S. Morgenstern's "Through the Looking Glass" (abridged)

by el_em_en_oh_pee

Summary

The moon Tarot card is associated with such things as "illusion. Escape into daydreams to avoid dealing with reality. Inability to discern reality from illusion". Herein lies S. Morgenstern’s epic rendition of a man whose dreams and reality become increasingly blurred after a traumatic event, now abridged by editor Eloise Midgen.

Notes

Written for Team Canon at 2008 HD World Cup, prompt "Moon Tarot Card"

I wasn't going to repose this to AO3 (since I'm only reposting old things that I'm proud of), but then I changed my mind, basically.

Thanks, to my beta extraordinaire, Annalisa, for checking this last-minute and for keeping me sane (All remaining mistakes=mine). Thanks Becca and Evie for keymashy conversations about worldcup & for calming me down the last few days. Love!

♥ ♥ ♥
I was going through a stack of old books and papers last Wednesday when I happened upon a story that I had very nearly forgotten. It was the first story that I had actually read, apart from all those picture books of childhood, and it was the first story that captured my interest in reading: S. Morgenstern's *Through the Looking Glass*.

I immediately called up my best friend to share this good news. "You found what, now?" she asked. I repeated the title. "Never heard of it," she said. "Hey, are you coming to the party tomorrow or not?"

Needless to say, I was greatly distressed at this development. My own best friend, not being familiar with *Through the Looking Glass*? I asked my boyfriend. He had never heard of it, either: "Louis Carroll's book, sure, but who is S. Morgenstern?"

Frantic for someone else who shared my knowledge of the story, and not getting any positive responses from friends, I called the library. "That story has been out of print for years," they said. "Harry Potter essentially replaced it. We've lost all our copies. Can we interest you in *Goblet of Fire*?"

Unimpressed by their lack of reverence, I decided to calm myself by rereading the story—and quickly realised that there were many parts that were needlessly long and drawn-out. Because I wanted my friends to read the story (but did not want them to suffer through the blowzy sections), I decided to cut them out and give said friends an edited version. Once finished, I realised this left one or two plot holes, so I added commentary to the sections removed, and set them apart from the rest of the story with three hearts (♥ ♥ ♥). Upon reading this, my best friend urged me to share this with the rest of the world.

And that is where you, dear reader, come in.

♥ ♥ ♥

Harry's dreams were becoming distracting.

It had been bad enough when he'd dreamed that he had died and Voldemort had died and Snape had loved his mum, but they had steadily grown simultaneously more outlandish and enticing. They had a particular linearity to them: a certain sense of lucidity, a certain sense of *time passing*. In his dreams, he was content, was happy. Ginny kissed him a lot in his dreams. Ginny kissed him, and Ron and Hermione kissed each other, and everyone was relieved that the war was over and things could return to normal. Harry did exactly everything he felt like doing in his dreams, and nothing more, because they were dreams and he could afford such frivolity.

Waking life, however. Waking life was much more episodic. Waking life guided Harry more than he guided it—days were spent going from one hiding place to the next, always searching for a way through Voldemort's defences to Voldemort, a way to kill Nagini, a way to *triumph*. Waking life was drawn-out, one moment fading into the next in an almost alarming fashion. When awake, Harry wanted nothing more than to fall back asleep again and spend time in the summerlands of his dreams.

But he couldn't. He couldn't waste time sleeping when he could be searching. So he stayed awake as much as he could, searching with Hermione and Ron for an end to the war, an end to Voldemort.

♥ ♥ ♥

I removed about fifteen pages of repeated uses of words such as 'ergo' and 'therefore' that tell a part of the story that can be summed up in the following sentence: *Three months after Harry had*
the dream about killing Voldemort, he and Ron and Hermione decided that, just maybe, splitting up would be conducive to their hunt.

♥ ♥ ♥

Being on his own was different. Not good different, not bad different, just different. Harry worried more, that Ron and Hermione would come to harm, even though he was relieved that they weren’t with him and thus susceptible to even more danger.

