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Chapter 1 to 11

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Chapter: 1

(Crying Over) Spilt Potions

by Azhure

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Prologue - Separations and Connections
The Hogwarts Express chugged along steadily as it made its way towards its destination. The excitement and nerves, the reunions and anticipation all reaching fever pitch during the height of the journey as another year of school was beginning. Summer stories had been swapped along with Chocolate Frog cards. Acquaintances were renewed with distant friends. The start of another year - his last - was tinged with sadness for Harry Potter, the Boy Who Lived.

Now an adult of the wizarding world, Harry had spent a most pleasant summer. Scrap that. It wasn't just pleasant, it had been brilliant. It was amazing what a touch of independence and a good dose of leaving the Dursleys behind forever could do. It wasn't the thought of going back to school that made him sad. Neither was it the thought that this would be his last year at Hogwarts before becoming a fully trained wizard. Even thoughts of the ominous task ahead of him hadn't entered his mind on this day. Indeed, he had barely thought of Voldemort all summer. He had been having too much of a good time.

With head girl Hermione and prefect Ron busy in the prefect's carriage, Harry had been left to his own devices. This had given him too much idle time on his hands, and he had immediately begun brooding. *Has it really only been a few short hours since we were together?* It had felt like a lifetime. Harry had found love that summer; well, at least he thought it was love. He was fairly sure about his partner's feelings, and Harry had given over his heart to the man. He had definitely fallen hard.

Being gay had not been an issue in the wizarding world, but Harry had at first been reluctant to come out. Muggle prejudices instilled by Uncle Vernon were still fresh in his mind. Hermione

had been the one to guess his preference, and he had been delighted to discover that he wasn't such a *freak* after all. It wasn't that he hated girls, indeed he had slept with a couple the year before, but he had certainly been bowled over by the man he was now in love with.

Of course he didn't want to go back to school. A summer of free love and affection would now turn out to be clandestine meetings in enclosed spaces, searching for excuses to linger after class, quick snogs up again a wall, unobtrusive watching in the Quidditch stands and, if he were lucky, hard and fast shags in an empty classroom. His lover was also at Hogwarts, but he didn't think his friends, or his fellow students would approve of their relationship if it ever saw the light of day.

Harry reluctantly made his way to the lavatory, after hiding from his friends and wallowing for a good couple of hours. If he had to watch Colin and Ginny and their overtly sweet displays of affection any longer, he thought he might be sick. Besides, it wasn't fair that they got to be together whilst he would be the one hiding his love away. He looked up at himself in the mirror as he washed his hands.

It had come as no surprise that he had never quite had the same growth spurt as his friends, but then again, his stocky frame had been filled out with muscle gained from countless hours of Quidditch. An intensive regime of Dark Arts training the previous year had also helped Harry to become more confident in himself. He still wore his glasses - not willing to trust the eyesight correction charms - not whilst there was a chance he would still play Quidditch professionally. His hair was more out of control than ever, and he barely gave it a second glance, even though he had let it grow a little during the summer. His lover told him that he liked it longer. He smirked at the reflection in the mirror. Whatever his lover wanted, he would happily oblige. He'd let it grow to the floor if that's what he wanted.

Wiping his hands on the paper towel, Harry heard the door to the corridor glide open, before sliding shut with a bang.

"Potter!" The familiar drawl made Harry turn defensively, but he relaxed when he saw just the blonde, alone, without his henchmen.

"Malfoy." Harry studied his rival; the immaculate bearing and the finely tailored clothing a stark contrast to his own faded jeans, tight black t-shirt and scuffed boots. The blonde hair was tied neatly and firmly in a tight ponytail, a silver clasp designed like a snake kept it from escaping. The blonde stood relaxed, leaning back against the door, his arms folded, as he looked over the Boy Who Lived. He seemed pleased with himself. No doubt finding Harry alone was making him look so pleased. Harry's hand itched to grab his wand, but he waited, his gaze never leaving Malfoy's.

"Well, Potter, I see that the Dark Lord hasn't yet killed you. What a shame." He looked around. "What... no Weasel to back you up Potter? Didn't your fan club come rushing back to you after its little Prefect's meeting?"

"I thought you'd be too busy terrorising first years and recruiting Junior Death Eaters, Malfoy. Haven't you got better things to do than annoy me?" Harry made to leave, but the blonde stopped him as he reached the door.

"As a matter of fact, Potter, bothering you is the last thing on my list. I do have much better things to do!" Draco stepped forward, nose to nose with Harry, as his hand grasped the front of the Gryffindor's t-shirt. Harry stepped back as the blonde pushed him up against the sinks, his back slamming hard into the taps. Draco's lips descended on Harry's as he kissed the Gryffindor fervently and desperately. In a frenzy of emotions, Harry returned the kiss, allowing the blonde's tongue to tackle his own. Coming back to his senses, Harry tried to push the taller young man out of the way.

"Draco! What are you doing?" Harry whispered as he looked at the door in fear. "What if someone came along... what if they found out about us?"

The Slytherin grinned at the Gryffindor. "Harry, Harry, Harry. Do you really think anyone would argue with Crabbe and Goyle? I've got them posted outside."

Harry's eyes widened. "You didn't tell them..." A pale finger brushed across his lips.

"Relax! I merely told them to stand guard. What they think I'm doing to you... well, I'll be leaving that to their underdeveloped imaginations." The finger was replaced again by Draco's talented lips, and Harry soon relaxed.

Harry had been pushed up and was now sitting on the sink, Draco's body pressed into his as he straddled the blonde. The heat being generated wasn't only from the tightly enclosed space. Harry hooked his legs around Draco's, bringing him in even closer. Their kisses became desperate, as both knew their tryst would have to end soon. Too soon for either of them to leave satisfied. They stayed locked in each other's arms like that for a few long moments, neither willing to part. Finally, after kissing his way down the blonde's neck, his own head nestled against Draco's chest, Harry spoke.

"I don't know if I can do this Draco." Harry's voice was tinged with apprehension and sadness.

"Of course you can! We'll make it work. Just you see. Between your map and my knowledge of the dungeons, not to mention your invisibility cloak, we'll find a way to be together." Draco assured his lover.

"No, I mean the pretending - in public - to hate you." He looked deep into the blonde's lust filled grey eyes. "I gave up feeling that way a long time ago." Draco stepped back, as Harry slid off the edge of the basin.

Draco nodded at Harry's words. "Feeling's mutual." They separated, the evidence of their time together rather obvious. Harry splashed water on his face to calm himself down. He saw the blonde watching him from across the small room. Draco's sad smile mirrored his own.

"Come on then. Shall we get this over with?"

Draco sighed and nodded in agreement. Looking over at the door, Harry knew their time together was running short.

"I don't want to do this either, so I just want to say sorry in advance." Harry nodded as he steeled himself for the inevitable blow.

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Ron and Hermione opened the door to the carriage to find Ginny and Luna fussing over the obviously injured Harry.

"What happened?" the Head Girl quickly looked over at her friend, shocked to find him holding his jaw gingerly.

Ron didn't need an explanation. "Malfoy happened, didn't it?" Harry nodded. The red head clenched his fist around his wand, and made to leave the carriage in search of the Slytherin. "He was agitated and itching for a fight the whole ruddy meeting... when I get my hands on him, I'll..."

"S'okay Ron. I got him back." Harry mumbled with his broken jaw clenched shut.

"Yeah, I saw Pansy Parkinson fawning over him as I ducked out to the loo. It seems he's got a broken nose for his effort." Ginny sounded pleased, but frowned in disapproval at Harry.

"Honestly Harry, you couldn't even make it to school, and you're already fighting with Malfoy!" Hermione sighed. She looked closely at Harry's jaw as she touched it gently. She tutted. "I can't help you with that - sorry. You'll have to get Madame Pomfrey to look at it. Why you didn't just hex him I'll never know. Boys." She rolled her eyes and tutted again, Ginny and Luna nodding their heads in agreement. Ron and Colin just ignored the girls and their disapproval, pleased at least with the fact that Harry had given as good as he got.

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Harry sat quietly the remainder of the journey, glad that he wasn't expected to talk much. Sure, the broken jaw hurt like hell, but at least the pair had the foresight to cast some pain reduction charms on each other. It was going to be a painful time if they chose to keep up their pretence of hate and loathing.

He knew it was going to be a painfully long year. As they disembarked the train at Hogsmeade, Harry, surrounded by his gang of friends and fellow Gryffindors, spotted Draco and his own gang across the platform. The blonde scowled - not ominously (not with his nose all blotchy and puffy) - but it was a scowl just the same. Harry returned it with a glare. It was all for effect, but

Harry could see that Draco's heart wasn't in it. Everyone around them expected them to behave this way.

Nobody had noticed that the glares and stares had been meaningless, at least since Easter - five months earlier. How they came to be together was not important in the grand scheme of things, but the fact that Harry had fallen in love with his rival was extremely important. The pair of them had savoured every moment together during the summer; not knowing when their next stolen moment would be. Coming back to school was a challenge to their relationship - a challenge they both would have to face almost alone.

As his friends talked nostalgically about starting their final year of school, Harry thought of little else but Draco. He didn't care that it was his last year of school. Someday he would need to face Voldemort, and he just had an inkling; an uneasy feeling, that it would be sooner rather than later. He needed Draco's support to help him get through that encounter.

It wasn't the fact that Draco was a Slytherin that kept Harry from confiding in his friends. It was the idea that someone might find out - someone that might pass the information on to Voldemort and his minions. Heaven forbid that they discover just how much Draco meant to the Boy Who Lived. They had both agreed to maintain the charade, purely for this reason. Still, he wasn't looking forward to pretending, not if it was going to be so painful. He winced as he tenderly touched his jaw. The pain reduction charm was starting to wear off.

As they approached the steps of the castle, Harry was stopped by an imposing figure.

"Mr Potter. How *wonderful* to see you. I understand you have been attacking one of my students." Professor Snape snarled sarcastically at his least favourite student.

"Sir... Malfoy started -"

"I'll hear none of your excuses Potter. Fifty Points from Gryffindor for brawling like a Muggle on the train. As much as I adore your scintillating company, I regret to advise that you'll also be spending detention with me twice a week. Goodness knows, your potions mark might even reach Acceptable. You may even scrape through your NEWT yet. Although if I were you, I wouldn't be holding my breath on that one." The Potions master stalked away, no doubt seeking his own student to comfort and heap praise upon.

"Can you believe the nerve of that man! Fifty Points!" Ron was incredulous. "Hell, I bet he won't take any off Malfoy, even if he did provoke you. I hope you have a plan to get back at Malfoy, Harry, because if you don't get him, then I will."

"Oh don't worry Ron, I have plans for Malfoy." He tried to smile, but winced instead. *Yes, I do have plans for Malfoy. Wicked, wicked plans.* The thought of what he would like to do to Draco put a grin on his face - well, as much of a grin as was possible with a broken jaw. Thoughts of this put a little spring in his step as he made his way to the infirmary.

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Chapter: 2

(Crying Over) Spilt Potions

by Azhure

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Chapter 1 - A Time for Mistakes

Twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty. Harry stopped stirring the potion and looked down, satisfied with the colour of the viscous film coating the end of the silver spoon. Sniffing, he nodded in approval. Everything seemed to be in order. With a wave of his wand the fire was extinguished. Looking up carefully, he noticed that Snape was still engrossed in his own brewing. It had seemed strange that Snape was so involved in what was in his own cauldron, when he was supposed to be supervising Harry's detention. Harry smirked. It had been all too easy.

NEWT level Potions had been a lot more work than Harry and his classmates had anticipated. Snape expected the students to do a considerable amount of preparation outside of class time. Harry was at least grateful for the detention given to him for *fighting* with Draco on the train.

It was already the second week of the new school year and this was Harry's third detention, with Snape. Draco had felt really bad about the fact that Harry received this open ended detention with his head of house, so he had shared the list of potions that Snape had published to the Slytherins in advance. It was expected that his students would be able to brew those potions perfectly by class time. Harry would practice some of them in each detention, hopefully with Snape thinking he was reading ahead, and not being given help from a Slytherin. Although this evening, his thoughts were on far more personal things than the potion he was supposedly brewing. He hoped against hope that Snape didn't take a closer look at the contents of his cauldron - he didn't fancy explaining what it actually contained. He smirked as he thought that perhaps Snape would have no idea what was in it, but he wouldn't push his luck.

Nary a night went by that at least one other Gryffindor was included in the detention, and fourth year, Dennis Creevey, was this evening's unlucky participant. Apparently Dennis's track record in Potions was on a par with Neville Longbottom's. Dennis was once again struggling with a cauldron that seemed to bubble and steam at an alarming rate. Harry hoped the inevitable explosion would occur after he had finished his own work. In anticipation of this, Harry quickly

bottled the contents of his now cooled cauldron. Looking around surreptitiously, he saw that both Snape and Creevey were totally oblivious to his own actions. He swiftly pocketed the newly bottled potion, and pulled out another, very similar jar. This would be the item handed in to Snape at the end of the session. Another final look around, and the other two people in the classroom were still intent on their own work. *Yes!* Harry thought as he congratulated himself. He was going to get away with it.

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Thirty-eight, Thirty-nine, Forty... Snape finished stirring the potion as he carefully turned off the heat, and cast a charm to instantly snap freeze the contents of the cauldron as it settled. He turned the hourglass to count the exact time for the concoction to remain in that state. Normally he didn't need to time the wait precisely, but his very life literally depended on this particular brew. It was very special. So special that Voldemort had indicated to his Potions master that if he did not succeed in correctly brewing this potion... well, let's just say that the Dark Lord had a very vivid imagination.

Precision was the key. Timing was of the essence. Soon one of his greatest challenges as a Potions master would soon be on its way to the Dark Lord. How he hated that his greatest achievements were for that ... creature. Snape refused to think of him as human.

This final stage of his latest project was a delicate one, and had been in process all summer, but finally, Snape had finished it. This last step in the process was crucial. He could not afford any delays in his work. It had been a new moon the previous Monday, so tonight was the last opportunity to brew the potion until the next month. The brewing cycle had revolved around the lunar calendar, and he had now waited the obligatory ten days from last Monday's new moon, to add the final ingredients and allow it to reduce.

Another two minutes, and he would have it bottled and ready to present to his master. Well, *one* of his masters. The one who had allowed him the opportunity to practice the darker side of his chosen profession. Just the opportunity of making it had been enough of a challenge for the Hogwarts Potions master, and he was pleased he had completed it without incident. Not that he had any doubt about his own skills.

The actual brewing process had been surprisingly easy, considering the difficulty the Death Eaters had gone to in obtaining, then translating the ancient grimoire from which it came. A large part of it had been in Parseltongue, which the Dark Lord himself had translated. Just the impossibility of obtaining some of the ingredients had been enough of a challenge for some of Voldemort's minions and their underworld contacts. This potion was the result of their labours; not that the Dark Lord would thank any of them, even though he would be pleased.

It had been somewhat of a privilege being asked to brew something that had been thought lost for centuries. Unfortunately, the translators had been somewhat secretive, and had only given him enough information to make the potion. He had come to his own rather unsettling conclusions as to the potion's purpose - some of the combinations of ingredients were pretty

obvious to any Potions master. His somewhat futile attempts at grilling the translators had wielded no further information. At one stage he even toyed, albeit briefly, with getting Potter to read the few notes he had been given that were in Parseltongue. Voldemort had written translations against the original, and it was ever so tempting, particularly when Potter was so close! He tried not to think about how Voldemort would use the potion once he handed it over. Snape tried very hard not to get involved in any ethical dilemma about the work he did for his other master. Despite being a Slytherin, and despite his rather unhealthy obsession with the darker side of his craft, he did have scruples.

Now that the critical stage of the brewing was completed, Snape noticed the movement out of the corner of his eye. Potter was moving over to the sinks to clean out his cauldron. *No explosions there,* he thought disappointedly. The Potions master scowled as he wondered once again, just how he had been manipulated into keeping the Golden Boy - along with the other Gryffindor troublemakers - in his NEWT level potions class. He shook his head at the fact he had been overruled by Dumbledore and the entire Board of Governors on that count.

He wondered why he had been possessed to give Potter this detention - Merlin knows he had to put up with teaching him and his cronies - so why did he volunteer to spend this extra time with the brat? Perhaps it was the unmitigated pleasure from watching him fail, over and over again. Snape was disappointed that the Gryffindor had adequately brewed the class work since the start of the year. *Perhaps I'm slipping and I no longer intimidate the Boy Who Lived. I think I'm going to need a good rest after this year - after seven years of Potter, wouldn't anyone want that?* It was only the second week of term, and already the younger Creevey was on his second detention. He began mentally counting down the weeks until the end of this school year.

The Potions master had been rather shocked to find that Potter's summer homework had actually been passable, and that so far this year he had handed in acceptable work. *Perhaps it had been the Muggles holding him back,* he thought. Potter had apparently left their protection the minute he turned seventeen, and spent the remainder of his summer in some upmarket new hotel in Diagon Alley. Perhaps he had just decided to do some homework over the summer. *Perhaps there is hope for us all,* he thought cynically. Whatever had happened over the summer, the young Gryffindor had certainly grown up, and grown confident. Confident in his schoolwork, confident in the way he walked, and confident in the way he flirted - both with the girls, and not surprisingly, the boys. *Any more confident, and he'll be as arrogant as his father.* Severus scowled at the thought.

Voldemort had seemed rather disinterested in Potter's whereabouts the past few months, but the Potions master suspected that things would soon be coming to a head. He could feel it. He recognised that prickling sensation he usually got when he knew the Dark Lord was working on something malicious. It didn't take a genius to know that the potion he just completed would be involved in those machinations.

Whatever the reason for Potter's sudden and intense interest in potions, the young man had finished his work, and was nearly packed up. *At least he didn't cause any disruptions tonight,* Snape thought. He loathed supervising detentions (surely having to put up with them in class was

bad enough), but it was all part and parcel of his job description. Snape had no idea what Potter had been brewing, his only requirement was that the concoction be handed in at the end of the detention. Judging from his cursory glance at Potter's work area and the ingredients laid out, he surmised it was possibly something for headaches. The ingredients had seemed about right for some type of pain reduction salve. He knew that the mental link to Voldemort had caused the boy plenty of grief - he had seen its effects during their early Occlumency lessons years ago. Snape was ever so grateful he had managed to get out of that extra training. Dumbledore had taken on the boy's training the previous year, and it appeared that he had indeed become a successful Occlumens. Not satisfied with just having that one extra skill, the arrogant teen had also mastered the counter art of Legilimency.

Snape's mind was soon back on his own cauldron as he noticed the hourglass sands had fully fallen. Carefully unfreezing the contents of his cauldron, he gently poured the remaining liquid into a small vial and stoppered it, casting an airtight seal charm. *Done.* All he had to do now was let it sit before he delivered it to the Dark Lord.

Being airtight, the active ingredients would remain dormant for up to five years. But once the seal was broken, the potion would need to be used within a couple of hours before it lost its potency and was rendered useless. No doubt the Dark Lord would have some long winded ceremony involving the potion, perhaps plenty of chanting and prostrating, but Snape hoped and prayed that he wouldn't have to watch.

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He dared to look in Creevey's direction - instantly regretting doing so. He caught the blur as Potter raced towards his housemate, who was pouring something into his cauldron. Snape didn't need Trelawney's tea leaves to know that this was not going to be good, and that his run of good fortune had ended.

