behind him. The floors creaked as he followed the redhead down the hall to the kitchen where he sat on a wooden stool in front of a plate piled high with sandwiches. Harry leaned back against the counter. “...Hey, Ron? I have a favor to ask. Er, a few, actually, and it’d be loads of help if you didn’t ask too many questions about them right now.”

Ron stared. “Do you want a sandwich?”

...  

Draco came to slowly at first, rising from a blackened haze that seemed as thick as molasses, and then all at once; sounds first, the dripping of a faucet, maybe. Then came the nip of a cold dampness in the air. His arms were bound, wrists tied behind his back and the chair he was sitting on.

The pain struck him next, a sharp, stinging pain and he remembered the cuts with the sharpened blade, each drag of Riddle’s knife and the blows to his face. One cut, for every man belonging to Morsmordre that Draco had ever harmed or killed.
When it came down to the body count, there had been many over the years. Draco didn’t know if he was meant to consider them badges of honor...or shame, because what would Harry think, if he knew exactly how much blood Draco had on his hands?

*Harry.*

His face floated to the forefront of Draco’s mind, calling to memory the way his eyes crinkled and lit up whenever he smiled. The ghost of his kisses were felt against his lips and the warmth of his body was an echo against his own...

His heart clenched tightly and then relaxed. Harry was safe. In the grand scheme of things, Draco knew he could accept death far easier knowing that he didn’t drag Harry to the same, sticky end. That wasn’t to say he wouldn’t go down without a fight, though.

Unsure if he was alone or not, Draco kept his eyes shut and carefully rotated his wrists to test the strength of his bindings. His fingers curled along the rope, deftly feeling for a knot.

“It’s no use. You aren’t going anywhere,” came the lofty words to his right. Draco raised his head and let his eyes open. Riddle was leaning against the wall, smug as ever, a malicious glint in his reddish-brown eyes. The desire to break Riddle’s neck with his bare hands bloomed in his chest. “Do you think our dear Harry will like your new scars?” Riddle asked. He gestured to the bloodied lines on Draco’s torso.

“He isn’t yours,” Draco said calmly. His hands clenched behind his back but the remark wasn’t altogether unexpected. He’d been waiting for Riddle to bring up Harry. Honestly, he was more surprised he hadn’t brought him up sooner, during their first round with the knife.

*Don’t take the bait.*

“No? I’ve certainly marked him as my own. I’d like to think a part of him still belongs to me,” Riddle replied just as easily. “Tell me something, Draco. Is he always that loud or was it because the only lubricant I used was his own blood?”

*Do not take the bait.*

*Focus on something else.*

The rise and fall of his own chest with every breath he took...The dripping sink.

Draco kept his eyes forward, his jaw set and body motionless.

*Drip.*

*Drip.*

*Drip.*

Inwardly, he snarled like a caged animal.

“Oh, how he cried out for you,” Riddle continued in a raspy whisper that nevertheless managed to ricochet loudly off the concrete walls. “Normally one would be offended to have their partner scream someone else’s name in the middle of sex, but truthfully...?” Riddle approached him. He leaned in closely until Draco could feel the caress of hot breath against the side of his face. “...It was so much fun watching him writhe and cry and call out your name to no avail. He was just so helpless …and
you were too late, weren’t you Draco?”

Draco snapped his head to the side, cracking his skull hard against Riddle’s face. When Riddle moved back a little from the force of the hit, his mouth was bleeding.

He was also grinning.

With one hand, Riddle wiped the corner of his busted lip and eyed the blood smeared onto his knuckles. He stared at it for a moment. Although he still wore that peculiar smile, his eyes were livid.

“I find it ironic that you don’t have any qualms making others bleed, but the sight of your own spilt blood has you so very unsettled,” Draco drawled as Riddle walked away from him to the drippy, industrial sink. “If I didn’t know any better, I’d think you were afraid of dying, Tom.”

Riddle said nothing in response but Draco noted the stiffening of his spine as he washed his hands and put on a pair of rubber gloves for the second time.

Riddle picked up a thin knife from the nearby counter and traced Draco’s jaw with the flat side of it.

“I suppose we’ll have to ask Harry how he feels about your new scars when he gets here. I’m afraid that you’re not going to be quite as pretty as you were before.”

...What?

No. Harry was safe. Riddle couldn’t have gotten to him.

With the hand not holding the knife, Riddle withdrew Draco’s mobile from his pocket and waved it in his face.

“He’s on his way, the little liar.”

Liar?

“He’s got the Map, Malfoy. Turns out, he’s had it this whole time. At first I thought he was just playing games with me, telling me what he knew I wanted to hear, but then he went and sent a couple of pictures, including one of the files he uploaded on Morsmordre, and well, exclusive information like that can’t appear out of thin air, now can it? The boy has played you for a fool and now he’s on his way to deliver the Map to me as we speak. In exchange for you, of course. It would be an admirable sacrifice if it wasn’t just so...pathetic. The naive little urchin thinks he can play with the real men who run this city…” Riddle chuckled softly.

Draco felt his blood run cold. When Riddle pressed down harder with the blade and pierced skin, he barely even noticed.

Feel free to find me on tumblr if you have any questions or just simply want to say hi. :)

Chapter End Notes

Yes, yes. I am still here. Truth is, the last couple of months have been...probably the
worst of my life? ...so, updates are slow. I'm sorry, guys. I'm trying. I'm also sorry for failing to properly reply to each of the wonderful comments left behind for the last chapter. My lack of response is entirely on me and does not mean they weren't appreciated and loved the hell out of.

I promise though, this story is going to be finished. We've only got two or three chapters left, I think!

Good job to those who suspected the true location of the Map (by now, I'm sure most had that bit figured out!) ;)

On a side note -- IFYItD has recently surpassed 2000 kudos and...I'm floored. Overjoyed, don't get me wrong, but the response has been unreal. And truly, all that positive feedback and support (in comments and bookmarks, as well), means so much to me. Thank you.

xx

CJ

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!