Wandering blindly became rote, and clues became more and more scarce. Still, the agreed-upon meeting place and time was over a week away

♥ ♥ ♥

Oh, right. Reader, I should have mentioned: Harry, Ron, and Hermione agreed to meet at Godric’s Hollow again one month after splitting up.

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and time was over a week away, so still, he wandered.

♦

During the night, he dreamed of eating ice cream with Ginny every day, of holding hands and laughing, of Hermione studying ever more and of Ron running his hand through her hair as she did so, of Molly Weasley cooking delicious dinners, and of an earless George wandering around, looking entirely lost.

Harry wondered where Fred was, if the dreams were taking into account his death in a previous dream. Harry wondered why Fred would be dead, if these dreams seemed otherwise so happy (they were imperfect, yes; political problems, mostly, but Harry was happier than he’d ever been while in bed asleep and shouldn’t Fred not being around be counterintuitive to this?).

♦

Three days before Harry was set to go back to Godric's Hollow, he came upon a manor behind a wrought-iron gate and a long drive. Albino peacocks were strutting along the grounds. Harry's memory was jogged. "Malfoy," he thought, immediately wondering why he thought that—he’d never seen the outside before.

Something made Harry search the grounds for alarm spells (oddly enough, there were none) quickly and, just as quickly, Apparate to just inside the gates. Going willingly into the lion's den, perhaps, but surely the Malfoys would have something of use to him. He paused long enough to pull his Invisibility Cloak tighter around him (Harry wore this all the time now) and crept closer.

He was so bent on getting up to the manor proper while avoiding the main drive—who knew what sort of dangerous things could be lurking there, or what sort of people he might get in the path of!—watching his footsteps so intently so as not to snap a twig, that he didn't see the dark figure rushing toward him until it ran into him.

"Oof!" the other person said, loudly, then cursed, quietly. "I hope no one heard that..."

Harry scrambled backwards, subsequently hitting a tree in a rather breathtaking collision, in order to get out of Draco Malfoy's way. There was a thump as he hit it, and he hoped as hard as he possibly could that Malfoy hadn't heard it. He stood, for seven breathless seconds, seven
breathless eternities, willing Malfoy to collect himself and continue on.

And then Malfoy looked directly at him. He didn't actually say anything, but Harry could see him mouthing something, something along the lines of 'is anyone there?'

Harry didn't move. He held his breath, wishing, praying that Malfoy would just move on. After a minute, motionless except for Harry crossing his fingers, Malfoy turned around, and Harry breathed a sigh of relief.

Less than a second later, he saw the tip of Malfoy's wand over Malfoy's shoulder, heard a whispered revealing spell. Harry clutched at his cloak, but a breeze rippled around his feet, drawing the edges up, revealing a bit of trainer. And Malfoy had turned back around. Staring at his face, wishing for a lack of understanding, of remembrance, Harry saw a spark of comprehension in Malfoy's eyes. A heartbeat later, Malfoy was striding at him, and then Harry found himself pressed against the wood of a large oak behind him, his invisibility cloak slipping, revealing a fraction of face here, an inch of chest there.

"Potter," Malfoy hissed.

Harry said nothing. He hadn't brought himself to move again, quite yet, so he stood, barely breathing, staring at Malfoy, one eye obscured by invisibility, but the other no doubt laden with contempt, surprise, pleading. He tried to school himself into a more emotionless state, but Malfoy had probably already seen.

"Potter," Malfoy said again, infinitesimally softer and exponentially harsher than before.

♥ ♥ ♥

There were about a thousand more words of Draco saying "Potter" in different tones of voices and Harry looking shocked and slightly amazed, so I took liberties with the cutting of that. After this rather wordy encounter, the scene abruptly ended (no resolution!) and there was a brief (and by 'brief' I mean four pages) interlude with Ron and Hermione accidentally running into each other and not quite kissing for eight awkward hours. The story starts up again with another of Harry's summery... dreams.