"No Dennis! Don't add the lobalug venom yet... you have to wait..." Harry's frantic cry gave Snape a sense of déjà vu. He seemed to recall Longbottom had made the same mistake in his fourth year, and this explosion was likely to be just as spectacular.

It was. The Potions master had barely managed to put up a shield charm to protect his own work area before the boy's cauldron had blown up and covered himself, and a large portion of the room in the venomous concoction. Snape noticed that whilst Potter had managed to cast his own personal protection shield, Creevey had not, and was even now beginning to convulse and writhe from the acid in the lobalug venom. Snape was beside the boy in an instant.

"Potter! Get over here now." Creevey was going to need attending to; and urgently. Snape realised all too late that he would not be able to get the potion to his room in time for his scheduled fire call. He just prayed to every deity he could think of that Potter could deliver it to his room, and get out before the arranged rendezvous with the Death Eater who would be coming to collect the Dark Lord's potion.

"Sir?" The short, yet slightly stocky seventeen-year-old looked questioningly at his professor. It was obvious that Harry was itching to help his fellow Gryffindor, but the professor knew the charms to help stop the venom from spreading, and had already applied them to help the Creevey boy. Potter didn't.

Snape regretted that the decision was out of his hands, and he hated that. "I doubt I can trust you with such an important task Potter," the professor started, "but Creevey needs my help to get to the Infirmary." He pulled the vial of a gleaming blue liquid from within the folds of his robes.

"Take this to my office. The password is 'erudite'. Don't dawdle. Place it in the green box on my desk. It's charmed to keep the contents cool. Touch nothing else... lest you have an encounter you are not quite yet ready for." He spoke the last quietly to the concerned Gryffindor.

Harry just stood there, thinking. *What had he meant by that last threat? As if I'd go anywhere near his stuff after I stupidly went through his pensieve. That was years ago.* His eyes narrowed at the thought. *I don't think he trusts me. I don't think he'd ever trust me. I'll show him.* Harry set his shoulders, and looked down at his housemate in concern, but could see that he would need to get to the Infirmary immediately. He reluctantly admitted that Snape was better trained to handle such accidents.

"I wish I didn't have to trust you with such an important concoction," Harry rolled his eyes at the professor's now commonplace insult, "but if you as much as spill one drop, then losing every single house point Gryffindor earns this year will only be the tip of the iceberg." Harry swallowed visibly as he understood the implied threat in the potion master's gaze.

"Well don't just stand there - Get out! Go! NOW!" Snape had already forgotten about Harry and was now attending to the injured form of Dennis Creevey. Harry was torn between wanting to help his housemate, and following a direct instruction from Snape.

For that matter, Snape hoped that Potter could follow the simplest of instructions. This potion was too important to him - to his position as spy and to the Order in general. He could not afford to fail. Not now. Somehow he knew that much rested on the outcome of this particular potion.

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Harry stalked out of the classroom in annoyance. *Why couldn't I take Dennis to the Infirmary?* Just because Harry had now mastered Occlumency, and had also managed to become Snape's equal at Legilimency, the snarky git thought he could demean him at every possible opportunity. *Who does he think I am? A delivery boy? Doesn't think I can follow simple instructions huh? Seems I'll be having to prove myself all round this evening.* Harry smirked as he thought of the deception he had achieved right under the professor's nose, and what he was planning to do once he had delivered Snape's precious vial. He had somewhere else he needed to be right now, and being Snape's delivery boy was going to make him late for his rendezvous with Draco.

He had never seen a potion that particular shade of blue before. He snorted as it reminded him of

the colour of those things that Aunt Petunia used to throw in the toilet to keep the room smelling fresh. Perhaps Snape was working on a way to... No, Harry wasn't even going to take that line of thinking any further. Still, he wondered why Snape was making such a fuss about getting it to his office. *Why can't he just carry it around in his robes like he usually does?* It suddenly struck him. He stopped momentarily as he realised that it was likely something for Voldemort. He stopped. What if it was? Why should he deliver it? Harry shook his head, arguing with his inner concerns. *It couldn't be. Not everything is about Voldemort. It's probably something totally innocent. Why else would he let me within spitting distance of it?* He hurried, not wanting to know the consequences of not getting it there in one piece.

Harry shrugged off his concerns about the potion - he had more important things to think about this night. He had been rather preoccupied all day, and he knew that all rational thoughts had left his mind at the thought of his own agenda for the evening. He grinned wickedly as he realised that Snape had given him the perfect excuse to hang around the dungeons openly, without resorting to skulking in the shadows. Everything had gone so perfectly all evening, yet the night was far from over. He had plans. Lascivious plans of his own. Anyone watching the play of emotions across his face would not need to guess his preoccupation.

But someone, or rather, something, was watching. Harry was so distracted and preoccupied, he failed to see Peeves hiding behind a suit of armour. Seeing the student so deep in his own thoughts, Peeves, in all his otherworldly wisdom, decided on the subtle approach.

"Boo!" he cried as he floated out from behind the suit of armour.

Harry tripped as he was startled by the poltergeist, the potion slipping from his grasp as it was flung high in the air. A look of complete horror crossed his face as he realised what was happening. The world slowed down as he watched the sealed vial spin slowly, end over end, rising higher and higher as his own fear and panic rose at the same levels. Fortunately, his automatic reflexes took over, and he extended his arm as he took a flying leap. He felt the cool glass in his hand as he wrapped his fingers around it, and relaxed. Unfortunately, he forgot that he wasn't on a broom, and realised, a moment too late, that he was going to hit the ground. Hard.

Harry heard a tiny clink of glass as his hand, soon followed by the rest of his body, hit the flagstones. He didn't want to open his eyes. Expecting to feel the trickle of liquid against his fingers, he was surprised to find the cool glass of the vial still intact. He opened his eyes suddenly, to find it was true. He had saved it, or so he had thought. In his desire to keep Snape's concoction safe, he held the fragile glass a little too tightly, and soon began to feel the cool of the runny liquid on his fingers. He looked closer to see a crack in the vial, and the thin liquid escaping.

"Fuck!" he hissed aloud, not realising he had cursed in Parseltongue (a habit he unconsciously indulged in), and certainly not caring if Peeves or anyone else heard. Snape would kill him! All he needed to do was take this stupid thing and put it on Snape's desk, and he couldn't even do that right. *So much for Constant Vigilance,* Harry thought, *If Peeves can scare me that easily then goodness knows what will happen when I finally confront Voldemort.*

He kept an eagle eye out for the rotten poltergeist as he carefully made his way to the Potion Master's office, taking extra care not to trip over any of the uneven flagstones on the dungeon floor. He made it without further incident, and muttered the password. He looked around in panic as he felt the liquid starting to seep out faster, but was relieved when he noticed an entire box of empty vials resting beside the sink.

Harry sighed in relief at his good fortune. Casting a vacuum spell to create an airtight working area, he quickly uncorked and broke the seal on the cracked vial before pouring the potion into the new glass jar. He took a sudden breath as a small sliver of glass made its way into his finger. As he flinched, his fingers slipped on the glass, and a good dollop of the runny liquid flowed out over his fingers. He cursed again, but felt no side effects from the skin contact. *Thank Merlin it isn't caustic*, he thought absently. Quickly stoppering the vial and resetting the airtight seal, he wiped the excess liquid from the edge of the jar with his fingers. He pocketed the cracked vial - he would hate for Snape to uncover his mistake.

He never noticed the slick substance as it clung to his fingers before slowly being absorbed into the skin.

Harry spotted the green box on Snape's desk, and promptly unloaded his burden. He had no doubt it would be the first thing the eagle eyed professor would look for when he returned. Harry left with a sense of smugness. He was going to get away with it! Looking at his watch, he realised that even if Snape wasn't going to chew through him now, he had no doubt his lover would. He was late. Quite late. He wasted no more time as he raced to his clandestine meeting.

In his haste, he had slammed the door of Snape's office with a hard thump. A sign hanging from the back of the door fell; the aged parchment worn and yellowed. The permanent sticking charm had obviously worn out. The message on the sign was clear, and any first year could tell you the importance of its message. *Always wash your hands after experiencing spills. Just because it doesn't burn, doesn't mean it won't cause lasting harm*.

Harry had paid no attention to the sign in his haste to get to his own rendezvous. In hindsight, Harry would regret not paying attention to the sign. Unfortunately, he was about to learn its lesson the hard way.

The hardest of them all.

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Chapter: 3

(Crying Over) Spilt Potions

by Azhure

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Chapter 2 - A Time for Lust

Having been on an errand for Snape at least gave Harry a good reason to be wandering the halls of Hogwarts dungeons. Knowing that the professor was in the Infirmary with the injured Dennis Creevey gave the Gryffindor a further sway in his step. Filch and Mrs Norris rarely prowled the halls of Snape's domain; preferring to capture those venturing out in other parts of the castle, so Harry was confident he would not be caught. He stopped when he spied the grimy mirror next to the statue of Derwent the Dastardly. His destination was the hidden room behind the mirror. He heard a slight step, and he paused, not wanting to give himself away. At first he suspected it might be Filch, negating his earlier thoughts, but he soon realised the other person was trying to remain quiet as well.

The attack came from behind; someone else had been lurking in the shadows of the dungeons. *Shit,* he thought, *I hope they didn't see Draco,* but further thought was drowned out by the arm that suddenly snuck around his waist and the warm breath that tickled his ear.

"Shh...", Draco whispered. "You make enough noise to wake a herd of hippogriffs. Harry tried to turn into the embrace to face his lover, but was held firmly. "You're late, Potter." The last word spoken as the blonde's tongue slid out and rimmed Harry's outer ear.

"Not out here Draco." Harry moaned quietly, but desperately. Draco released him long enough to cast the spell to open the secret passageway.

It was dark. Darker than he anticipated once the mirror closed behind him. Harry blinked, but quickly found himself up against the wall. Draco held him firmly, his tongue licking long, relentless strokes against his bared neck. Harry groaned as the spark of hunger in his groin was in sharp contrast to the cold stone against his cheek. In Draco's haste, Harry's glasses flew off and clattered to the floor. Draco's attentions moved to Harry's ear as his moist tongue again rimmed the edge, sending ripples of pleasure all the way to his nether regions. "I'll say it again Potter - you're late. Care to explain, or do I have to fuck you up against the wall?" The voice growled in his ear, but Harry was practically incoherent at the blonde's suggestion.

Despite the lack of light, and without his glasses, Harry quickly used his slightly shorter frame to slip out of Draco's grasp and turn the tables on the blonde. Draco struggled as he was now twisted up against the wall. If there had been any light, the look on Draco's face would have been one of surprise.

"Blame your head of house, *Malfoy*." Harry had to work hard to stop the blonde from struggling against his grip, which tightened the more he resisted. Harry held Draco's hands behind his back, but the blonde was not struggling in his grip. Harry slowly trailed one finger along the nape of his neck, tickling the rim of his ear. Draco arched back moaning as Harry's lips replaced hands, and his hands found other places to explore. Harry pressed his body against the blonde's robes, there being little mistake as to the heat being generated between the pair.

Harry's lips trailed light butterfly kisses against the blonde's neck, slowly following the jaw line as the blonde turned in the embrace. Harry's hands tingled at each touch against Draco's warm skin. Harry tasted the delectable skin, familiarising himself with the blonde's taste once again. Who knew when they would be together again? This was their first chance to truly be together since school started. A quick snog behind the Quidditch stands, and one mind blowing hand job in the boys' lavatory were not enough to sustain Harry, and he for one was going to cherish every minute of this encounter.

"Why'd Snape make you late? He buggering you too?" Draco managed to get out between panting. Draco enjoyed making conversation during their intimate liaisons, but Harry loved to make the blonde incoherent. He was no doubt succeeding with that already, if Draco could barely make it through a sentence. His answer to Draco's crude comment was to wipe the satisfied smirk off his face by a resounding and stirring kiss on the blonde's mouth - his lips plundered by the depth of Harry's intent. Draco could barely retain his control. He tried to pull Harry closer, all the while rubbing himself against Harry's robes, the friction heating them both up. As suddenly as he began, Harry stopped, and moved right away from the blonde.

In the dark, he could not read the look of loss and longing in the blonde's face, but he didn't want their evening to end in a quick shag up against a cold dungeon wall. "Only in your dreams, Draco, could you possibly come up with something that sick and depraved. Buggering Snape. That's... well... that's just plain sick. Now you've ruined my mood." Harry feigned disinterest as he walked away; the sound of Draco's breathing returning to normal as he let his immediate desire wane, heading to a deeper place.

"Turn on the light, Harry." Draco's voice rasped, his smooth and cultured tones returning to normal, his desire hidden for now. Harry cast a light at the end of his wand, and saw the glint of his glasses a few feet away. He thought twice about bending down to pick them up, sensing the mood of his secret lover, and knowing just what would turn him on the most. He motioned to pick them up, but at the last minute summoned them with his wand. He saw the pout on the blonde's face at the lost opportunity. "Turn around." Draco whispered. Harry was still facing Draco, who was beside the hidden entranceway.

He saw the glowing light reflected in Draco's eyes, and turned, his breath momentarily gone. The room certainly looked different to when he had first discovered it on the Marauder's Map. Gone was the dusty pile of unused tables and chairs, as was the broken and worn chaise-longe. In their place dozens of candles hovered, their soft light slowly brightening and adding to the ambience of the transfigured furniture. In place of the disused and hopefully forgotten clutter stood a plush and stately king size bed. The plump cushions and down cover all adorned in royal blue and

cream linens, silks and satins. The thin gauze curtains were tied back to the solid bed head, and the mattress looked inviting for more than one reason.

"Wow... you got a little bored waiting, huh?" Harry nodded approvingly. Draco looked pleased at his renovations.

"Well you didn't expect me to bugger you on that rickety old settee, did you?" the blonde taunted, temptingly.

"Not really. Still," Harry moved to embrace Draco, "I honestly don't care where we are, as long as you're eager, and willing, and I can see that you are both. Merlin, I've missed you." Harry drove in hard for another kiss, his hands groping aimlessly at Draco's robes, grabbing at the first available cloth. His lips were doing the same, groping for the nearest skin. He felt skin under his hands as he finally managed to pull Draco's shirt from his trousers, walking his way towards the bed. Draco's hands were confidently roaming over Harry's lower body, grasping his belt, stopping before he continued. Harry groaned in frustration.

"So, you did you bring it, didn't you? No trouble?" Draco's eyes lit up in anticipation. Harry knew what he wanted, but feigned concern and patted his robes as if he had forgotten. The blonde backed away, but Harry grabbed him, pulling Draco down, but they both lost their balance, and landed on the rug. Harry landed atop Draco, the blonde not struggling in any way to leave the compromising position.

"Of course I remembered it. Do you really think I'd forget something so important? Besides, don't think I've forgotten our little deal tonight, Draco. You owe me, big time." Harry mimicked Draco's drawl perfectly, and the quirk at the corner of his mouth twitch upward. "Besides, I always like to come prepared." Draco's eyebrow rose questioningly.

"Eager are we, Harry? I must say, you were rather distracted in classes earlier today. Do I really make you so hot under the collar that you think about me all the time?" He batted his eyelids melodramatically as he wiggled against the dark haired young man straddling him; the evidence of their shared arousal bumping. Harry gasped as Draco snorted in laughter. "Ooh, you are prepared, aren't you?" On a more serious note, he asked further. "Seriously, you did manage to brew it, didn't you?"

Harry sat up straight and rummaged through his robes. He flinched as his hand rubbed up against the broken vial, and he pulled it out, along with the small jar of salve he bottled earlier. He flung the broken vial away into the corner, the residue of it still clinging to his fingers. He presented the jar to Draco, wandlessly increasing the light so they could both see clearly. Draco raised an eyebrow at the frivolous use of Harry's increased powers, but didn't complain. The blonde snatched the jar from Harry, before unscrewing the lid and sniffing the contents. Tentatively putting a finger in the jar, Draco rubbed the slick and viscous salve between his fingers, and looked into Harry's green eyes with surprise.

"How the hell did you manage this?" he asked in doubt, a tinge of awe in his voice. "Not the

brewing of it - I knew you could do that - but how the hell did you get away with it. This is still warm. Smells just a bit off, but it feels the right consistency."

"Was easier than I thought." Harry said proudly. "Snape was busy making something of his own - he was in his own world. Tie that in with the fact that one of the Creevey brothers was doing a detention, and he barely batted an eyelid in my direction. Didn't even bother to check what I was making." Draco nodded.

"Sometimes your mind comes up with the most Slytherin of ideas, Harry."

"Hey, who dared me to brew ruddy super-slick lubricant right under Snape's nose?" Harry was beaming at the fact he had managed to make a rather tricky, but totally obvious lubricating salve right in front of his least favoured professor. Had he been discovered, Snape would have had no doubt as to what it would be used for; having no other purpose. Still, Harry grinned at the imagined look on his Professor's face if he knew what it was, and who he would be using it with.

Draco shook his head in astonishment. "Only a Gryffindor would be daft enough to actually try something like that in front of Snape." But his words belied his awe at the fact that Harry had managed to get away with it. "You say Snape was busy?" Draco was stalling now.

"Hush up, Draco. I won the ruddy dare. You know what's happening next." Harry could barely wait any longer. "You promised." He added petulantly. Harry had been hanging on the edge of anticipation for hours. His cock had twitched all day at the very thought of being with his lover after two whole weeks, and he knew that Draco would be itching just as much as he was.

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Harry pondered his luck that day, how he had managed to beg, borrow and steal the ingredients to make the salve. He had been puzzled by Snape's preoccupation in detention, but he wasn't looking a gift unicorn in the mouth. Despite being sidetracked by having to deliver the professor's potion to his rooms, and his near miss, he wasn't going to let anything ruin this night with Draco. In the six months they had been lovers, it had been Draco who had tenderly showed Harry the finer points of loving and pleasing a man. Harry had only been too willing to let the blonde fill him, and their lovemaking had always been filled with heat and passion. Harry had never begged or pleaded with Draco to reciprocate, but after their whispered encounter in the lavatory a few days earlier, Draco had surprised the Gryffindor with an offer he could not, would not refuse.

Harry had been punished severely for their mock fight on the Hogwarts Express. Draco had received an admonishment, and little else for his involvement in their altercation. He felt bad at the loss of house points for Harry, but mostly it was the unfair detention that had concerned him. It was a complete surprise to the Gryffindor when Draco growled in his ear that he wanted Harry to make love to him - not only in way of apology, but because he wanted to take the next step in their relationship. Harry had been gobsmacked at the idea, knowing full well that he wouldn't be asked again if he refused. Draco had only one condition. Harry would have to brew a particular

potion, a rather advanced and slick lubricant - but with magical properties - properties that could heighten the senses and ease any pain.

Harry had readily agreed to brew the potion, that was, until he realised its difficulty. Loving the Slytherin was never going to be an easy task, but it was a task that Harry would move mountains for. Harry could not believe his luck when Snape had been so preoccupied during detention. He guessed it just was his lucky day. He wasn't going to let his near miss with Snape's potion get in the way of what he had planned to do with and do to Draco this night. He had been hot and hard for it now for the past week, and had missed the touch of the blonde's body on top of his. To feel it beneath him would be something new, something else to make him shiver. At the thought of Draco, he looked down to find his wanton gaze on his own eyes.

"Are you sure you want this Draco?" Harry asked one final time. He didn't know what he would do if the blonde reneged, but judging from the way the blonde was licking his lips lasciviously, he doubted that very much. Draco nodded his assent, much to Harry's unspoken relief.

He stood up, offering his hand to Draco. "Seeing as you went to all the trouble of fixing this room, it would be a waste if we didn't at least try to make it over there." Harry indicated the bed with a wave of his hand, not realising the wandless magic that erupted, turning the sheets down and awaiting the pair. Harry wanted Draco lying at his complete mercy on that bed. He moved away, heading towards the bed, but before he could move, Draco grabbed Harry's belt, pulling the Gryffindor back into a closer embrace. Harry felt the blonde's talented hands working their way to pull out his shirt.

"Where do you think you're going? Got somewhere else to be? Someone else to shag perhaps?" the smirk was no longer vindictive - Harry thought it looked rather sexy these days, and Draco used his sex appeal to full effect. He brought his mouth up to Harry's neck and started licking and nuzzling the fine stubble, working his way slowly to Harry's ear, before gently blowing and licking the rim. Harry suspected Draco would try to woo him this way, and he wasn't going to fall for it … no matter … how … good … it felt. He closed his eyes and hummed as he felt the pleasure tingling beginning to trickle down to the very centre of his being.

As his desire grew, Harry grabbed a fist full of Draco's robes, and threw him onto the bed. He could make out a sparkle in the Slytherin's grey eyes as he pulled Draco's hands away from his own clothes, and held them firmly above the blonde's head. Draco struggled unconvincingly, but Harry continued to hold his wrists firmly. Eager to get on with it now, Harry went straight for the blonde's ear, knowing full well the effect of a well placed tongue, and a few quick hot words could do. He released the blonde's hands, and growled in his ear as he ground deliciously against the blonde's fully clothed body.

"Strip for me… Draco." He felt the shudder run through the body beneath him. It was something about the way Harry said his name during their intimate moments. He placed an emphasis on it like nobody else. Perhaps it was that, or the fact that Harry usually ended up whispering endearments to him in Parseltongue, the sexiest language of them all. Whether Harry did it consciously, or unconsciously, it didn't matter, it had an effect on Draco that sent shivers down

his spine, and his hips bucking automatically against Harry's.

Harry sat back, giving the blonde some room. Kneeling on the bed, Draco - ever the consummate showman - began shrugging out of his robe, before unbuttoning his shirt, then loosening his tie. He stopped Draco's hands as he was about to discard the tie. "Leave it." Draco left it looped around his neck, as he elegantly removed his shirt. Harry couldn't contain himself any longer. He pounced, grabbing the tie to bring the blonde over to him. His hands groped everywhere. The feel of the warm skin a magic touch, one that triggered his own need to lose some clothing.

In unspoken understanding, Draco began working on Harry's robe, which he had shucked deftly, before beginning on the fiddly buttons of his own shirt. Harry breathlessly trailed hard and rough kisses down the blonde's neck, across his abdomen, and down to Draco's nipples as he bit down hard. His hands roamed the warm skin, marking it with each touch, branding the blonde as his own property. Draco arched his back into the bed at Harry's rough touch, but didn't falter as he now impatiently began unbuttoning his own trousers. Harry was pleased at the sight of the blonde that awaited beneath. Draco had worn no underwear, and his member stood proudly, hot and leaking for Harry. It was a sight that made Harry's own cock twitch again.

"You remembered." He murmured hotly, talking about Harry's desire to go without the confines of underwear. Draco tilted his hips towards Harry, but he was denied the delicious friction as Harry moved back, allowing his hands to roam over even more of the blonde's pale and perfect flesh.

Draco shivered and moaned quietly as Harry paid particular attention to his nipples, first letting his tongue bathe a path across from one nipple to the other, before ever so gently teasing with the tip of his tongue over his hot breath. Draco shivered again with anticipation.

Lying there totally naked, but for his school tie, Draco saw Harry was still wearing too much, and began to work on the remainder of Harry's clothing. Before he knew it, Harry has his own trousers around his ankles; the blonde deftly dealing with the fabrics. His own tie was still looped around his neck. Draco lay back, letting Harry's talented tongue bathe across all corners of his chest, as his own lips made inviting gasps and groans. His hands grasped at whatever they could find - bedsheets, pillows, thin air - before finally holding the ends of Harry's tie.

Harry was hard and leaking in anticipation at the sight of Draco laid out before him, totally and utterly aching for him alone. Both naked, the time for teasing was well over. Harry grabbed roughly at Draco's hot and leaking cock, pulling hard. Draco gasped as he tried to reciprocate, but instead, Harry moved. His hand grasped the taunt and fiery flesh, pumping slowly in time with his own tongue - a tongue which delved hotly into the blonde's mouth. The combination formed a tandem movement that had Draco writhing in ecstasy.

Draco shivered and bucked as the cold air from the room hit both naked men, Harry taking advantage and pressing skin to skin to maintain some warmth, although he did take great pleasure in taunting Draco's cold and hard nipples. Achingly hard and overloaded with

sensations as Harry plundered his mouth and fisted his cock, he barely realised he had rolled over and was now kneeling, body humping back into Harry's.

Harry's idle hands had spent a week with little to do - until now. He had spent countless hours after homework, avoiding Ron and Hermione, just getting off on the anticipation of this encounter. Draco was putty in his hands, and he knew that he would soon be even more pliant to his touch. Harry's tongue worked its way down the blonde's perfectly unmarked pale back. The tongue bathed and suckled at each spinal knob, before biting down hard. That would leave a ring of marks - a tattoo - down his back. Harry's hands were magnetised to the pale flesh, as they began to venture in the vicinity of one Slytherin backside.

Draco began grinding back into the bed at the touch, his skin was on fire and he felt his own aching need. If he could just... but Harry's hand scrabbled down and stopped the blonde from humping himself off into the bed at the touch, as he raised him again onto his hands and knees. His left hand came around and pulled at Draco's balls to take the edge off his need. He wasn't going to let him get off so quickly. Frustrated, the blonde humped back needily in anticipation of Harry's next move.

Harry's tongue and teeth continued their ritualistic path down the blonde's back, and moved closer to Draco's ass, his tongue just touching the edge of the puckered flesh before laving and bathing it; surrounding it with tongue and teeth. Draco's moan was enough to tell Harry he was definitely ready for more, but he wasn't finished yet. The talented tongue tentatively pushed at the tight ring of muscle; investigating. He could feel the shudder pass through Draco's body, and his own cock was itching to move beyond and feel that tight and hot heat. Merlin knows, he'd been wanting it since the moment Draco suggested it.

Harry didn't stop there. Draco was still humping back, spreading his legs as far as he could and holding back his own cheeks. Harry smirked at the inviting sight. For someone who had been so reluctant to be on bottom, he was certainly eager now. Harry's tongue continued, lapping a path down to the surprisingly smooth yet tight balls; taking in one, then the other as he suckled and played at them, but not releasing them just yet. He didn't want this to end too soon.

Harry stopped momentarily, whispering a summons for the jar of salve that he had slaved so hard to make. There were definite uses for wandless magic, and Harry was grateful for the ability to unscrew the lid with just a thought. He eventually scooped a generous dollop and with his right hand headed back toward Draco's firm and tight entrance, prepared the blonde for the ride of his life. Whilst seeking entrance with his fingers, Harry slid down between the blonde's legs, and turned around, taking the tip of Draco's flesh in his mouth. He sucked, ever so gently as he let his own finger slowly slip behind the tight ring of muscle. Draco gasped, and moaned in delight as Harry toyed with his finger just in his entrance.

Draco could not feel any pain from this assault on his senses. On the contrary, it was exquisite, and the pain reduction ingredients of the lubricating salve not only took away the uncomfortable edge, it blew his mind away. Draco sensed the magic that flowed as Harry's finger ventured further in. He distracted Draco by running his tongue along the tip of Draco's cock, the amount

swallowed mirroring the distance his finger traversed. The blonde was drowning in sensations; on one hand, he was wanting to give in to Harry's mouth, on the other, his fingers - and he had barely managed to realise that there were indeed two fingers now working their magic.

The dual feelings of Harry wrapped around his cock, and Harry's hands toying with him in other ways were too good to be true. Draco wondered why he'd waited so long for this. He could feel the fingers moving around, thrusting, pushing, pulsating. He felt when Harry started to wiggle them around - stretching him - preparing him for the even more wonderful invasion. Harry's phallus wasn't quite as beautiful as Draco's, but it's massive girth had been enough of a challenge for Draco's mouth, hence his reluctance to place it *there*.

The urge to just fuck Harry's face was insistent; if the Gryffindor didn't have one hand wrapped around his balls, he would have come long before. Suddenly, Harry's fingers brushed against that spot... yeah... right there... Now Draco totally understood. It was clear. He humped back, wanting those talented fingers to brush against it again. Harry, knowing full well what the blonde wanted, obliged. Soon the blonde built up a slow rhythm, hump back and have Harry's fingers brush against his prostate; push forward and be swallowed deeper by the Gryffindor's hot and talented mouth.

Draco knew he wasn't going to last much longer, his orgasm striking as Harry simultaneously let go of his balls with one hand, and added a third and very well lubricated finger inside his now stretching and rather numb arse. He came in waves, harder than he had ever before, with Harry swallowing every drop and sucking him dry. Harry's fingers never left their warm encasement, but he took the opportunity to move out from under the blonde, and grab him around the waist. Yes, he was very pliant, and Harry knew it was far from over.

Harry muttered incoherent words as he kissed his way back up the blonde's chest, the Parseltongue sending shivers of anticipation through Draco. Harry had realised the spoken snake language had that effect on his lover, and took plenty of opportunity to maintain the rapture. Draco felt the combined shiver as all his senses were heightened, as if his own orgasm wasn't over yet. He could feel the fire in his groin stirring again, and a deep seated warmth now spread through to his battered hole.

Harry had used up a good portion of the lubricating salve, but slowly released his fingers, much to Draco's whimpering dismay, as he used the last of it to slick up his own throbbing member. He had to be careful. Just the sight of the debauched blonde before him was enough to get him off, but he wasn't going to give the blonde the pleasure of seeing Harry peak too soon.

They were both sated when Harry brought the languishing blonde's body back and he felt the comforting warmth of Harry's cock as he paused right at Draco's entrance. Just before entry, he heard Draco ask between his panting. "Charms?" he whispered hoarsely. Harry had suddenly realised that he had not placed any silencing charms on the room. He didn't fancy anyone discovering them, especially not the school ghosts. He wandlessly waved his hand, and the charm took effect. He noticed the strange blue glow his hand took, but thought little of it. He was still learning and developing his wandless magic skills - who was to say that it wasn't perfectly

normal.

Draco nodded at Harry's silent charm setting. He could feel the effects of the protective charms that Harry had just woven. A small part of his mind was glad he remembered to make Harry set them at the last minute. He admitted to being ever so jealous of Harry's burgeoning wandless abilities, but it was his other burgeoning assets he was more interested in at this present moment. Draco's legs were now around Harry's shoulders, his hips helped up with a pillow. Harry paused. Draco could see the dancing green fire in those eyes, as he slowly begged for entrance.

It felt like a lifetime had passed before Harry slowly pushed beyond the muscle, but this new assault was slow, and even, and torturous, for both of them. Harry wanted to rip into him and fuck him so hard he wouldn't be able to ride a broom for months; yet he wanted it to never end. Harry slowly encroached little by little, ever so slightly moving forward until he was fully seated - all the while muttering under his breath in Parseltongue. He allowed Draco's legs to fall back to the bed. Momentarily pausing, Draco watched as Harry panted, regaining his breath. He had forgotten his own breathing in their encounter, and realised he too was taking in great deep gulps of air.

Harry started a rocking motion, slowly pumping harder and faster. Draco's own cock rose again as he felt his prostate being plundered relentlessly. The momentum was slowly building, and both men knew that Harry couldn't last much longer.

Harry's hand grabbed at Draco's cock, his hand fisting roughly at the overstimulated organ as his extreme desires were reaching flashpoint. Draco had long surrendered to the hands, the fingers and now to Harry's cock. He could see the light dancing in Harry's unfocussed eyes as he alternated between babbling incoherent Parseltongue, and shouting Draco's name to the corners of the room.

Harry didn't know who cried out first, but he bit down hard into the blonde's neck as he released his seed deep within the blonde. He felt a surge of magic travelling along his skin as he felt pure energy pulsing through his system, and pumping it out into the blonde along with his seed. It was overwhelming.

As an aftertaste, Draco came again violently - repeatedly. A golden glow of light came from Harry's hand as he unconsciously cast a cleaning charm, the visible sign of his wandless magic something he had never seen before. Draco looked on in amazement, but could barely register what was happening.

They looked into each other's eyes for interminable moments, neither speaking, but talking volumes of love with their eyes. Reluctantly, Harry knew he would have to disengage, and with a soft 'pop', his softening cock pulled out, and the warm wetness tricked out. It was never an awkward moment, but it was the first time Harry had experienced this side of their shared pleasure, and he was amazed at the depths and levels of awareness he achieved.

Draco said nothing, but the small tear trickling down his cheek worried Harry. "What? Did I do

something wrong? I'm sorry..." Harry began, but Draco turned and looked at him.

"Nothing... you did nothing wrong. It was... perfect. It was as I had always imagined - losing my virginity in such a way." Draco whispered the last quietly, Harry's eyes widening to saucers at the revelation.

"You... I... we... Draco! You never told me! I just took your virginity?" Harry sat up on his elbow, looking down at the blonde, but Draco was smiling, grinning inanely in fact.

"No, you didn't take it, I gave it to you." The blonde writhed in post orgasmic ecstasy, nudging up against Harry's body for some warmth in the ever cooling room. Draco regretted that it didn't have a fire place, but between Harry and the duck down quilt, he could remain comfortably warm - at least whilst it was still relatively close to summer.

"Oh Gods! This can't be happening! Tell me you are joking Draco. I thought... well, I thought you were... experienced." Despite their intense love making, Harry could still blush like a virgin.

"Harry, relax. I'm still trying to think of words to describe what... what we just did together, but don't doubt yourself. You are so beautiful, so sexy, and... I think I love you." Draco whispered the last words.

Harry wasn't sure he heard correctly, but wasn't going to ask Draco to repeat them again. Luckily, the blonde continued.

"Harry, love, I was experienced before we started shagging. But I never planned on just giving my virginity to the first guy I shagged," Harry looked sheepishly under his lashes. "I wanted to give it to someone I love. And that's you if you haven't already guessed. Wool headed Gryffindor."

Harry lay back, Draco's head nestled on his chest, his heart still not at it regular rhythm. For once he must have had done something right. His luck had been fantastic; all day. First, he brewed the lubricant under Snape's nose; he nearly lost the Professor's potion, but managed to deliver it in a different vial; then Draco offering up his virginity, and Harry performing so spectacularly, he now had the blonde snuggled against his chest, dozing quietly.

He didn't complain. A run of good luck like that wouldn't last, he knew, but he wanted to let the feeling last as long as possible. He looked down upon the sleeping blonde, the pale lashes framing eyes that were so beautiful when they weren't screwed up in hatred. Running his hand along his jaw, Harry murmured words he once thought impossible. "You complete me Draco Malfoy. I love you, and you complete me."

Not wanting to wake him, Harry had muttered the words in Parseltongue. He knew how much the sibilant language turned the blonde on. Harry was only too happy to oblige him. He would confess to no one that he felt sexy when he spoke the language. As he drowsed, he never noticed the thin lines of glowing magic that enveloped his hand, and trailed their way toward the blonde,

tracing his body with the same golden glow. Every part of Draco's body that had been touched that night by Harry's right hand was now glowing. The light pulsed and throbbed with Draco's heartbeat.

The blonde stirred momentarily, and the glow diffused, breaking up into two different pulsing rhythms. Two heartbeats. The magical residue slowly faded and like a candle, winked out of existence, but not before the second heartbeat retreated further into Draco's being.

Yes, Harry was indeed having a wonderfully good run of luck.

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Chapter: 4

(Crying Over) Spilt Potions

by Azhure

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Chapter 3 - A Time for Discoveries

The second to last day of October dawned with the sun struggling to rise above the clouds. The chill wind picked up as it wafted down from the highlands and across the lake. It was perfect weather for the first Quidditch match of the season. Gryffindor versus Slytherin. Seeker versus Seeker. Harry versus Draco. Lover versus lover. This would be their first match against each other since they began their clandestine relationship a little over six months earlier. This was also their last match against each other whilst at school. The air of anticipation surrounding this match had been building throughout the school since Madame Hooch announced the Quidditch schedule back in September.

As most of the school, and the Quidditch team members, had made their way to the Great Hall for lunch, two very important players were missing. Nobody had seen either of the Quidditch captains since the previous evening; neither showing up for breakfast either. Speculation ranged from ideas as simple as sleeping in, right through to the possibility that one had likely killed the other. Some brave souls suggested other ludicrous ideas. If only they had known just how close to the truth they were.

This game had been built up as the ultimate Quidditch battle. The animosity that was evident

between Potter and Malfoy had reached fever pitch and the student body realised this was their last opportunity to see the rivals battle it out on the Quidditch pitch. In a move aimed to psychologically sway the balance of the game, a number of Slytherins suggested that Draco had perhaps hexed Potter, and the Gryffindors would have to forfeit the game. Likewise, the Gryffindors made their own suggestions in regard to Draco's no show at the breakfast table. Unfortunately for the Slytherins, the Gryffindors had some evidence to back their claims.

A couple of days earlier, the Slytherin seeker had been caught in a rather embarrassing situation in the lavatory, 'puking his guts out' as the second year so eloquently put it. Draco's delicate stomach had been the cause of no little concern to the Slytherin team, but the Captain assured his fellow players that he would be fine for the game.

Naturally, the Gryffindors assumed that Malfoy was actually terrified of losing the snitch - again. After all, this was his last opportunity to beat Gryffindor, and more importantly, Potter.

Had anyone actually bothered to get up and look for either of the Quidditch captains, then they would have been totally stunned when they discovered that they were indeed together, but not in any way that the general population of the school had expected.

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Harry had been waiting in their secret room in the dungeons for what felt like ages. Skipping out early on match day had not been difficult; everyone in Gryffindor knew their seeker needed time to focus on the match, particularly since this was likely to be the most important match for the year. A frown marred his freshly shaven face. Draco was supposed to be there before him, but he was nowhere to be found, and Harry knew his lover didn't have the invisibility cloak. Finally he turned, wand in hand, as he heard the mirror opening and he saw his dishevelled lover enter the room, his face weary and pained.

Grabbing Draco as he stumbled across the entrance, Harry held him and brought his mouth to his own, kissing him longingly. Draco kissed back languidly, but pulled back just as Harry was starting to deepen the kiss. He didn't pull away from the embrace, just nuzzled his head against Harry's.

"I hate this." Draco sighed.

"What? Meeting me?" Harry sounded hurt.

"No, not that!" Draco sighed. "Just running around in secret, you know... the usual." He sighed again as he held Harry closer. "Today is going to be horrible Harry."

"What?" Harry had a grin on his face a mile wide. "Worried because we're going to cream your green and silver arses?"

Draco slapped him playfully. "You know what I mean. I don't know if I want to go out there and

pretend to hate you any more."

Harry just held him tighter, and brought their lips together as he groaned. "I hate it too! Still, you might just get bored with me if you could be around me too long." He tried to lighten the situation. Draco was being far too serious, and Harry didn't want their stolen moments to be so dire. "It's only a game Draco."

Draco pulled back and looked into the green eyes. "It might only be a game to you, but I've got to put up with the shit back in the common room *if* we lose."

"What's this *if* business? You *will* lose." Quidditch was the one area where the pair agreed to disagree. Draco frowned and seemed a million miles away. Breaking from their embrace, he went to sit over on the chaise-longe, not looking well. Harry looked at him in concern.