♥ ♥ ♥

Harry was lying with his head in Ginny's lap, and she was running her fingers through his hair. It felt amazing. Harry, pleasantly full after a picnic luncheon that was perfect save for the ants, was just about to drift off when he remembered. "I saw Malfoy."

Ginny stopped carding. "You what?"

"Ran into him," Harry said, sleepily, wondering about watermelon. "The bastard."

"He's back in England?"

"He never left, did he?" Harry asked, stupidly.

"He left, Harry," Ginny said, but her words sounded faraway, and Harry yawned and woke up in a cold, slightly damp room.

♦

Malfoy Manor was different than before. When Harry had been taken directly inside earlier that year, it had seemed rather dank, dark, a bit mouldy about the edges. His hurried and cloaked trip
through it this time revealed slanting sunlight, vaulting ceilings, an airy atmosphere. Some of the
rooms were painted funny colours: vibrant greens and reds and yellows that Harry would have
expected... well. He wouldn't have expected walls like that in too many places, but least of all in
Malfoy's residence.

Malfoy took him through a largish bedroom with skylights, furnished with a clearly expensive and
rather new-looking desk, bed, and chest of drawers. The bedspread seemed to be a Slytherin
tapestry, remade, and the only sign of a tapestry anywhere in the house, thus far. Harry hardly had
a chance to look around, however: Malfoy forced him through another door and into a bathroom
that looked suspiciously like Aunt Petunia had been at it.

"Only private place in the entire manor," Malfoy explained, after casting a silencing spell ("just in
case"). "Everything else has surveillance spells and alarms, but Father and mum agreed that a
young boy such as me needs a spot of privacy in his life, so."

Harry looked on at him, uncomprehendingly. He had said barely two words since Malfoy
discovered him in the forest, and he wondered what exactly was going on. He opened his mouth
to ask, but started coughing instead.

Malfoy moved back away from him. "Don't you dare infect me, Potter," he said, and didn't wait
for Harry to respond before continuing with, "What were you doing, skulking about?"

"Not going to turn me into Volde—" Harry paused, remembering the curse on Voldemort's name
just in time. "Into him, are you?"

"I might yet!" Malfoy said, looking suddenly livid. "He will be very pleased if I do. Or if I kill you
now..."

"You wouldn't."

"You don't know that," Malfoy said, turning around and gripping the edge of the sink. He stared
at himself in the mirror, at a point just in the middle of his chest, and Harry suddenly remembered
Sectumsempra and felt a rather misplaced need to apologize. He gritted his teeth, preventing this.

♥ ♥ ♥

One thing to be said for S. Morgenstern is that he certainly gets into long-winded scenes between
Harry and Draco in which not much at all happens. The rest of this scene consists of Draco being
vaguely menacing (but not incredibly so), Harry being Harry, and the sink dripping plinkingly at
inopportune moments. It concludes with Draco chaining Harry (magically) to the pipes under the
sink and Harry mentioning that he was on Malfoy property looking for something.

Actually, when I went through this story initially, I found much of the middle part of the story
pointless. There are several scenes with Ginny in the happy, post-war land, each of them
ridiculously sweet and happy-ending-esque, and each one ending with a bit of a sense of
something being off about the whole scheme. There are one or two scenes about Ron and
Hermione individually going about their searches, and there are about thirty pages of Harry and
Draco having conversations that go nowhere in the middle of Draco's Dursleyish bathroom. Harry
hits his head on the sink, Draco gives him a damp cloth to put on the resulting bump. Their hands
brush, Draco looks at Harry sharply, and Harry frowns back.

I gave my best friend both the original copy of Through the Looking Glass and my abridged
version and, after reading through both, she gave me a stern lecture on cutting out half of what she
called 'the plot'. I, however, found it largely unimportant, and since I was the only person I knew
who had read the story in the first place, I felt like I had certain liberties with it. Thus, the bits I cut
S. Morgenstern skipped from the sharp glances to one week later, with Harry worrying a lot about Ron and Hermione missing him (they were) and looking for him (they started doing so, but they got distracted by Nagini, who they promptly tracked and killed, thus leaving Voldemort defenceless, Horcrux-wise). At this point in my re-reading of the story, I began to feel as if it might just have been better for Morgenstern to write "Rocks fall. Everyone dies." or for him to kill the entire assembled characters by way of volcanic explosion, it was getting so drawn out. "Get to the point!" I found myself hissing at the printed pages, with increasing frequency. "I want some resolution! I want some epic kissing scenes!"