"Hey? You okay? You're looking a little green. And I don't mean your uniform.

The blonde ran a hand through his hair, realising his slightly dishevelled appearance. He sighed as he threw himself back into the pillows. "I'm just tired, that's all. It's... everything. You know. I guess I'm a little stressed. Study, the pressure of the day, running around after you and hiding behind everyone's back. It can be tiring you know."

"And throwing up all over the place is a normal thing for you?" Harry raised an eyebrow, letting the blonde know that he knew about Draco being sick a few nights before. Many Gryffindors were still milking that story for all it was worth. Harry had been concerned when he first heard, but couldn't just go rushing down and seeing if he was alright.

"It's nothing Harry. I think I just had a bad lunch. Don't worry about it." But his face belied the truth.

"Talk to me Draco. Don't hide. What's wrong?" Harry sat down next to him as he stared into the concerned face of his lover. He held Draco's hand. Whatever was worrying Draco was starting to worry Harry. Almost instantly, it seemed that Draco snapped out of his funk, and realised where he was, and who he was talking to.

"It's okay Harry. I'm just feeling off. Probably one of the younger Slytherins is trying to poison me." His attempt at humour fell flat.

"Why would they do that? Do... do you think they know about us?" Harry looked mortified.

Draco laughed at his lover, his face finally returning to normal. "Hey, just kidding. Stop worrying. There's no way anyone knows about us. At least, I don't know of anyone. You haven't told weasel and the girlfriend yet, have you?"

Harry frowned. "you know I don't like you calling them that..." Draco smiled as he got the reaction he was looking for. He brought his lips to Harry's for another kiss. Someone was bound

to miss them sooner rather than later, and Draco didn't want to waste any more of their stolen time together. Harry obligingly accepted the kiss.

Hands were soon everywhere, and Harry was desperate for some relief from his mounting tension. It had been a couple of weeks since they had last been together like this, and he was beginning to think that Draco had been avoiding him. No such chance today, he thought, Draco seemed as eager to get some relief as well. They clung desperately to each other, both realising they would soon have to part and face the world as enemies again.

Draco seemed languid, placid even, in Harry's arms. Normally he would be struggling for dominance in their tussles, but recently he had been letting Harry take charge, which Harry didn't mind a bit. Even though they had not been able to do more than just steal a few kisses, the few times they had managed to do more, it had been Harry in charge. Perhaps Draco had enjoyed their first encounter in this room a little too much. Harry would have to make him work harder next time.

"Ow!" Draco yelped as he sat up quickly as Harry had managed to clamp his teeth around one of his nipples. His Slytherin Quidditch jersey had been long flung across the room, as had Harry's similar jersey.

"Sorry," Harry murmured. "Guess I'm just happy to see you. I just miss this." rather than biting again, he laved his tongue around the nipple, hoping to apologise for his roughness. Draco pushed him away.

"No, ow! That really hurt Harry."

"I said I'm Sorry." Harry didn't know why Draco was so snappy and cranky lately, but he knew he had ruined the moment. He tried to apologise, but Draco moved off the chaise-longe and proceeded to get dressed.

Draco sighed. "No look Harry. I'm the one who's sorry. I just don't feel... just don't feel sexy at all. I just haven't been myself lately. Merlin knows I'm as desperate as you are, but I'm just so tired and feeling off right now." He sat back down with his robe in his hands, feeling very upset at himself for disappointing his lover. Harry ran his hand down Draco's back in a sympathetic gesture.

"It's okay you know Draco. I just naturally thought you'd be as bloody horny as I am right now. Perhaps you are overworked. Too much sex can do that to you, you know." Harry's cheeky grin belied his worry for the blonde. He could see the tension in his eyes, and he sent a finger of Legilimency towards the blonde to see if he was hiding something.

"Hey!" Draco blocked Harry's attack by slamming down his own defences with Occlumency. "That wasn't fair."

"But when are you going to be warned by someone who wants to practice Legilimency on you,

Draco." Harry was serious now. Harry had taught the blonde Occlumency, knowing that it could come in handy one day. He especially didn't want anyone finding out that he and Draco were lovers, at least, particularly not Draco's father, or his father's *friends*. Harry kissed him on the forehead as an apology. Harry had noticed Draco had been distracted, and wanted to make up for it.

"That's the thing - I am. But my body isn't agreeing totally. I mean my nipples have been so sore, I've had to stop wearing my silk shirts. The cotton shirts look dreadful, but it's the only way I can cope!" his voice tinged on desperate.

Harry smiled. He knew that Draco was probably over reacting.

"Why don't we get ready for the game?" Harry got up and picked up his own jersey, putting it on slowly.

"Tonight then?" Draco knew it was unfair of him to be so snappy at Harry. So in way of apology, he suggested they should try to meet up that evening. He too had missed their time together - their *real* time together, and wanted to be with the Gryffindor. Unfortunately, he had ruined their mood. Still, it was going to be hard concentrating on the game with the thought of where Harry's hands would be afterwards.

"I'll probably find it hard to get away from the Common Room. After all, our victory parties tend to go on for hours."

"Who says you're going to win?" The smirk was back on Draco's face.

"Well you've left your winning streak a bit late, Malfoy." Harry returned the smirk as he folded his arms and faced the blonde.

"Dare?" Draco came nose to nose with his rival and lover. He looked down into the amused green eyes. *He's enjoying this!*

Harry rolled his eyes. "Winner gets to choose whatever he wants?" Draco nodded in agreement as they shook. Draco pulled Harry into a final embrace, and they kissed hard.

"May the best man catch the snitch then!"

"Don't worry, I will." Draco had to get the last word in - always.

They headed off in different directions, preparing for their final showdown on the Quidditch pitch. Now if only Draco could stop those butterflies in his stomach, he'd be fine.

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The game that had been hyped beyond belief had been a huge let down to the majority of the

school. It was over within a half hour; Harry catching the snitch easily whilst Draco was distracted on the opposite side of the pitch. It was only a fluke that had Harry catch it as it teasingly fluttered by. As usual, Harry had been marking Draco, and the Slytherin did the same. That was their usual game plan.

The sight of his lover this day had been distracting, not because he was just so gorgeous (and those green robes made him look sexier), but because he looked even paler than usual. In the couple of hours since they had parted, it seemed that Draco had become even more ill.

The Slytherin team had been delayed in coming onto the pitch, and Harry almost thought that they would forfeit. Ron was so excited at that prospect. "Perhaps he has chickened out eh Harry?" he murmured as they waited for their opposition to approach. Moments before Hooch was ready to forfeit the game and award the automatic 150 points to Gryffindor, Draco headed his team onto the pitch. Harry watched silently as they shook hands, but the Slytherin would not meet his eye directly. *Probably a good thing*, Harry thought, *I could get too distracted looking into those eyes right now, and I've got a game to win.*

Draco seemed sluggish from the moment he took to the air. It was as if he were a beginner, having difficulty staying mounted on his broom. He swayed too and fro as he flew around the goal posts erratically. Draco's game plan seemed to consist of surveying and seeking the snitch at close to ground level. Eventually, he seemed to find his wings, but he had been too far away to catch up with Harry. With one eye on the blonde, and the other searching the heavens for the elusive gold ball, it had been pure chance that the snitch taunted him at arm's reach. Draco never stood a chance at catching it, not even if he had been in top form.

Harry's catch was so quick, the other team members nearly missed it, the beaters in particular not seeing it at all. Harry held up the snitch for everyone to see. Unfortunately, the Gryffindor beater, Jack Sloper, had no idea Harry was about to catch the snitch, and had diverted a bludger headed Harry's way. He punched the bludger out of the way just as Harry caught the snitch, and was distracted as the crowd roared. He mis-hit the bludger and it headed directly toward Draco. Looking the other way, the Slytherin never stood a chance. With all eyes on Harry, it was lucky that Harry had kept his eye on his lover.

"Watch out!" Harry screamed, but looked on in horror as the bludger connected smack-bang in the middle of Draco's back. Knocked off his broom, the blonde fell the few feet to the ground in a pile of green and silver, writhing in pain. Picking up speed before Draco had even hit the ground, Harry was first to the Slytherin's side. He had Draco in his grip before anyone else could get near. Harry suddenly became conscious of the large crowd, and the effect of his actions. He didn't particularly care, Draco was more important than them. *Stuff the lot of 'em*, he thought as he knelt beside the fallen Slytherin. "Draco! Draco! Answer me. You okay?" Harry saw the look of pain and fear that crossed Draco's face, before he groaned and passed out.

Harry had to get him to Madame Pomfrey. Without thinking, Harry had pulled his wand from his sleeve, and was about to cast a stasis charm and motor him to the infirmary.

"Mr Potter! That's enough. This is not the time to strike him, not when he's down." Madame Hooch looked at him indignantly.

"Mobilicorpus." Harry cast the stasis charm on his lover before Hooch had a chance to think otherwise. Her yellow eyes glared at him, suspecting him of wanting to do more. Oh Harry wanted to do a hell of a lot more, but it was his own fault she thought ill of him. He deferred control of Draco's inert form to Madame Hooch, and he watched, along with the rest of the crowd as she took the Slytherin to the infirmary. The rest of the Slytherin team had landed and were slowly following her.

"What did you do Harry?" He heard the puzzlement in Ron's voice. He wasn't sure of Harry's motives. "Don't tell me you tried to help him Harry." Ron added incredulously.

Harry was ready to snap, but didn't want to argue with his friend. "He fell, I got there first. End of story Ron."

"But it's Malfoy. He deserves everything he can get." The red head pleaded.

"... and he fell off his broom. You heard the stories. He must be sick or something." He tried to mask the concern in his voice. "Nobody deserves to be injured that way Ron. No, not even Malfoy. I got to him first, and he's gone to the Infirmary. End of story. You didn't expect me to hex him whilst he's down, did you?" The look on Ron's face told him that he did indeed expect that.

"Ron, that's not the Gryffindor thing to do."

"I s'pose so. Still, had you fallen, Malfoy'd be still up there laughing, or hexing your arse into the next century."

"No he wouldn't Ron. You wouldn't let him get within striking distance." Harry wondered how his friend would react when he finally found out about him and Draco. He hoped that Draco was going to be okay. They headed to the showers before making their way back to the common room for the obligatory Gryffindor victory celebration.

Harry knew it would look suspicious if he tried to visit Draco, but he needed to know that he was alright. It was most unusual that he be so poor and off his game. If the blonde hadn't admitted he wasn't well that morning, Harry would have thought otherwise. It was a preoccupied and concerned Harry that returned to the common room, his mind on more important things than celebrating.

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It was hours before Harry could even get five minutes alone. The rest of the Gryffindor house had wanted to celebrate not only the win, but the fact that he had once again beaten Slytherin, his unbeaten record against the house remaining so. It was a hollow victory, Harry had only wanted

to win so he could take on the dare against his lover, who now lay in the infirmary, his condition unknown to him. He tried to get away several times, but Ron had other plans. It wasn't right for the team captain, and champion seeker to want to skive out of the party. Already Ron was planning tactics for their game against Ravenclaw, even though that game was another six weeks away.

Harry sat, nursing his butterbeer, totally oblivious to Ron's words. Hermione had noticed her friend's preoccupation, and nudged him as she flopped back into the couch next to him. "Sickle for your thoughts Harry."

He looked up, noticing who it was for the first time. "What?" he had indeed been miles away.

"You really are out of it tonight Harry. Anything you want to talk about?"

Harry shook his head. Hermione pursed her lips, knowing full well that he had enough on his mind and that he should talk rather than bottle it up. Harry was notorious for keeping things to himself, and Hermione made it her mission to make sure he had ample opportunity to talk things through with someone. She guessed the subtle approach would not work. It didn't take a genius to note that something troubled her friend, and she had her suspicions.

"Harry? If you ever want to talk..." she put her hand on his arm. It was as if he had noticed her for the first time. He smiled. *He's definitely worried about something,* she thought.

He knew that if she got a bee in her bonnet about something, she wouldn't let it go. He needed to put her off. "It's okay Hermione. I'm just tired. Guess I was overly worried about the game, and just glad it's over. I'm tired. Think I might head off." He got up and made his way up to the Seventh year boy's dorms.

"Harry? Where you off to?" He thought he had made his getaway, but lucked out when Ron caught him at the foot of the stairs. "You can't go up yet! This party's for you too!" Harry could smell the butterbeer on his best friend's breath, and tried to smile.

"No Ron, I have a bit of a headache, think I'll just lie down."

Ron looked at his friend in surprised concern, before whispering. "It's not your scar, is it?"

Harry lied, and indicated that it was. If it was the only way to get Ron off his back, then good. He wasn't feeling too convivial towards his house mates, not when Draco could be seriously injured, or worse. Ron left him alone, thankfully. As luck would have it, he wasn't alone when he returned to his rooms; Dean and Seamus were already there.

He slumped down on the bed, his plans to pull out the invisibility cloak now put to rest. He avoided his mates and feigned sleep. Harry really was more tired than he first suspected, and was soon drifting off. His dreams were restless and stressful.

He relentlessly chased the snitch, constantly ducking and weaving, but always with his eye on the ball. As he reached out the grasp it, the sight of Draco's crumpled body at the bottom of the goal posts shocked him, and he tried to reach, only to start chasing the snitch again. The image was more disturbing that he thought possible.

The chase slowly changed. After eventually grasping the fluttering golden ball in his outstretched fingers, he looked down, not to find the crumpled body, but the laughing image of Lucius Malfoy riding Draco's broom, and weaving effortlessly between the hoops. Harry turned to find Draco, but found himself in a dimly lit room, somewhere deep within some ancient castle. The laughter turned maniacal. Lucius was still there, but there was no sign of Draco. A sharp pain seared across his forehead; ripping his mind in two. There was no doubt as to the source of the laughter.

Voldemort. Through the throbbing pain in his skull, Harry could sense the overwhelming sense of glee that his nemesis was feeling. Lucius had obviously delivered some good news. Good enough to break through Harry's defences.

Harry woke with a start, only to discover the pain had not been left behind in the dream. It had been a true vision. The pain was worse now that he was awake, if that were at all possible.

"Harry?" it was Ron's groggy voice that he heard next. "You okay?... you had a nightmare. You were screaming. Was it... you know..." he pointed at his forehead. It was all Harry could do to nod, the pain taking ages to go away. *Why have I suddenly had a nightmare about Voldemort? Can he break through my Occlumency?* He realised that with his concern for Draco the night before, he had forgotten to complete his mind clearing exercises. Despite his talent with Occlumency, he still needed to do the forms, and clear his mind before sleep. He dismissed his friend as he slowly rose to go to the lavatory.

It felt like the lavatory had moved to the other side of the castle. It took an age for him to get there. A restless sleep in his clothes was not the most comfortable of nights. He needed a shower to help clear the cobwebs. A plan suddenly formed, and he smiled. Despite his befuddled mind, he had managed to realise that if he went to see Pomfrey about his headache, he could see how Draco was doing.

As he showered, the cobwebs did indeed lift, but the pain remained, and would do so until he went to visit Madame Pomfrey. As the warm water tricked over his body, he regretted being separated from his lover. They were so close, yet their different houses mean they were still so far from each other. The nightmare had been strange. *Why would Voldemort be talking to Lucius Malfoy? Lucius is in Azkaban. Why am I worried? He's rotting away under lock and key. He couldn't even touch Draco from there.* Harry shrugged as he realised it was most likely a false vision, just like when he tricked Harry into going to the Department of Mysteries eighteen months earlier.

Feeling better for the realisation that it had only been a dream, Harry managed to pull his thoughts back towards his injured lover. As to why his scar hurt? Well, perhaps Voldemort had found a way to break through Harry's barriers. He would talk to Dumbledore about it later. It was

serious enough that he should tell the headmaster, even if it was just a really crazy dream. But first, Draco.

Not having to work too hard to feign his headache, Harry made his way towards the infirmary. He was eager, and just a little apprehensive about Draco. But Harry never made it to his destination. The dozens of owls sweeping through the halls diverted his course towards the Great hall. He heard the sound as they all swept in and dropped their heavy burdens. Hedwig spied her master, and screeched as she dropped a copy of the Daily Prophet in his arms. She never bothered to stop for a treat, just continued on to the Owlery.

The shrieking started next, but he didn't need clarification over what caused the hysteria, when he read the headline:

MASS BREAKOUT FROM AZKABAN
Aurors overwhelmed as Dark Lord Strikes

Hermione spotted Harry, and quickly called him over. His headache was truly gone, but only to a deeper level, where he knew it would not go away. He could sense that something even more worrying was about to come. Hermione barely lifted her head as she read the article aloud to those around the Gryffindor table. "It says here that all the Death Eaters have escaped, and that nearly all the Aurors stationed there have been killed. Oh no! Tonks!"

Harry was still stunned as he read the article, and saw the picture of the blackened and burning fortress that was once the wizard prison. Harry looked around as fear and terror crossed the faces of his fellow students. Some had fainted and a few had gone into hysterics. Strangely enough, some of those most hysterical were at the Slytherin table. No doubt some parents had been freed, and there would be some interesting ramifications from those related. At the thought of parents, Harry realised his vision from the night before could most likely be real. Lucius was now free. Harry waited desperately for the chance to see Draco, but as he was about to make his getaway, he saw Professor Dumbledore.

The Headmaster rose from the table, his voice clear and crisp. His wand emitting sparks that grabbed everyone's attention and startled them to silence. "Students! Please, calm everyone! The events at Azkaban are indeed a long way from Hogwarts, and I will ask that you all stay inside the castle today. Classes will be starting as scheduled, and it is important that you all remain indoors. Care of Magical Creatures and Herbology will be held in the emergency classrooms on the ground floor. All Quidditch practices will also be cancelled until further notice." Some looked disappointed that life at Hogwarts would be proceeding as close to normal as possible.

The Professor continued. "Hogwarts is the safest place in the country for all of you, and I ask that you remain calm. The Death Eaters cannot harm you within the school grounds, on that you all have my personal assurance. So everyone, please finish your breakfast, then make your way to your first class."

The silence soon turned to murmurs, but the loud hysteria from earlier had faded to some quiet

sobbing and sniffling. Harry watched as the Potions master left the hall quietly, with the headmaster soon to follow. He sighed as he realised he should probably visit Dumbledore before he visited Draco. The Headmaster had caught Harry's eye just as he turned away from the hall, and he definitely knew he had no other choice. Ron and Hermione had also seen Dumbledore's meaningful gaze, and knew Harry had to see him. Alone.

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He was not surprised to find the stairway behind the stone gargoyle open when he reached the Headmaster's office. However, he wasn't expecting the crisp tones of his Potions master's voice as it was raised in anger. Hearing that tone of voice levelled at himself or his fellow Gryffindors was not uncommon, but hearing it levelled at Dumbledore was a different story. Harry hesitated before knocking, Snape's voice ringing loudly and clearly through the heavy oak door.

"... I can't believe you just calmly tell them they are safe here! Not after what happened this morning!"

"Severus, I merely stated the truth. The Death Eaters cannot harm them whilst at the school."

"But they can certainly kidnap a student..." Harry stepped back on his heels. *Someone's been kidnapped! From within the school? How could that happen?*

"Severus, we don't know yet that the boy has been kidnapped. Perhaps he's just decided to take a stroll, or heaven forfend, he's left of his own accord. However, it is highly likely that Lucius has always had some way of keeping his son close to his chest..."

Harry's heart skipped a beat. He hoped against hope they weren't talking about Draco, but he knew it was futile. How many other Lucius' would there be freshly escaped from Azkaban? *Oh Merlin! Draco!* Harry was ready to pound down the door, but waited to hear the rest of the conversation.

"It's not Draco I'm worried about Albus. It's his condition. I can't believe he let himself get into this mess!"

"Mr Malfoy's condition is none of your business Severus. Yes, it will be an inconvenience..." at this point Harry's heart missed another step. *What's wrong with Draco? Please tell me he is going to be okay!* "... he's an adult, and despite this little setback, he's old enough to make these decisions for himself..."

"But he was irresponsible. Just wait until I get my hands on..."

Dumbledore interrupted Snape's rant. "Draco is a resourceful boy Severus... But I think Mr Potter has heard enough, don't you? You can come in now Harry."

A blushing Harry, ashamed at being caught eavesdropping, slowly entered the room. "Sir..." He

looked tentatively at his Potions master, not sure if he wanted to talk with him in the room. "I... um... well... Is Dra... Malfoy going to be okay? I was worried about his fall yesterday..." Harry was gushing now. Dumbledore waved Harry to quiet with his hand.

"I'm sorry you had to learn about the breakout at Azkaban like that Harry. I was planning on telling the whole school about it at breakfast, but the owls beat me to it. Here, sit down." The headmaster drew up a chair for Harry to sit it. He reluctantly took it, despite the level glare from his pacing Potions teacher.

"But Draco, Sir?" Harry couldn't care less at the moment if Death Eaters came to the door. He wanted to know if his lover was okay, but felt awkward asking these two.

"It's a bit late to be concerned for him now, isn't it Potter?" Snape snarled. "Besides, you seem awfully concerned for someone who publicly loathes, despises and manages to humiliate my best student at every given opportunity." Snape stalked closer and looked down at Harry. "Since when do you care about Mr Malfoy's well being?" He glared right into Harry's eyes, not flinching. *Oh Merlin, he knows!*

The terror was etched on Harry's face. "Well, Sir..." Harry's mouth dried up, he couldn't speak. Thankfully, Dumbledore rescued him.

"It's okay Harry. We know about your... ahem... relationship with Mr Malfoy." Harry bowed his head. It couldn't get any worse. Draco was goodness knows where, without him, kidnapped by his own father most likely, and Harry was sitting here with Snape and The headmaster telling him they knew of the private affairs.

"Oh God." Harry bowed his head. "What happened Sir, how did Lucius get in here?" He held his head up high, not letting Snape's detestable leering put him off.

"We suspect that his father had some way of bringing Draco out of Hogwarts, without our permission, but we have no proof. For all we know, he's still in the castle. Perhaps he's currently looking for you."

"I was on my way to the infirmary..." Harry started, but Snape interrupted him.

"As interesting as your day may be Potter, did Draco ever mention anything about his father? Anything about a special way for him to be taken from the school?" Harry shook his head.

Dumbledore frowned. "Well, it must have been some portkey or talisman that could allow him to leave without triggering the wards. He must have taken Draco from the infirmary some time during the night. I'm surprised he risked it, particularly since he now knows about Draco's special needs. It's the safest way for him to travel, in his condition."

"Sir, I heard you talking, earlier. You mention this condition of Draco's. He told me yesterday he wasn't feeling too well. I think that's why he fell from his broom. What's wrong with him? Did

his father hurt him in some way?" Harry hoped to goodness that Draco would be okay. Hearing them discussing conditions, and special needs made him worry.

Snape snorted with more derision than Harry thought possible. "What's wrong with him? What's wrong with him! Ha! Why am I not surprised, Potter, that you are clueless, to the last?"

Harry looked at Dumbledore as Snape continued to deride Harry. The twinkle had gone from the Headmaster's eye, and a look of profound sadness crossed them. Harry could not remember ever seeing that look before.

"What's wrong with Draco you say!" Snape was still mocking Harry. "I couldn't believe it myself, but when Madame Pomfrey's tests confirmed it and Draco told me himself about you and him, well..."

"What?" Harry was angry now at his teacher. His had itched to grab the wand and hex the living daylights out of this rude and obnoxious professor. "Just tell me why has Draco been sick? Why did he fall off his broom? Why was a portkey the safest way for him to be taken from the school?"

"Why?" Snape paused for effect, wrapping his robe around his arms as he folded them. A sneer adorned his face. "Draco's been sick because he's pregnant you twit. Pregnant with your child Potter."

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Chapter: 5

(Crying Over) Spilt Potions

by Azhure

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Chapter 4 - A Time for Explanations

Harry just stood there in shock. Then he laughed. Laughed harder than he had even thought possible. Was Snape trying to be a comedian? But seeing the potion master's gaze not waver, a nervous tightness crossed his chest before he responded. "I'm sorry Sir; I thought you just said that Draco was pregnant."

"Good to see that there is absolutely nothing wrong with your hearing Potter. I'd offer points to Gryffindor, but perhaps we should work out what it is that stops you from listening in my classes first. Of course that's what I said you ignorant brat!" Snape looked at Harry in barely hidden contempt. Harry was stunned.

Professor Dumbledore slumped ever so slightly, and the merry twinkle in his eye faded. "Harry. I'm sorry, but it's quite true. Professor Snape is correct. Draco is indeed with child. Your child to be precise." Harry couldn't tell if the Headmaster was disappointed or surprised.

A niggling thought in the back of his mind was trying to tell him this was not real. *They're both bonkers. I must still be asleep, and this is just the crazy finale before I wake up.* Then Harry's subconscious was reminding him of a number of pieces that were slowly falling into place, all ending with the reminder that he was a wizard. Anything was possible. "Sir... um... Draco can't be... I mean... he's male... men can't... men don't..." Harry had trouble trying to put together a coherent argument. He didn't want to hear their answer; his subconscious was telling him that already.

"Oh for goodness sakes Potter, I would have thought you might be able to get your head around the fact that you are a wizard and that your magic can achieve great things. Muggle men obviously don't bear children, but wizards most certainly can and do." Harry seemed to bring the professor's vitriol to the fore, and he was only just beginning his rant. "Did you ever, for one minute, realise the implications of having a sexual relationship and not think about the consequences? What were you playing at Potter? Your foolish irresponsibility has caused more havoc than any other student. With anyone else, it's just a disappointment. Can't you see you've put Draco's life in danger now?" The professor stared down at Harry, but the words struck home and Harry bit back.

"Don't you think I know the consequences of having a relationship with anyone! Everyone I've ever cared about seems to be taken from me. That was *exactly* why we never told anyone." Harry worked hard to control his temper at the snarky git of a professor. Draco was missing, likely kidnapped, and Snape had the audacity to call him out for trying to have a somewhat normal life. Perhaps he was just upset it was his favourite Slytherin student. If Harry didn't know any better, he would have said Snape was jealous, or protective, or something. His own anger flared, he snapped back. "Anyway, *Sir,* if it's so common for wizards to be pregnant, then why haven't I ever seen, or heard of... oh, never mind. Forget it." Harry knew exactly what the answer would be.

His gaze landed on Fawkes' radiant plumage as the phoenix ruffled its feathers. Harry's concern grew at the thought of Draco possibly alone, a prisoner perhaps. The idea of him in that situation and pregnant stuck like a hardened lump in his throat. "At least Draco never mentioned that a wizard could get pregnant. I never thought that he could... that we could..."

"That's so typical of you Gryffindors. You charge off half cocked..." Professor Snape realised his inappropriate words, coughing to hide his faux pas. "Er... you race off and do things uninformed.

Honestly Potter, didn't you think once to use the Prophylaxis charm?"

"Huh?" *What was Snape talking about?* "The *what* charm?" Nearly seven years in the wizarding world, and Harry still learned new and amazing things every day. He never expected that a wizard could get pregnant. By the same token, he never even thought about being a father. He thought his sexual preference precluded that choice. *Wow. I'm going to be a father. That is going to take a lot of getting used to.*

Snape rolled his eyes at the Gryffindor. "Why am I *not* surprised? Of course Minerva *would* shy from discussing such things with her charges. But then again, I would have thought that most seventeen year olds knew the ins and outs of all sexual activities. Judging from the fact that you have no idea what I'm talking about, I'm guessing you've never even hinted to Mr Weasley about your relationship?" The rhetorical question remained unanswered. Harry's silence told Snape what he needed to know. "I thought not. But then again, I wouldn't guarantee any contraceptive charm any of the Weasleys might try to perform..."

"Severus!" Dumbledore's tone was firm. "Please try to contain your outbursts in my office. I'll not have you denigrating your fellow staff, or other students in front of anyone." Snape stopped his verbal assault on Harry, but looked only slightly contrite as he glared daggers at the young Gryffindor. Obviously the news of the pregnancy had upset the professor more than he cared to let on.

"But sir, how was I supposed to know I needed any sort of contraceptive? Besides, Draco never used one when he... um..." Harry blushed, not caring to elaborate further.

"As scintillating as your sex life is Potter, I've learnt more about it in the past day than I ever cared for. The thought that you have procreated is only mildly more displeasing than the fact that you and one of my Slytherins were sneaking around behind our backs! Honestly, this is a school, not a bordello!"

Harry stood up and began pacing, not really caring that both Snape and Dumbledore watched him like a hawk. A small nerve began ticking in his temple. Getting no satisfaction from pacing back and forth aimlessly, he sat back down again. Here he was, arguing about contraception with his least favourite professor, when there were more important things to think about. *Merlin! I'm going to be a father!* The fact was very slowly sinking in, and he had to keep repeating the phrase to himself to help absorb the information.

Seeing that the bickering between the Potions master and Harry would lead them nowhere, the headmaster interrupted. "Harry, I know you're worried about Draco, and this news has come as a complete shock, but perhaps there are a few things you should know first." Harry nodded, grateful for Dumbledore's calm demeanour. It was in stark contrast to Snape's attacking manner. As he waited for the sparring guests in his office to calm down, the headmaster conjured a tea tray, and charmed it to begin pouring. Harry barely tasted the strong brew as he clutched the fine china cup tightly.

"Harry, we need to discuss a number of things before deciding what course of action to take." It occurred to Harry that he was being treated, for once, like the adult that he was. Snape was obviously not happy about this. "Judging by what you've just told us, I'm assuming Draco never told you much about his childhood?" Harry shook his head. *What does that have to do with anything?* He thought. *Why is Dumbledore taking things so calmly? Why aren't we trying to go after Draco?* "Yes, well, I suppose at your age, you have other things to explore about your relationship? Hmm?" Harry didn't know who was more embarrassed, himself, or the headmaster. Snape just stood there and frowned. Harry didn't really fancy discussing this with him around.

"Yes, well, Harry, there are things about young Mr Malfoy that you should perhaps consider. When Draco was a baby, he contracted a Muggle disease called Mumps. He caught it from a Muggle child, and unfortunately, it rendered him sterile. Draco is unable to father any children." Harry just sat in stunned silence. He nodded absently, realising just how important that information was. The headmaster continued. "I can only assume this is why Draco never showed you the Prophylaxis charm."

No wonder Lucius Malfoy hates Muggles so much, Harry thought. He suddenly realised the gravity of the situation. When did Draco find out he was pregnant? He didn't seem to know the day before. *Oh Merlin! Draco didn't think he could have any children! Is he happy? I don't even know how he's reacted to the news.* A small pocket of joy opened up in Harry's heart at the thought of being a father, but then all his confused thoughts - joy, surprise and worry just began to swim around in his head, and spiral out of control. If he hadn't already been sitting down, then he sure would have needed to.

Harry needed a lot more time to think this over, and try to absorb everything the Headmaster was telling him. Harry knew exactly what he wanted to do. The overwhelming concern for Draco's whereabouts spurred him to action and overrode all other caution. He pushed the myriad of confusion to the back of his mind temporarily. He sifted through his thoughts and tried to think rationally. "Sir," he needed to act responsibly, and maturely, after all, he was going to be a father. "Are we really sure that Draco was kidnapped? Is it at all possible Draco's just decided to just get away for a while? I know that he likes to go off quietly and contemplate sometimes. I could go and get the map..."

"Goodness knows I'd go running a mile too, if I knew I was having Potter's child." Snape mumbled under his breath. Harry glared and fisted his hand deeper in his pocket. His itchy wand hand wanted terribly to hex the odious professor. Professor Dumbledore just glared at his Potions master, who turned and looked contrite. Snape hadn't expected the others to hear that last comment.

"I'm reluctant to admit it Harry, but I do think that it is highly likely that Draco has somehow been taken."

"But why would anyone want to kidnap Draco?" Harry asked, knowing full well who would just love to get his hands on the one person that was closest to the Boy Who Lived.

"Well if it wasn't Lucius directly, then it would no doubt be some other Death Eater. The timing of this, combined with the breakout from Azkaban is just too coincidental. I did sense a tremor in the wards very early this morning, but with the winds being so bad, I thought little of it. No doubt it was some sort of portkey. Their signatures can be very hard to trace. As I was telling Professor Snape earlier, that is most likely the safest way to get Draco out, especially in his condition."

Harry sensed that something wasn't quite right. Harry couldn't put his finger on it. "But... surely they couldn't know... How could they know so quickly? I mean, Draco only found out he was pregnant yesterday - didn't he? Who else knows?" Harry looked at Snape, his gaze burning holes in the spy's back. How else was it possible the Death Eaters would know such intimate knowledge already?

"Harry, Professor Snape has my complete trust. He has not told anyone else about young Draco's condition. So far, only the three of us, Draco and Madame Pomfrey know. Beyond that, well, we don't know for certain that anyone else does. Perhaps it is just pure co-incidence that Draco's gone missing at this time." Dumbledore seemed just as perplexed as Harry was.

"Indeed, if Lucius did find out, it is highly likely he would try to spirit the boy away. He has always been excessively hard on Muggles because of Draco's inability to provide him with an heir. I guess he never considered his son's sexual persuasion, and the possibility that he could carry a child. Lucius will want this child. He'll want it raised as a Malfoy." Harry didn't want to think about Lucius Malfoy, and the fact that he would be related to the detestable man. Thinking of Draco's father made Harry remember why he had wanted to see Dumbledore in the first place.

"Sir!" Harry stood up quickly, holding himself steady as a phantom pain in his scar rippled across his forehead. "Sir! I remember now why I came to speak to you. Last night I had a vision. When I woke up, I thought it was just a dream, but my scar was hurting. It's still hurting now."

Snape turned quickly. "Voldemort got through to you?" Snape's eyes narrowed. "Have you been slacking off in your Occlumency?" As if to make a point, the Potions master struck Harry quickly with Legilimency, but Harry's defences were spot on. Harry blocked him without a second thought. The professor lowered his wand. He was silently impressed at the Gryffindor's blocking, but made no visible indication. The fact that he stopped taunting was evidence enough.

Harry was totally honest. "I don't know how he broke through Sir, that's why I thought it was a dream. I was just so worried for Draco after his fall, and so tired and distracted from the game. I was so upset I couldn't go and see him in the infirmary. Before yesterday's game, Draco told me that he wasn't feeling well. I thought he might just have a bug. He thought it was just stress from his workload, and the fact that some of the younger Slytherins might be trying to poison him. Guess we know now what it was. I was beside myself with worry before I fell asleep. I could have probably been a little more diligent in my mind clearing exercises."

"You can't afford to let your guard slip Potter. Voldemort will strike at you when you least expect it." The professor wasn't angry now, just warning him not to get upset. It was indeed times like

this that Voldemort would try to get to Harry.

"Severus, I doubt Harry willingly forgot to practice his Occlumency last night. And Harry, Professor Snape is right. What's that phrase of Professor Moody's?"

"Constant Vigilance, Sir."

"Yes, quite. Now tell us Harry, what did you see in your dream?" Harry quickly recounted the snippets of conversation he heard between Lucius and the Dark Lord. The professors could see why Harry thought it was merely a dream, after all, how could Lucius have been talking to Voldemort if he was safely in Azkaban?"

"You say Voldemort was happy?" Snape asked.

Harry nodded. "I think happy was probably not a strong enough word. Joyful... euphoric even. Then Voldemort mentioned something about a boy." Suddenly it was starting to make sense. "You don't think they meant Draco, or me?"

Professor Snape snorted. "Not everything is about you, Potter. But in this instance, you are probably right. So somehow Voldemort knew, and was telling Lucius. Why else would he want to break them all out of Azkaban?"

"Is it likely you'll be summoned Severus?" Professor Dumbledore looked concerned. Snape nodded. "No doubt he'll want to tell us all about his plans now that everyone is free."

"Hey!" Harry just realised who he was talking to, and tried not to be so excitable. "Do you think that he just knows that Draco's pregnant, or that it's my child?" Harry ran the words through his head again. *My child*. Still the words sounded foreign on his tongue, but he wanted to repeat them, over and over again.

"He's probably hoping that you'll run off and do something rash, Harry." Dumbledore looked down over the top of his half-moon glasses as he spoke. His eyes sending subliminal suggestions to Harry. *You won't be going off on any crazy rescue mission. That's exactly what Voldemort would want.*

"Don't worry Sir. If the Death Eaters have Draco, then I'm going to assume they will know about the baby. If they know about the baby, then they'll soon find out about its other father. It's likely they would then use Draco to set a trap." Fear gripped his chest at the thought of his lover, and their unborn child being used as bait in one of Voldemort's traps. A stray thought crossed his mind - *What if he wasn't kidnapped? What if he has gone of his own accord? Merlin, no!* The Draco that Harry had grown to love would not do that. Not only had he told Harry he never wanted to be a Death Eater, Harry had probed Draco's mind with Legilimency, and discovered it to be true. Harry began fidgeting, and got up again to start pacing.

"Harry, I know you want to help, but it's just too risky. I think we should let Professor Snape find

out as much as he can." Harry nodded reluctantly.

"I've learned a lot since the last time I went rushing off. I didn't rush off once last year, and I didn't need to rescue anyone." Harry was only blathering on to try and talk himself out of going and doing the very thing he promised against. "Besides, I've got *other* skills now." Harry abstractly referred to his wandless magic capabilities. Dumbledore had been tutoring him in the skill, after realising Harry's potential. Harry had not even told Ron and Hermione about it. Draco only knew because Harry had been excited about it, and because he wanted to show off to his lover. Beyond Dumbledore and Draco, nobody else knew. Not even Snape.

The Potions master gasped as he clutched his forearm. "I'm sorry Albus, I have to go." Voldemort had made the expected summons.

Dumbledore nodded. "I don't need to tell you to be careful Severus. Just let us know if young Mr Malfoy is there, and most importantly, if he's unharmed." Snape nodded, before flooing away.

Harry was still fidgeting, his worry escalated by the fact that the Death Eaters were being called. He had been bombarded with information in the past half hour. It would take hours for it to all sink in, but a really bad feeling was dwelling in the pit of his stomach. The fact that Voldemort was active again was never going to make Harry happy, but it was inevitable. That his lover and his child were also involved just made it more vital somehow.

It seemed incredible to Harry that only a day ago, he had been worried about finding time alone with Draco. Now all he wanted was to see the blonde's annoying smirk, and to touch his hair, his face, or even listen to his constant string of self affirmations.

"...Harry." Professor Dumbledore had been trying to get Harry's attention whilst he was being introspective. Harry finally snapped out of it, and looked at the old Headmaster. "Harry. There's nothing more you can do today. I'll let you know if Professor Snape hears any news."

"You're going to have to inform the Order, aren't you?" Harry suddenly blurted.

"Well, yes, I'm afraid so. Even though I will need to inform them of Draco's condition, I'll make sure that your name stays out of it..."