I have never been known to be very patient, reader, and (as my boyfriend pointed out), I seemed to forget the part where I initially read this as a young child. I thought these things, however, age of initial reading notwithstanding, and I am cutting this section entirely to remove any need for you to do the same.

We continue near the beginning of the end (I have removed, effectively, eighty pages here). Draco hasn't turned Harry in yet, for a reason that neither they nor I could quite discern, and Harry has managed to twist Dumbledore's death in a way to get Draco to let him go free.

♥ ♥ ♥

Malfoy bit his lip, and Harry could tell that he was cursing himself (and Harry) inwardly. After a few moments, he drew his wand, and cast the releasing spell. The chains around Harry disappeared.

It took him a few minutes before he was able to properly stand. His joints creaked; he felt stiff all over. Malfoy watched, expressionless, as Harry stretched, cracked his knuckles and popped his back, pulled himself into some semblance of position.

"My invisibility cloak?"

Malfoy nodded. He turned to his closet (which he had locked magically against Harry), opened it, drew out Harry's cloak of invisibility. Handed it over. Watched as first Harry's hand, then his arm, disappeared from sight.

"Thanks for not killing me, I guess," Harry said. His voice was hoarse. His stomach growled.

Malfoy nodded again, still expressionless.

"You can come too, you know," Harry said. He'd been hinting at things like this a lot more recently, but Malfoy had shown no signs of comprehending. "You can get out of this mess. Dumbledore offered... I'm sure it's not too late."

"I don't want to be anywhere else but here," Malfoy said, tersely, his eyes glinting oddly before blankness settled on his features again. "Go. Now."

Harry nodded. "Right." He pulled the cloak around him, reached to cover his head.

Malfoy's hand stopped him. His eyes all glinty again, he grasped Harry's wrist, loosely, in a sweaty hand. Harry froze, looked at him questioningly. Malfoy showed no signs of moving for almost a full minute, and Harry was just about to pull away when Malfoy blinked once and leaned in to kiss him once: quick, dry, cold. Harry stared at him.

"Go," Malfoy said again.
Harry wasn't listening. "What was that?"

"Go," Malfoy repeated. "Now."

Harry still wasn't paying attention. "Because that won't work, you know, I don't like guys and this is real life and I have a battle to win and I have to go back to Ron and Hermione and you're on the other side!"

"I know," Malfoy snapped. "That wasn't anything, Potter, fucking leave already."

And Harry left.

◆

"I kissed Malfoy," Harry said, dreamily, lying in Ginny's lap again. "In real life."

Ginny stood up abruptly, dropping Harry's head to the ground. Hard. "What do you mean," she said, quite obviously trying not to shout. "This is real life."

"No, this is a dream," Harry replied, sitting up and wincing as he touched his head. "Real life couldn't get this good."

She didn't relax, not really, but Harry could notice a certain dissipation of tension in Ginny's stance. "So you kissed Draco Malfoy."

"He kissed me, rather," Harry said. "And then I went off and found Ron and Hermione again and we're about to go kill Voldemort."

"Harry," Ginny said, staring at Harry with an odd sort of expression. "Voldemort's dead."

◆

Since it was a dreamworld, Harry decided that he could make Malfoy appear if he really wanted him to. So he wrote Malfoy an owl ("I need to talk to you. It's important," followed by specifications for a time and place) and waited.

Malfoy never sent a reply, but Harry didn't expect one. When the day came, Malfoy was waiting at the specified location, looking highly impatient and slightly worried.

"Is it about Father?" he asked, as soon as Harry appeared, and sighed sharply at Harry's blank expression. "In Azkaban—no? No? I suppose not then. What is it, Potter?"