"No sir, that wouldn't be fair." The Order had a right to know the full truth, and Harry didn't think hiding this from them would help Draco in any way. "Draco's most likely in trouble because of me, and the order members are going to have to know sooner or later. Perhaps they'll be more willing to help him if they know it's my baby." Again those words sounded foreign on Harry's tongue, but he made a mental effort to get used to them.

"Very well, Harry. As you wish. Now, I suggest you head out and perhaps think about heading to class."

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Harry didn't really remember leaving the Headmaster's office, but he didn't end up going to classes. There was just too much going around in his head to contemplate learning. Harry's legs automatically led him to the Room of Requirement. Whenever he needed time to think, Harry usually headed there. Sometimes he would send off a few dozen volleys of curses and hexes, just to let out some anger. He had spent a good number of hours in the come and go room with Dumbledore, just building up his wandless magic skills.

After Sirius had died, Harry had spent a miserable summer wallowing. He knuckled down and got on with his studies during sixth year as part of his own penance for getting his godfather killed. He had made extra effort to build up his Occlumency skills, and had resumed practice with Dumbledore at the start of his sixth year. His wandless magic had been evident for a long time, but as part of their new understanding, Dumbledore tried to help Harry, and suggested that he should try to harness this innate magic. Everyone knew Harry blew up his aunt when he was only thirteen, and he realised his trouble learning the summoning charm had been due to the fact that his wand was hindering him. Harry still used his wand publicly, but practiced all his magic wandlessly when in this isolated room.

Nobody questioned Harry when he was in the Room of Requirement, and nobody would bother knocking. To have all this information dumped on him so suddenly was unexpected, but after taking some time to contemplate, Harry knew that even if he could wish it all away, he wouldn't want to. Not at all. Somehow, the thought that he and Draco were going to be fathers was something that just felt right. Harry felt as if something inside him was complete.

Still, there was something strange about Draco's sudden disappearance. If Dumbledore suspected he had been kidnapped, then that was most likely the case. Harry refused to consider any other option. Surely he would be happy about this baby? Harry just wanted to talk to his lover, to smother him in kisses, and tell him just how much more he loved him. Harry felt awful that Draco was infertile. Still, it wasn't a topic that they had ever talked about. He assumed that Draco would eventually tell him if the topic had ever come up.

Harry didn't know how long he had been sitting in the extremely comfortable overstuffed armchair that sat close to the fireplace. Dobby must have been and gone; a plate of sandwiches and some pumpkin juice had appeared on the sideboard. Harry realised he had not eaten breakfast, and his stomach growled as he remembered he had barely eaten at the Gryffindor celebrations the night before.

Harry closed the book in his lap after reading the last page. Professor Dumbledore had slipped it into his hand just as he left the office that morning. Harry had spent most of the day reading it - in between his bouts of contemplation. *What to Expect When Your Wizard's Expecting.* Harry regretted his ignorance of wizard culture, and had felt so stupid when Dumbledore and Snape had told him about Draco's pregnancy. Harry had learned a great many things over the years, but not once had Harry ever considered the possibility of Male pregnancy. All Harry had known about female pregnancy could have fit on the back of an owl treat.

Harry had indeed been given a crash course in fatherhood. The book explained things rather thoroughly, but succinctly. Harry's overriding concern was the fact that he was going to be a father at eighteen! *Merlin! I haven't even left school! How am I going to support this child?* At that moment, the reality of his own childhood hit home. The people he wanted most to share this news with were all dead.

As he assimilated the whole idea of fatherhood, Harry's eyes had been opened wide to the whole concept of wizard pregnancy when he started to read the professor's book. If it were at all possible, Harry's concern for Draco increased when Harry realised what his lover would have to go through just to have this baby.

No wonder Harry had never seen or head or a pregnant wizard. It wasn't common, and for good reason. At least Harry knew why Draco had been so sick, and that he didn't have any life threatening condition. At least, not for the first trimester. The symptoms for male pregnancy during that time were very similar to a woman's pregnancy.

Harry had been concerned that Draco's fall during the game had possibly hurt the baby, but Draco's magic would be maintaining and protecting the enchanted womb that was growing and surrounding their child. When the wizard was in danger, the baby was protected even more. That would explain Draco's poor flying that day. There was a considerable risk to the baby, and Draco's magic was turning inward to protect him.

That was the other surprise for Harry. He was having a son. There was no doubt about that. Wizard pregnancies always ended in boys; There had never been a recorded case of a girl child being born to two wizards. *I'm going to have a son!* He thought, but who could he tell? Harry wanted to shout it from the rooftops, but was very quickly brought back down to earth. He couldn't tell anyone, not even Ron and Hermione. Not if he wanted to protect Draco. And their son.

The biggest concern that Harry had was the most concerning factor of all Wizard pregnancies. Draco was going to totally lose his magical abilities by the fourth month. All his magic would be turned inward, to help the baby grow and develop his own magic. Very soon, Draco would be unable to transfigure a teabag, and would have as much magic as a Squib.

Harry didn't want Draco to face that alone. There was no question about that. Harry did not want any child of his to have to live without parents, and Harry was going to make damn sure that both of them were going to be there. He was itching to get up and just go and rescue Draco, but not only was that childish, he really had no idea where Draco was.

He really had no idea how Draco was feeling, and that was the most bittersweet part of the whole thing. Would Draco still be at school if he weren't pregnant? Harry wondered again what the blonde's reaction was to the news. He supposed he could go and ask Madame Pomfrey, after all, she did the tests, and had no doubt seen other father's reactions to the news of a pregnancy, no matter how unexpected. Harry didn't even know if he was happy, or upset. *Oh Merlin, what if he doesn't want this baby?* Harry swept the thought away as quickly as it had come. He wasn't going

to think negatively.

At least it was some consolation to know that wizards could not abort their pregnancies. If they tried, the wizard in question would end up being rendered a squib. All his magic would be expelled with the baby. Of course, if there was a miscarriage, there was also a chance that this could also happen. That nervous tightness in his chest turned into the pit of his stomach and was trying to escape through his belly at this thought.

Harry hadn't realised he was missing the feast in the Great Hall. The irony of the fact that something else was taken away from him on Halloween was pushed right to the very back of his mind. He didn't feel much like going back to the dorm. It would only require him to have to give his friends explanations for his disappearance that day, and he wasn't up to that. At the thought of sleep, a bed suddenly appeared in the room, a requirement that had been recognised by Harry's fatigue.

As Harry lay drifting off to sleep slowly, he realised that the news of his impending fatherhood had given him a new edge of determination. There was no way that Voldemort and his own children would exist in the same world. He vowed to himself that he would defeat the Dark Lord before his son was born. He couldn't bear the thought of his lover and their child in any danger. He wanted them to know that their father would come home every night, and not be out fighting Death Eaters and Dark Lords.

Harry fell asleep, the vision of himself and Draco holding a tiny baby in the forefront of his mind. In the back of his mind, a curse as he realised he hadn't consciously cleared his mind to steel it against invasion by Occlumency.

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Harry's dreams were restless. Had he been back in his usual bed, there would have been no doubt his friends would have woken him up by this stage. The sheets were drenched with sweat and tangled around Harry's restless body. They were certainly not erotic by any stretch of the imagination, but the blazing red pucker of his scar was vivid against the pale moonlight that fell across the bed.

At one stage, he cried out for his mother. Most often, he called out for Draco. In the end, he sat up, screaming out Draco's name, before collapsing back onto the bed. Dobby had overheard Harry Potter's cries, and had alerted the Headmaster.

Harry had calmed down by the time Dumbledore had arrived. He was seemingly asleep, curled up in the foetal position. Dumbledore would have suspected he was only sleeping, but for two things. The scar was bleeding, and the blood had tricked down Harry's tear stained face.

But what worried the headmaster most of all was Harry's unblinking, catatonic gaze.

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Chapter: 6

(Crying Over) Spilt Potions

by Azhure

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Chapter 5: A Time for Fallout

Draco woke slowly as he felt the chill air assault his nose. He didn't open his eyes, just pulled the comforter up further around his shoulders and buried his nose deep in its downy softness. For a moment, he felt disoriented, but as his mind slowly crept close to wakefulness, a familiar taste in the back of his mouth returned, and the nausea was back again. He groaned into the pillow at the feeling, willing it to go away.

A split second later, Draco vividly remembered why he felt nauseous. *I'm pregnant,* he thought with unreserved pleasure. Draco tried to move an arm down to his bilious stomach, but felt nothing more than the sudden pain of his broken ribs. The memory of his Quidditch fall came hurdling back into his memory. Along with the revelation he was pregnant, Draco recalled Madame Pomfrey's inability to fix his broken bones magically, for fear of harming the baby.

The baby. My baby. Our baby. Draco smiled at the thought. He had been totally floored at first by Madame Pomfrey's declaration of his condition. Floored, but then delighted, then utterly scared. In the cold, dim pre-morning light, Draco was back to romanticising the notion of his pregnancy. Today would be the day he would tell Harry, and they could then decide what they would do.

The wave of nausea passed, and Draco snuggled back into his pillow. Madame Pomfrey had run a battery of tests on Draco to find out why he had fallen from his broom, and why with such a fall, he had not damaged himself any further. It was only by chance that she ran a pregnancy test. Not only was the medi-witch stunned by the fact that the young wizard was indeed pregnant; Draco had disbelieved her initial diagnosis. He wanted pain killing potions, and he wanted them on the spot. She was dithering around and telling him how wonderful it was, and Draco had been lying there in agony from what he thought was several thousand broken bones.

Despite the fall, Draco had only broken three ribs, and had cracked his wrist upon impact. The medi-witch explained how the baby was syphoning Draco's magic to protect itself, and it had been doing so since conception. The fact his broom handling skills were below par was the

baby's way of discouraging him from getting on a broom and placing himself in more danger. When Draco did inevitably fall, his magic strung itself out to protect his body, and the baby as much as possible. The pain he was experiencing was most likely his muscles and joints having to return to their normal state after they had been suddenly struck with protective magic that had absorbed the shock as he fell and impacted on the ground.

He would have to wait for his ribs and his wrist to heal naturally, which would require his stay in the infirmary for at least another couple of weeks. Draco couldn't recall the beds ever feeling this good before, and he could not recall putting on his silk pyjamas before he fell asleep. Indeed, he had been wearing his cotton ones. The feel of the silk against his sensitive skin, his nipples in particular, hurt more than aroused him.

At the mere thought of his sensitised skin against the silk, Draco felt uncomfortable, and quickly realised that he was totally surrounded by the luxurious fabric. He frowned, and his bare feet kicked the silken fabric engulfing him. This wasn't the bed he remembered falling asleep in. He opened his eyes to the unexpected, but extremely familiar sight of the plush canopy over his own four poster bed at Malfoy Manor. *Why am I here?* Draco thought, his mind still in a sleep befuddled fog.

Before he had time to ponder this sudden change in his sleeping arrangements, the nausea returned, this time with a vengeance. Draco pulled back the covers and raced quickly to his own private bathroom, barely making it in time to reach the toilet bowl. The retching was painful, each wave sending pain radiating through each broken rib, and Draco spent a long time just resting against the toilet bowl. When he finally felt up to moving, he began to contemplate his surroundings.

Deciding the bed was just a little too far to walk, Draco eyed his bathtub. A long luxurious soak would help him to feel better - it always had in the past. He ran a bath, squirting bubbles of his favourite scents into the steaming hot water. The bath water felt like a glove against his sensitive body, and lay, luxuriating in the tub for an interminable time. It gave the blonde plenty of time to think about the life changing news he received the day before.

Draco rubbed soapy hands over all of his body, feeling out any changes to it. Apart from being tired constantly, and the nausea, he didn't feel, or look pregnant just yet. So his skin was super sensitive, that was about it. He placed his hand over his belly, marvelling at the growing little wizard inside. Draco had always been aware that Wizards could carry a child, but even when Draco discovered that he was gay, he never expected that he would carry one. When he caught the Mumps as a child, it had been assumed that Draco was totally infertile. To be carrying a child was a miracle! He had not dared take the chance of it, and Draco was surprised that Harry had not cast the contraceptive charm correctly. *But then again*, he thought, *I never showed him how to do it - perhaps he didn't know how to cast it properly. I would have thought he'd know. Surely those righteous Gryffindor friends of his would have made sure he knew what to do properly! I should never have trusted a Weasley to teach him something that important!*

Draco sat back and thought about Harry. *How will he react? Merlin, I bet he'll be thrilled at the*

news, even if it might be a shock at first! I can't wait for that conversation! Draco was rejoicing at his news, and was thrilled about the baby, but wasn't sure if Harry would be pleased. He would have to tell him - today if possible. Draco had never thought about parenthood, he had always assumed he would be the last in the Malfoy line, which wasn't such a bad thing. To have a child growing inside - his and Harry's child - was nothing short of a miracle.

A smile passed his lips at the thought of telling his lover their news, but it soon faded as he remembered his surroundings, and just how he had been spirited away to his home, when he was last in the school infirmary. He vaguely remembered Madame Pomfrey mentioning that she would need to inform his mother, and Draco asking that she not do that. He didn't want to tell anyone just yet - anyone but Harry that is. It had been bad enough when Professor Snape had stormed into the infirmary.

The professor had been concerned for his favourite seventh year student after his erratic flying. Finding out that the boy was pregnant was the last thing Snape had expected to hear. Draco had been awaiting the inevitable question about the other father, and had been thinking of ways to avoid that particular interrogation. Professor Snape had demanded that the medi-witch redo the tests, under his own strict supervision. She obliged. At first Draco felt the tingle of the medi-witch's magic as it tickled and tingled across his belly. As her wand pointed a few inches above his abdomen, Draco could see a small cloud of light slowly forming into a clear, uninterrupted blue circle. What Draco had *not* been expecting, was the name of the other parent to be listed in glaringly bright white letters inside the circle.

Harry was going to kill him. Scrap that, Harry would have to get in line behind Snape. The Potions master had been stunned, then totally livid at the revelation. Draco had been lucky that Madame Pomfrey had protected him from the worst of the Professor's vitriolic temper, but he knew that he would sooner had kept it secret than have the Professors finding out who Draco's lover was. After going to such lengths to keep their relationship a secret, Draco had been disappointed that he had been the one to let the kneazle out of the bag, however unintentional.

Draco had been spared his head of house's temper after the medi-witch had kicked Snape out of the infirmary. Apparently Draco had needed rest. He begged and pleaded with her not to tell anyone else about his condition or in particular, about the child's other father. She did have to tell Professor Dumbledore, but beyond that, she would not tell another soul. *Perhaps Dumbledore told Mother,* Draco surmised as he lay in the now cooling bath water. It was the only logical explanation as to why he was home. *Perhaps he has only told her about my Quidditch fall. She'd bend over backwards to get me out of that school with the flimsiest of excuses.* Draco relaxed at the thought of spending a couple of weeks at home to allow his ribs to recover.

Still, he wondered, *did Dumbeldore tell Mother the full story? Or am I expected to tell her my good news?* A small sliver of fear crept into his mind at the thought of telling Narcissa about his pregnancy. She would no doubt want to know who the other father was, and he was still thinking of a way to avoid answering that question. *Still, it could be worse. Father could be here and that is one interview I am not looking forward to.*

Draco hauled himself out of the bath water, determined to make the most of his recuperative time at home. Still, he knew that there would be serious changes happening in his life, and there would be no going back. He would have to tell Harry, and soon. Being home would make that much harder. Obviously, the headmaster knew of his pregnancy now, and he pondered the logistics of how he could get some time alone with his lover.

But first, he needed to get dressed, and face his mother. It would be good to see her again. Since Lucius was in Azkaban, Narcissa Malfoy had been living the high life across Europe, and Draco suspected that she may have had a boyfriend or two on the continent. That didn't bother him in the least. It had given Draco the opportunity to smuggle Harry into the Manor during their summer vacation, and despite his lover's reservations at the time, the pair had made the most of it. Harry had drawn the line at making love in his father's bed; claiming that was too ridiculous. The last time Draco had been at the manor had been with his lover, and he remembered their time together fondly.

Rummaging through his walk-in-closet for some comfortable clothes, Draco found a comfortable cotton t-shirt - Harry's actually - that would not rub too hard against his sensitive nipples. Draco remembered the last time Harry wore that shirt, and the subsequent lovemaking that had followed. He brought the shirt to his nose and sniffed deeply, taking in the scent of his Harry. It smelt of leather and grass and Quidditch - all with an undertone of the earthy after-shave that Draco loved so much. Draco donned the shirt, wincing before taking extra care as he pulled it down over his tender ribs. His wrist was giving him some trouble in dressing, and he figured that comfortably loose robes would be the easiest clothing to don. Not only would it be easy for him to dress, but it gave him a freedom of movement.

He guessed it was the baby that was making him feel a little bloated and sore, and the lose robes would hopefully not hinder his movement in any way. Not that Draco planned to go anywhere today. Though the nausea had passed, and he felt obligated to face his mother at the breakfast table, he was certainly not up to further travel. He was a little apprehensive at the meeting, but was planning on focussing on the good that would come from it all. Still, he would have preferred to tell Harry before anyone else, but it seemed that choice had been taken away from him.

Finally dressed (it had taken longer than anticipated with his broken wrist, and he had left his wand was on the bedside table), he was about to leave the dressing room, when he heard the heavy oak doors to his rooms closing. Someone else was in there. Draco swept out of the room, but could see no sign of anyone. "Mother?" Draco called tentatively. *Who else could be in my room at this hour of the morning? It couldn't have been the house elves, and Gaggy would have made her presence known to her Master Draco.*

Draco looked around in confusion, not knowing who had been in his room. Everything looked to be in its place. He was puzzled by the fact his school trunk was missing. Surely if he had been brought home, his trunk would be around. *Perhaps it will be coming later.* He quickly spied some potions on his bedside table. Potions that he knew had not been there before he had his bath. He went over to carefully inspect them, only to discover they were the anti nausea and

painkilling potions that Madame Pomfrey had prepared for him the day before. They would help with the pregnancy, but they were the strongest potions that could be given to him without harming the baby.

Draco downed the anti nausea potion - not wanting a repeat performance of earlier if he was expected to have breakfast with his mother. It tasted vile, and Draco pondered the intelligence of having an anti nausea potion that made you want to gag from the taste. He grabbed his wand and quickly cast a charm to fix his hair neatly into its silver dragon clasp. The wand felt sluggish in Draco's hand, and for the first time, he realised the effect of his pregnancy on his magic. Draco had known that pregnant wizards lost their magic, and he had thought a little about it after Pomfrey had told him of his condition, but only now was it beginning to sink in. *I'm going to be as useless as a squib! Merlin!* Draco looked at himself in the mirror and saw that his grooming charm had indeed not worked as planned. His hair was still not properly brushed, and it had been gathered into a messy pony tail. Draco tried the charm again, adding a little more intent behind it. His hair finally behaved, and had properly been groomed and worked into the clasp. He didn't think his magic would disappear for another couple of months, but he figured it was better to get used to it now. Thinking ahead, he figured it would be around NEWT time when his son would be born, and he would get his powers back.

He stopped in his tracks. *I'm going to be without my magic for at least five months. How am I going to sit my NEWTS?* He sat in stunned silence for a moment. There was so much to think about with this pregnancy, and he was yet to talk to his lover. No wonder Dumbledore had sent him home. Still, it would have been nice if he could have talked to Harry beforehand. This time, as he heard the outer door to his sitting room open again, he heard the unmistakable sound of footsteps. *That couldn't be mother. Not unless she had taken to wearing Dragonhide boots.* He got up, curious about his visitor. *Who else knows I'm home?* He wondered.

He thought for a moment of the possibility that Dumbledore might be there, or even Professor Snape, but he hoped beyond hope that Harry was lurking around somewhere. How else did his potions from Madame Pomfrey suddenly appear on his bedside table? The thought of seeing his lover added a little spring in his step, and a small coil of excitement wound its way around his chest. He wasn't nervous at all about telling Harry about their baby, but he was keen to see the look on his lovers face at the news. Draco would be disappointed if Dumbledore or Professor Snape had pre-empted him and given Harry the news already. Draco opened his bedchamber door and stepped out, ready to call out to his lover, a grin on his face from ear to ear. Nothing much could spoil his good mood.

Nothing much, except the sight of the man standing before him. He was a little thinner than Draco last remembered, with his face more gaunt than ever before, and the long hair was more grey than white. The dark bags under his eyes did not deter the steely blue gaze that radiated from eyes that narrowed upon sighting Draco. He was immaculately dressed and was just as imposing as ever, despite his obvious physical changes. Still, the hardened look of displeasure on his face was directed at Draco, and at that moment Draco knew that Lucius Malfoy knew all. The shock of who he saw caused Draco to blurt out the first thing that came to mind.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" As soon as the words left his mouth, Draco realised just how much worse he had just made his situation. The semblance of happiness shattered as all colour drained from his face.

"Have all manners gone by the wayside, as well as propriety, during my absence son? Is it not suitable for a father, and the current Lord of the Manor to visit his son and heir as he recovers from his injuries?" The voice was husky from disuse, but the malicious intent was still evident in the tone. Lucius moved towards his son slowly, leaning more heavily than before on the snake head cane. Draco could see the fury in his father's eyes, and was terrified.

"Father. I'm sorry." Draco quickly regained his equilibrium in the presence of his father. It had been at least fifteen months since his father had been incarcerated in Azkaban, and a good eighteen since he had last seen Lucius. "I never expected you to be here Father. I wasn't aware that you were due for trial. Had I known, we could have had the house elves prepare a feast." Draco tried to back pedal as quickly as possible. "I apologise for my outburst. I wasn't expecting you here. I had thought you were someone else." Draco knew honesty, wherever possible, was best when dealing with his father.

Lucius came nose to nose with his son, who now had the same height as his father. Last time they had been together Lucius still towered over his son. "It would appear that being pregnant, and being buggered by The Boy Who Lived has addled your brains, Son. Of course I haven't been released." So he was right, Lucius knew the truth. He couldn't even begin to fathom just how Lucius had found out, but the fact that his father was standing right here before him, when he was supposed to be safely locked up in Azkaban, unnerved Draco more than he thought possible.

"How did..." Draco never got to finish as Lucius interrupted.

"I was most pleasantly surprised when the Dark Lord came and broke us all out of Azkaban. After all, I had heard nary a word from my devoted wife and son for the months of my incarceration." Lucius pointed his cane at the table, as a copy of the Evening Prophet from the day before flew into Draco's hands. There he read the Mass breakout story, and stood there in stunned silence. Lucius continued. "Yes, I was most surprised by his action. I was not aware that our Lord and Master was ready to show his hand just yet. But I was most shocked when he told me the news of your condition. He had hoped that I might be able to put you on the straight and narrow."

Draco was busy reading the story. His father and all the other Death Eaters were now out of Azkaban, and free. Voldemort knew about the baby, and knew that it was Harry's. Draco had obviously not been sent home to recuperate from his injuries. "How did I get home?" was the only question he could ask without further incriminating himself to his seething father. Draco fumbled around in his robes searching for his wand, but realised too late that he had left it on his dresser.

"Do you have any idea how embarassing and belittling it is to have your master inform you of

your own son's indiscretions? It's my duty as your father to make you see the error of your ways, Draco. I had plans for you. Great plans. Your little adventures have put a bit of a dent in the path, but I think we can manage to salvage what we can of your predicament." Lucius sounded almost gleeful at the thought. "I took the liberty of activating our family portkey, the one that is attached to your signet ring." Lucius pointed to Draco's Malfoy Crest ring. Draco looked even more terrified, completely unaware that he had been carrying around a portkey all these years. "You're much safer here, now, at home."

"Come now Draco, why don't we discuss this over some breakfast. I must say I've missed Gaggy's little pastries, and I am looking forward to hearing about everything you've been up to since I've been away." Lucius saw Draco looking nervously back at his room. "Looking for this?" Lucius held up Draco's wand. Draco just looked blankly at it, wondering when Lucius had summoned it. "I took the liberty of liberating you of the burden Draco. After all, you won't be needing it for a while. Now come. I grow impatient, and breakfast will be getting cold." Lucius sounded cordial as he led his son out of his chambers. Draco had no other choice but to follow.

"Where's mother?" Draco asked, trying to think of innocent conversation. "Does she know you're home?"

"Oh, she's currently indisposed. She most certainly knows I am home, and is wisely keeping her distance. She didn't think I would know about her little dalliances, but some news did manage to filter back to me whilst at Azkaban." Lucius kept walking, but as they reached the end of the east wing, Lucius turned left instead of right.

"Father?" Draco asked curiously. "Where are we..."

"Indulge me for a few moments Draco. Lucius kept up a fast and furious pace. Draco kept up, refusing to cower visibly before his father. For a moment he thought that Lucius was going to lead him to the dungeons, but was relieved when they took the steps to the second floor. Draco had not been in this part of the Manor since he was a young boy, and could think of no reason why his father was bringing him here. They stopped at the end of a darkened hallway; a hallway where little light shone, no matter how bright the sunlight outside.

"You know Draco, when you were a boy, and you caught that nasty disease from the Muggles, your mother and I tried desperately to have more children, but it was not to be. Malfoys have not been prolific breeders, but we didn't want to resign ourselves to the fact that you would be the last of our line. The fact that filthy, stinking Muggles could end the Malfoy line was something I was not prepared to live with. So I went to our Manor over on the French Riviera, and pulled this out." A flourish of his wand, and beams of light struck the intricate tapestry adorning the wall. As Lucius added more light, Draco could see that the intricately woven ivy patterns on the tapestry were in fact names. Names, dates and lines. It was a family tree. Draco had never before seen this tapestry, and had no idea of its existence.

"This Draco, is The Malfoy family tree. Centuries ago, Billius Malfoy had three legitimate sons, and one bastard son. He knew that the bastard son would want to claim the Malfoy fortune by the

fact that he was a day older than his eldest legitimate son. To avoid any squabbles upon his death, he had this tapestry crafted, and had the finest charm makers of the time weave paternity and family charms into it. The tapestry fulfilled its purpose. It showed that even though the bastard son was a day older than his legitimate son, he was conceived a full fortnight after his eldest Malfoy son. By wizard law, the date of conception is more important, and it avoided any contestation." Lucius finished and casually waved his wand over the lower part of the tapestry.

Draco could clearly see the names of his own grandparents, his father and mother, followed closely by his own. What he wasn't expecting was the blue line that wavered strongly from his own name. It showed a date - the date that his son was conceived. Draco's child was now a part of the Malfoy family tree. Lucius muttered a spell under his breath, and other letters sprung to life as another red line drew itself from Draco's. *Harry James Potter.* The other father had been named. Draco muttered a silent curse under his breath at his own stupidity.

"Did you honestly think I wouldn't find out about your dalliance? That it would never get back to me Draco? Your mother was truly stunned when she heard the alarms on the tapestry ringing wildly. She had forgotten the sound. After wishing for so long to have another child, to hear it go off and see your indiscretion written plainly was enough to shock her senseless. Still, she had the sense to inform one of my colleagues, in the vain hope that the news might reach my ears. Narcissa was not expecting an audience with the Dark Lord. I don't think she'll be the same after that meeting." Lucius was staring at the tapestry, his eyes barely moving from Harry's name. He was no doubt willing the words to change to some other name.

Lucius continued before Draco could say anything. Draco honestly didn't know what to say. The fact that not only had his mother found out about his pregnancy, but she had informed Voldemort, who had then freed his father, was enough to have him reeling. "Actually Draco, I don't know what upset your mother more. The fact that you are indeed with child, or the fact that you are gay. The fact of your partner of choice, I'm trying extremely hard to fathom at this moment..." Lucius took a deep breath before continuing.

"Your choice of lover has left a lot to be desired Draco. You couldn't even choose a pureblood for your dalliances? Hmmm?" Lucius turned and looked at his son closely for the first time since confronting him with the tapestry. Draco was speechless, and utterly terrified. He could not have caused more damage to Harry by running a front page advertisement in the Daily Prophet, declaring his love for The Boy Who Lived in gigantic neon letters.

"I... I..." Draco didn't quite know what to say to his father. Whatever it was, it wasn't going to please Lucius.

"Oh for goodness sake Draco, please tell me it was a one off fling, and you haven't gone off and made a fool of yourself. How long has this been going on?" Lucius was eyeballing Draco now, who was feeling more nauseous despite the potion he took earlier. What was Lucius going to do? Draco couldn't begin to imagine what his father could do to him, and to the baby. He immediately thought that he might try to terminate the pregnancy, but quickly realised that would pose too much risk to Draco. He wouldn't want to cause Draco to spend the rest of his life living

like a squib after an abortion, would he?

"What do you intend to do next, Father?" Draco managed to ask, not having any idea what he wanted to do next, short of running away right back to Hogwarts. Lucius remained silent, but Draco was compelled to follow him as he headed out to have breakfast in the dining room. It was a silent trip, with his father not giving away any emotions. Draco ran countless scenarios through his head. Did anyone at Hogwarts know where he was? What would Harry do if he found out he'd been taken? Would Harry come to rescue him?

Lucius was silent through most of the morning meal. Gaggy had been suitable cowed at the sight of the Lord of the Manor, and had acted accordingly. Draco barely ate - the sight of the lavish spread enough to make him want to empty his stomach again. Obviously his anti nausea potion wasn't strong enough. The clear pain in his ribs kept him from trying to force his breakfast back up. He was grateful for the slices of dry toast, and the weak tea that Gaggy presented him. Even the house elf knew now, and Draco wondered whether his condition would be front page of the Daily Prophet. It felt like everyone he saw knew of his condition.

"So, Draco," Lucius seemed patronisingly civil. Perhaps it was the renewed strength from a full breakfast in his own home. Apart from his obvious physical gauntness, Lucius hadn't seemed to have lost any edge to his sanity from his stay in Azkaban. Perhaps the lack of Dementors in the place had made it more bearable. "Tell me. What exactly did you intend doing with yourself? What plans have you made for your future?" The question seemed innocent enough, but Draco knew the wrong answer would have severe consequences. If anything, this post Azkaban Lucius Malfoy seemed even more dangerous than before. Or perhaps it just seemed that way because he was on the receiving end of his wrath.

"I only found out about my pregnancy yesterday Father. I have been under the influence of painkillers because of my injuries since then. I've barely had time for it to sink in, Father." There, that was a rather non committal answer.

"You do realise you won't be going back to Hogwarts, at least not this year." Lucius answered flatly. Draco looked up in surprise. "Of course you can't you silly boy. How can you expect to complete your NEWTS when you will be powerless to do so? You didn't expect your precious Harry to help you out of that one, did you?" The way Lucius spat Harry's name, Draco knew he was angrier than he let on. This was not going to be pretty.

"No doubt you have already made arrangements for me Father." Draco knew any sort of resistance was futile. Lucius would not have acted so quickly to get Draco out of Hogwarts if he didn't already have something planned for his son. He just wished that Lucius would get it over and done with.

"Indeed, Draco. I am at least pleased to see that despite your indiscretions, you at least understand how useless it is to resist me. I had grand plans for you son. My incarceration had delayed them, but now I think it is time you met your true master. You would have been presented to him upon your seventeenth birthday, and no doubt been given his mark of approval,

but that has been unfortunately delayed." Draco sat stunned as Lucius gracefully sipped his tea at this declaration. Lucius had just stated that he was handing him over to Voldemort, and had said it as calmly as if he were going to replant the entire kitchen gardens.

"I.... I don't know what to say Father." Draco gasped in response.

"May I suggest you show the Dark Lord a little more subservience than you have shown your own father? You have still not explained your ludicrous behaviour to me, Draco, but if Voldemort asks why you have been in a relationship with that abomination of a Gryffindor, then I hope you have a sufficiently good answer. If you're lucky he'll spare your life. At least until the child is born and I can retrain another Malfoy heir. One who won't turn his back on his family at the first sign of a batted eyelid." Draco looked Lucius directly in the eye, and saw the steely gaze returned. "Oh yes Draco. You expected that I'd want nothing to do with this child, didn't you? I am willing to overlook the fact that your son's other father is only half blood. The Potters were once as respectable as the Malfoys, at least they were until they joined with Dumbledore in Grindelwald's reign. Potter's prestige in the wizarding world is enough to overlook the misgivings in his bloodlines."

Lucius said no more on the subject as he rose from the dining table. "Your precious Harry doesn't even know you're gone yet Draco. I suggest you spend the day preparing for your audience with Voldemort. Consider your future, son. I do hope that you can do your own heritage proud when you meet the Dark Lord this evening." Lucius grabbed Draco's chin and looked directly into his eyes. "We both had such great ambitions for you, I would hate for it to all go to waste." Lucius was about to leave the room, but turned back at the last minute. "I trust you'll be ready by dinner. We'll be taking a portkey to visit the Dark Lord's Manor, and he doesn't like to be kept waiting."

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Draco spent most of the day in a daze. He was being presented to Voldemort. A meeting that Lucius had planned initially for his seventeenth birthday. Draco had been more than grateful when Lucius was still in prison on that wondrous day. He and Harry celebrated that missed milestone during the early summer when Draco's birthday rolled around. Draco desperately wanted to write a letter, or fire call Hogwarts, or just escape in general, but without his wand, he felt useless. This uselessness hadn't been helped by the fact that two Death Eaters he didn't recognise escorted Draco back to his rooms after breakfast. He was virtually a prisoner in his own Manor. A fact that made him feel even more useless.

As he lay on the bed staring up at the canopy, Draco tried to make sense of all that had happened in the past couple of days. The shock of seeing his father, and the strange absence of his mother had frightened him. He had not been frightened like that since he came home from school his first year, after having failed to get top marks in the year. That had been frightening, but he had been nowhere near as scared as he felt now.

He placed his hand on his belly, unable to feel the child within, but knowing that whatever happened, he loved it without reservation. He knew that the child had been conceived in a

moment of complete love between himself and Harry, and that no matter what happened next, he would always have that moment. He wanted to write, to apologise to Harry, to tell him everything that he'd ever put off saying to his lover, either because he was too afraid, or he felt silly saying it. There was no way his minders would allow him to send off the letter, so he just sat and wrote. And wrote. He wrote until his hand was sore, and all that remained of his ink was a few stray drops in the end of his quill. Draco's wrist ached from the effort. Fortunately his broken wrist wasn't on his writing hand. He reread his letter, knowing that it would probably never reach its intended recipient.

He sealed the letter and as a tear welled up in his eye and carefully stashed it in his writing desk. He would send it to Harry if he had a chance, but that was unlikely on this day. He would sent it at the first chance he got, and hoped it would reach Harry before anything dire happened.

He meditated the rest of his time away, clearing his mind and practicing his Occlumency as Harry had taught him. He did not like the fact that after careful consideration, he had been left to so few practicable options. He barely remembered the sandwiches that Gaggy brought him for lunch. They could have been cardboard for all Draco remembered of them, but the tea she provided had helped to quell the queasy stomach. Draco didn't know whether the queasiness was from the baby, or his impending meeting. Time was growing short as he watched the sun setting behind the west wing of the manor, and Draco soon knew he was out of options. He just hoped that the plan he had chosen would be the right one in the end.

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A short time after dinner, Draco's minders had entered with a portkey, whisking him off quietly to an unknown destination. The familiar portkey tug behind his navel felt different, and he suspected the baby might have something to do with that. He was concerned, for a moment, that portkeys might cause some damage during pregnancy, but he remembered that it was safer for him to travel that way than by floo.

Draco landed at his destination and immediately wore his mask of Malfoy indifference. He had chosen his best Malfoy dress robes, black velvet with silver snakes along the trim, along with a deep emerald green shirt. The public sneer of Malfoy superiority adorned his face again, as he spied a ring of people he found somewhat familiar. Draco made his way toward his father, who stood proudly before a group of other Death Eaters, including his aunt and uncle, Bellatrix and Rodolphus LeStrange. He nodded to his father in his cool and detached way, acknowledging his presence, but not committing to any form of action just yet. His aunt and uncle looked him over cool disdain. They obviously knew of Draco's condition, and had already formed their own opinions about their no doubt traitorous nephew.

Lucius returned the cool nod. Draco glanced at others in the room, and realised the familar faces belonged to Death Eaters he had not seen since he was a little child. Many of the people present had visited the Manor before he went to Hogwarts. Some, like the Crabbes and Goyles, he knew from his association with their sons. Some nodded in return, but Draco quickly turned back to his father. His two minders had stepped back into the crowd, no doubt fairly low amongst the

hierarchy of the Death Eaters. For a short while in his early teens, Draco had cherished the thought of joining the service of Voldemort and carrying on in the footsteps of his father. That dream had soured after he had seen the crazy and ridiculous stunts they had pulled; including the maniacal chase over a prophecy that had landed Lucius in jail.

All chatter stopped as the large mahogany and iron doors opened slowly, and the tall hooded visage of Voldemort slowly entered the room. All the Death Eaters bowed as he passed, Draco following his father's lead at the appropriate moment. The Dark Lord sat on the large throne-like chair upon a raised dais at one end of the room. All his followers continued to prostrate themselves before him as he pulled back his dark hood. The pale grey skin and red eyes shocked Draco heavily. Harry had never wanted to talk about his meeting with Voldemort before, but to look upon the face was enough to scare Draco into the next life. He felt the ruby eyes glare through him, and immediately threw up his barriers. He expected the intrusion in his mind. Harry had been training him well. He dared not meet the eyes of pure evil. Not before he had to.

The Death Eaters moved into their rightful places before their Dark Lord, with Draco staying firmly by his father's side. "I senssse that one of usss is missssing." The shrill voice hissed through yellowed teeth. As if that had been a cue for his entry, a latecomer quickly appeared with a pop, and immediately prostrated himself before Voldemort.

"Apologies My Lord. Forgive my tardiness. I was with students when your call came. I had to... make other arrangements. I beg for your humble forgiveness." Draco was surprised at the subservient tone in the mellifluous voice of his potions professor. Draco recalled that Harry mentioned that the Professor was a spy, and he cursed himself for not remembering that fact before he had put his plan into place. It was too late now for Draco to turn back.

"SSSeverusss. Just who I was waiting for. Ssseeing as you are here before me, we have many things to dissscusss." Snape did not reply. "Tell me SSSeverusss, have you any further successs with our little project?"

"I regret Sir, that I have made no headway on the situation. I do not understand how the potion did not work. Perhaps there was something misquoted in the translation..."

"I assure you Severusss, that the translation was perfect. The potion that you gave me did not work as intended. Are you sure that nothing elssse endangered the processss whilssst brewing?"

"Sir, I assure you that it was delivered directly to you the moment that it was completed." The Potions master knew that he should not argue with his Master, but Draco could sense that Snape did not believe that the failure of some potion was his own fault. Draco had seen too much of his favourite teacher over the years to know when he was digging in his heels.