"It's about the kiss," Harry said, frankly. "In real life. You wouldn't tell me what it was, or, rather, why you did it."

"What the fuck are you talking about, Potter," Malfoy said, looking at him strangely.

"Real life," Harry said. "This is a dream. Clearly."

"No, it isn't," Malfoy said, forming a fist with one hand, then relaxing it. "I'm leaving."

"Wait!" Harry reached out, grabbed Malfoy's wrist in much the same way Malfoy had grabbed his back in his manor. Malfoy gave him another odd look, moved to wrest his arm away, but Harry had already pulled either himself closer to Malfoy, or Malfoy closer to him (he couldn't quite tell), and kissed him, in much the same way that Malfoy had kissed him in real life(?), except a bit longer, a bit warmer, and a bit wetter. He still pulled back quickly, though.
For a moment, Malfoy looked as if he was trying to subdue hysterics. "What the fuck."

"It's a dream!" Harry said, indignantly. "I can do what I want!"

"You're mad," Malfoy said flatly, belatedly pulling himself free of Harry's (admittedly loose) grasp. "One, you kiss me—you want to kiss me, that's mad, and two, for the last time, this is NOT A DREAM."

Harry shook his head obstinately, ignoring the part where Malfoy had accused him of wanting to kiss him. "This is a dream," he said. "Real life couldn't possibly be this perfect."

Malfoy stared at him. Finally, he spoke: "Potter," he said. "You're an idiot."

Personally, I feel *Through the Looking Glass* would have been much better if either the conversation had turned to something along the lines of:

"I had a dream," Harry said. "I had a dream that I was flying you away from Fiendfyre and you were holding onto me."

*Draco looked scathingly at him. "Potter," he said. "That was real life."*

or if Harry decided that things weren't going his way in his conversation to Draco and if he 'woke up' to Ginny turning into Seymour from *Little Shop of Horrors* and trying to eat Harry alive, but, clearly, this did not happen. I can picture the resulting conversation if it did go that way, however. Something along the lines of:

Harry: wtf how were you right?
Draco: I'm always right.
Harry: whatever. Can you just kiss me again?
Draco: wtf?! No.
Harry: I thought you wanted to!
Draco: that was just a dream, Harry.

Harry would then, clearly, go on to say "Whatever, I'm going to do it anyway," and Draco would say, "I protest this!" but ultimately give in.

But S. Morgenstern doesn't do that. Malfoy goes away, and Harry sulks a bit and goes off again into the dream—I mean, "real life" world, fights a few Dementors, and starts writing Draco a lot of confused letters back in what he fancied was the dream world.

The last letter also functioned as a last result. *Dra Malfoy, Harry* wrote.

*Seriously, I don’t think I’m mad. Maybe I am. But I’m still skeptical that life could actually be as good as it has been—maybe it can, but, according to my experiences, it really can’t. But I don’t know.*

*Seriously, Malfoy, I won’t assault your mouth or whatever you’re telling yourself that I did back then again. I just want to talk to you. Sort some things out. You’re okay with this, yeah?*

—*H. Potter*

Harry sent it off hopelessly, subconsciously admitting to himself that hopelessness wasn't
something he was used to in this dream and maybe that made it real life, after all. Maybe not.

He fretted for almost two weeks, off and on. And then, one day during yet another picnic with Ginny, he saw Malfoy. He saw Malfoy walking across the field to them.

♥ ♥ ♥

S. Morgenstern's tale ends, *In the other world, Harry and Ron and Hermione were fighting Voldemort. They triumphed; Draco died at the Dark Lord's side.*

*It was then that Harry rejected this world's reality and woke up from his dream* but I decided that it would be better if the ending were left ambiguous for you, the reader.

My boyfriend has brought attention to the fact that I might not have done justice to S. Morgenstern's story, so, if you have any questions or if you want any of the removed scenes, feel free to write me at eloise.midgen@magicmail.co.uk (professional) or keenondisco@gmail.com (informal).

——E.Midgen

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