"Well I can see that I overessstimated your abilitiesss Ssseverusss. Perhaps I should have given the tasssk to one of your counterpartsss on the continent. Perhaps they would not have been so sssloppy."

"Yes My Lord." The Potions master did not raise his eyes, and knew that he was wrong to correct his master.

"As it isss, I will now have to wait another year. Do you think that you might learn from your missstakesss before you attempt to brew it again? I will not tolerate any more excusesss for your failure, Ssseverussss." Voldemort paused, his wand out ready to strike at the subservient Death Eater. "Come here SSSeverusss."

Snape immediately stood and walked right up to Voldemort. "I was made to look a fool because of your failure Ssseverusss. You have ruined my plans one time too many, and I will have to wait another year for my son and heir. The ritual was rather embarrasssing, to sssay the least, and I will not be made a fool of again. I will have my ssson and heir! Even if I have to resssort to getting him in other waysss."

"My Lord?" Snape asked questioningly. He had not known what Voldemort was talking about. Draco's collar felt uncomfortably tight as he realised that Voldemort had asked his Potions master to make some sort of fertility potion. Something that would allow him to produce a child. Suddenly, Draco felt more vulnerable than before. He had not failed to notice that the Dark Lord's eyes had fallen on him.

"But tell me SSSeverusss, before I show you my disspleasure, just why I shouldn't kill you right now. Tell me, why did you not inform me that young Mr Malfoy had been undertaking relationsss with Harry Potter." Draco blushed as Voldemort had blatantly announced their relationship to the assembly. He heard a few gasps and felt dozens of eyes burning the back of his neck. He held his head held high, and kept his eye on his professor. "It sssaddened me to learn of the boysss condition from his mother of all people. At least there are those still loyal enough to our cause that they bring these thingsss to my attention. You are in daily contact with thesse boys, yet you mention nothing." Voldemort's rage was seething, and Draco's heart skipped several beats as he awaited the curse that failed to come.

"My Lord, I was only made aware of Draco's condition at the same time he found out - yesterday. I had no idea that he was involved with anyone, in any way. Whatever Draco's motives, the relationship with Mr Potter was not overt in any way. They were still breaking each others' jaws and noses only a few weeks ago. I have spent the better part of today trying to divert Dumbledore and Potter's attention away from Draco's whereabouts."

Draco's heart leapt at the thought of Harry. *He must know!* The thought danced happily around in his head for a few moments, but he was brought back to the moment as he saw the Dark Lord's eyes fall upon his own face. "Draco. Pleassse, come clossser."

He would have faltered, but his father's steady hand helped him forward. Snape bowed and remained prostrate before Voldemort, and Draco moved in beside his professor. "It is ssso kind of you to join usss tonight Draco. I must apologissse for not ssseeking an audience with you sssooner, but I felt you would rather I spend time helping to releassse your father."

Draco's voice tried not to waver. "Thank you My Lord. I beg your indulgence. I had hoped to meet with you sooner as well, but I did not want to presume upon your plans." Draco bowed his head, yet raised his eyes to look directly at the hideous face. A large part of him wanted to run screaming from the room.

"Yes, well now Draco. Your mother'sss discovery of your condition and the fact that you have not denied thessse allegations leavesss me in a quandary. What do I do with you? I hear the ssson of my favoured ssservant has been consorting with the enemy. And not just consssorting, but sssleeping with him. Tell me young Draco, do tell usss how you came to be carrying the child of the Boy Who Lived.

Utterly terrified, Draco realised it was now or never. "My Lord, I thought you would be pleased. I... I wanted so much to join your service. I knew with Father in Azkaban, It would be folly to wear your mark whilst attending school, what with Dumbledore being so vigilant. I thought I could provide service to you in other ways. I apologise for not informing you of my plans earlier, but they gained momentum rather quickly, and I acted as soon as I could."

"Plansss Draco? What are you talking about?" Draco knew that he had just this one chance to convince Voldemort of his sincerity. He pushed his shoulders back and spoke with every ounce of his Malfoy bearing coming forth. His arrogance was a mirror of his father's and his haughty attitude mirrored that of his mother. He had nothing left to lose.

"I felt it prudent to keep a close eye on Potter." Draco spat the name out with all the hatred he no longer held for Harry. "I thought that perhaps by getting closer to him I could either sway him to our side, or incapacitate him in some way. Either way, I discovered something about Potter that made my job all the more easier." Voldemort sat on the edge of his chair at Draco's story. "I discovered about eight months ago that The Boy Who Lived was gay. Sharing the same predilection, I took it upon myself to get closer to him in the way that mattered most. I set about to make him fall in love with me." He snickered as he said the words. Lucius's eyes lit up with surprise at Draco's last words. *Indeed, if I can fool Father, then I should be able to fool Voldemort.*

"Are you sssaying you managed to get clossse enough to make him fall in love with you? How did you manage that, Draco?" Voldemort's voice held a note of scepticism, but he didn't sound totally disbelieving either.

"Indeed My Lord. Potter has always been easy to sway with his heart. I have seen it countless times. He is overemotional, clingy and very emotionally needy. I merely stepped in and filled the gap. Of course, I had to convince him I was genuine first. I may have said things about you and about father that I am ashamed of." Draco hung his head contritely. Draco knew who was more clingy and overemotional, and he knew that if Harry ever knew he had said these things, that it would break his lover's heart. He continued. "It was almost too easy My Lord. As it is, he now fancies himself in love with me, and he would do anything I ask."

"How did you manage thisss pregnancy?" Voldemort sounded curious.

"I knew I could never father my own children My Lord, but I thought it possible that I could carry one. Potter is, as we all know, powerful in his own right. I felt his powers, combined with mine could produce a child of power. One who would be a worthy heir to the Malfoy name if need be. However, I felt it sweet justice to not only be able to carry his child, but to present its loyalty to his greatest adversary. He's so emotionally fragile; It will break him when he finds out about my betrayal." Draco moved to kneel before the Dark Lord. He tried desperately not to tremble. He had made it this far, Merlin help him not to fuck up at the last minute. He cleared his mind, knowing full well that Voldemort would seek the truth with Legilimency.

"I humbly offer you my allegiance, and that of my unborn son. I ask for your protection as my own powers will falter during my confinement. I can only hope that my offering will break Potter, and allow us swift victory over Dumbledore and his Order of the Phoenix." Draco stayed bowed before Voldemort, sensing the tendrils of Legilimency as they attacked his mind. He cleared his mind of all thought, barring that made up nonsense he just spouted to Voldemort. A wave of nausea attacked him again, and he realised he had barely eaten. His ribs ached from tension, and he steeled himself for the inevitable Cruciatus curse.

The Dark Lord clapped. Clapped his hands and made a rough barking noise, which Draco eventually recognised as laughter. He dared to look up, confused. "Draco Malfoy, you are as cunning and sssly as your father, and your ingenuity will become legendary! Tell me my colleaguesss, did any of you dare to think of sssuch a bold plan? Would any of you have dared to possse as one of my opposssition to receive Potter's good gracesss? It takes courage and fortitude to carry out such a plan, and it took one who had not yet pledged his allegiance to bring down Potter!" Draco realised that Voldemort was smiling, but the Dark Lord saw the look of fear on Draco's face.

"Oh I accept your allegiance child. Welcome to the ssservice of the Death Eatersss. Do not fret over your future, young Malfoy. Take heed in the fact that I alssso have great plansss for your child. The ssspawn of Potter. I think that your actionsss this night will definitely cause young Mr Potter to become overly emotional. After all, it is Halloween. He won't like it that his new family hasss been taken away from him on this aussspiciousss occasssion." Draco cringed inwardly. His timing was pathetic. He had not realised it was Halloween, and desperately wanted to be back in the Castle, enjoying the feast in the Great Hall, then enjoying warm caresses and cuddles with his lover. He doubted he would ever feel those arms or those lips again. A shiver ran down his spine at the loss.

"No indeed Draco, you bring more than jussst an ordinary gift to my ssservice. How do you think Potter would react if he knew that his ssson would become my heir? How would that hurt him?" Draco could not believe what he was hearing from Voldemort. He might just get away with it after all. He became more confident at that thought.

"Potter?" Draco drawled as he crossed his arms. "Why if he knew that you would make his son your heir, it would thoroughly destroy him. Perhaps even kill him." The smirk that crossed Draco's face was killing him, but seeing the eyes of his father, his head of house, and the Dark

Lord upon him, he would have to play this part, and he knew he would now have to play it over the coming months. Even though a small part of him died inside at the thought.

"Well now Draco, welcome to my team. I'll leave you to reside at the Manor, and I'll provide you with sssome companions. Your father will be rather busy, I'm afraid, ssso he will be not at home often, and I don't believe your Mother will be visiting any time ssshortly. Ssshe made it perfectly clear ssshe wanted nothing to do with you after your disgraceful behaviour, and she's moved away to the continent. No. I think hand picked companionship will help you along your way. Oh, and you need not worry about your studiesss. SSSeverusss will be providing you with a ssstudy plan, one that will take into account your diminished abilities. SSSeverusss." The Dark Lord called back to his Potions master.

Draco could not believe it. He was going to get away with it. It had been all too easy. He watched in horror as his Potions master was writhing in pain as Voldemort cursed him with Cruciatus. The Dark Lord had not forgotten to punish him for that failed potion. Draco hoped that he was still not on the schedule for the same punishment. He watched in horror as the curse coursed through Snape's veins. The veins in his head were distinctly visible, and he cried out from the sheer agony of it all. His body lost control from the sheer terror of the pain coursing through his veins. Draco knew that he would be next, and that he had not got out of this without any form of punishment. He vowed that when the time came, he would accept his punishment with honour.

It had felt like forever, but it had only been a few minutes before Voldemort lowered his wand. "Take that back to Dumbledore. SSSee if he won't nursssse him back to health." The inert form of Severus Snape was carried away by two Death Eater minions. As he watched Snape's broken and battered body being taken away, he felt the firm grip of his father's hand on his upper arm. Time to face the music. Draco walked toward the Dark Lord with his head held high.

"Now Draco, your ingenuity is extremely pleasssing, but I am displeasssed that you did not come to me sssooner with thisss plan of yoursss. You presumed too much. You sssshhhould feel the force of my wrath, as all my servantsss do, but as you are bearing my heir, I cannot, and will not allow anything to hurt him. Indeed, a Malfoy and Potter child will be powerful, and with your asssistance, he will indeed be moulded into a fine heir, very much like you, my dear Draco." The Dark Lord's bony fingers ran along Draco's jaw, and he didn't flinch, despite the utter revulsion at the touch. "No my child. I don't think I want to let a prize sssuch as yourself go to wassste."

Draco watched as Voldemort glanced at his father, who nodded imperceptibly. "I am your humble servant, My Lord." Draco intoned the words he had heard his father speak dozens of times through the fireplace at home. It took him a few seconds to realise that his father was unbuttoning his shirtsleeves, and rolling up his robe. He trembled as he realised what was coming. He had not expected this! *This wasn't part of my plan!* His eyes widened as he watched the Dark Lord lower his wand to Draco's arm. Draco tried to flinch away, but Lucius, and someone else now held him firm.

Forgive me Harry. This is not what I want. Draco thought as he steeled himself for the pain.

"*Morsemordre!*" The Dark Lord cried out as he drew the servant's mark into Draco's pale and unblemished skin. "Never fear young Draco! You need not worry about Dumbledore finding out about your allegiance! You'll not be returning to that Muggle's school!"

Draco bit clean through his lip to prevent crying out loud in agony. The burning feeling swept entirely through his left arm. The rank scent of his burning flesh assaulted his nostrils, and he brought up all his lunch, ashamed at showing such weakness in front of this disgusting creature. The pain did not subside, but did not get any worse, and he could feel the bond forging between himself, and his new Master. The senses and emotions were horrifyingly real, and a terrifyingly exquisite sense of joy suddenly passed through his arm, then it was all over. He did not want to look at his arm, not wanting to see the marred flesh, knowing in that moment that he had lost Harry forever. He could sense his master's overwhelming sense of joy at the new recruit, and Draco attempted a smile, knowing it was expected.

The smile came out as a sneer, but everyone was used to seeing that on the face of a Malfoy. Draco came to his senses, and knelt before his new Lord. "I am always your humble servant. Thank you. I won't let you down."

Draco barely remembered the rest of the evening, beyond his father giving him back his wand, and his desperate desire to AK himself with it. A part of him had died inside that night, but in hindsight, he knew that anything less would have resulted in his own death by now. His Malfoy survival instinct had kicked in at the last minute, and Draco had chosen the path that would ensure his own survival. Even if it did mean that he broke two hearts that night. The last thought before he finally fell asleep was that he was ever so grateful that Harry had blocked his link to the Dark Lord, and did not have to witness the travesty that had taken place that night.

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Lying in his own bed in the Room of Requirement at Hogwarts, Harry had indeed sensed every moment of Voldemort's joy, and seen every moment of the encounter. He did not know why his link to the Dark Lord and been reconnected, but he saw the events of that night with vivid clarity. He saw his lover, his beloved, stand up and tell how it had all been some cruel joke - some way to trick him. Harry felt the stabs as he saw Draco deliver the lowest of blows - offering himself, and their child up to the Dark Lord. He cried out in pain as he felt every sting of the Cruciatus performed on Professor Snape, and he felt not only the knives in his back, but the sheer pain of the Dark Mark as the father of his child was slowly giving himself completely over to the enemy. He felt the overwhelming joy radiating from Voldemort, and he didn't care if the pain was too much: Harry had nothing left to live for.

Harry Potter had been a fool. A fool for love. His failure was now complete, and it was only a matter of time before Voldemort would win, for Harry had no heart left, not after this night.

He could still feel the pain, could still see the look of utter hatred on Draco's face as he spoke Harry's name and as Draco accepted the Dark Mark, he saw the stoic look of acceptance, and the

joy in his eyes and on his face. He could still feel the sting in his own arm as he felt the darkness being burned into Draco's arm.

Voldemort had been right. Halloween was not a good time for him. Not only had his parents been taken away, but now the betrayal was complete, and his own son was lost to him on this dark night.

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Harry's mind was in turmoil from Draco's betrayal.

He never bothered trying to wake up, the nightmare would only be worse upon waking.

He never noticed his screams had brought Dobby to the come and go room.

He never realised that Professor Dumbledore found his catatonic body, and had carried him out and brought him to the infirmary.

He never sensed the Headmaster send tendrils of legilimency into his mind to help determine Harry's mental state.

He never stopped the sparkle of life from fading in his green eyes as his heart was shattered into a million pieces.

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Chapter: 7

(Crying Over) Spilt Potions

by Azhure

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Chapter 6 - Biding Time

"Oi! 'Mione!" Ron yelled as he rushed towards the Head Girl. "You seen Harry today?" he asked hopefully.

"Hey Ron!" Hermione waved as she saw Ron returning, his face red and flustered from Quidditch practice. He carried his broom across his shoulders, but as he drew closer, she saw that it was Harry's *Firebolt*, and not his own *Cleansweep* he carried. She shook her head to indicate she hadn't seen him. "I thought he'd be at your practice. This is the last game, after all."

The red head shook his head sadly. "Nope. He didn't show - again." Ron's tone verged on irritated, but he looked contrite as he saw the sad look in Hermione's eye. He sighed. "Well it just isn't fair 'Mione! Why does the team Captain, and the best Seeker ever, have to lose interest in the game with only a handful of matches remaining? I mean, I'm hoping he'll once again come out on match day at the last minute, but it's like he's a ghost. He's never at practices, and he barely says two words to the rest of the team. It's like he doesn't really care any more. He used to love flying!" Ron's dejected tone summed it up perfectly.

"I know what you mean Ron, but it isn't just Quidditch he's missing out on; it's like he barely cares about life any more! Ever since his breakdown... I feel like I'm treading on eggshells whenever I'm near him. Something's seriously wrong Ron. I'm really worried."

Ron snorted. "You're only getting worried now 'Mione? Hell, it's been months..." He scoffed sarcastically.

"Ron!" Hermione was exasperated.

"What?" Ron threw his arms up in the air in confusion. "Goodness knows 'Mione, I've tried bending over backwards to help him. He either ignores me and stares off into space, or just runs away back to that damn room of his. I'm not chasing him any more. I've given all I've got. Honestly. He stalks around this school in his own little world. He rarely sleeps in our dorm any more. Every now and then we see that his curtains have been moved, so he must come in occasionally, but he's never there when any of us are around." He indicates the broom. "He never even said anything when I first asked about practicing on his broom. He just tried to pretend I wasn't even there. So I just took it, to see if I'd get a reaction. I don't think he even noticed, or cared that it's gone!"

"Oh Ron! I know you've tried, and he's tried your patience, but don't think that you're the only one whom he's upset! You don't think that everyone's tried to help him get over his nervous breakdown? I've been there for him every day as well Ron, and on some days, I think I see a spark of the old Harry, but it never lasts for more than a few seconds. Dumbledore never said it was going to be easy, but we have to persevere with it Ron." They walked quietly as they got closer to the school steps, making their way up to Gryffindor Tower. "We're all he's got." She added as an after thought.

Finally, the red head sighed in frustration. "I know we're supposed to be there for him 'Mione, but it's hard you know. I mean, I give and give and give, and it barely makes a dent in that façade. I honestly don't think he's smiled since..." Ron thought hard. "I can't remember seeing him smile since we were on the train to school this year. At least he was smiling before Malfoy broke his jaw."

Hermione smiled at the memory. It had all seemed so long ago. "Yeah, I remember that. He did seem rather happy that day. I think he'd had a good summer. He never talked about, though. Did he say anything about it to you?"

Ron shook his head. "He never said a word 'Mione. He just clammed up tighter than a cats ar..." He realised who he was talking to and coughed to cover his language. "It's strange though..." he wandered off aloud in his thoughts.

"What's strange?" Hermione had pulled out her Arithmancy text and was ready to start studying for the next exam. Ron just stood there, absently twirling Harry's broom in his arms.

"Oh, he just seemed so secretive earlier this year - putting up silencing charms, sneaking off with the cloak and not telling me where he was going - that sort of thing." Ron lowered his voice "You know, he scares me sometimes 'Mione. He's scarier than Snape these days. It's like there's something dark - something festering inside him. I think it's his eyes - they're almost... dead." Ron thought about the last part of his comment carefully, and agreed it was correct.

Hermione nodded in agreement with Ron's assessment. "You're right about his eyes Ron. But Harry's always had some darkness inside him. Nobody could have so much happen to him at such a young age, and not carry around some dark demons. I guess that's why we have to keep chipping away - remind him that he's not alone." Hermione thought wistfully about her dear friend. Her dear lost friend. She missed him sometimes - every day actually. Something had snapped inside that darkened mind, and had caused him to break down one evening. Dumbledore had called them down from their beds to the Infirmary. The sight of Harry's dull and lifeless eyes had grieved Hermione. At first she had thought he was dead, but she saw the steady breathing rhythm and wondered just what could have caused him to have a complete mental meltdown. That was the best way to describe the condition that had struck Harry.

Ron broke her concentration with his tone. "Yeah, well he had really lousy timing. Why did he have to have a nervous breakdown right then? Just when Vol... You-Know-Who showed his hand again?" Ron spoke gruffly, the anger evident in his voice.

"Ron! How do you know that Voldemort wasn't to blame for Harry's condition?" Hermione dug her heels in.

Ron sighed. "We aren't going to have this argument again are we?" He slumped in the chair next to the Head Girl. "All I'm saying is that when just when we need him the most, Harry just cracks up and becomes a hermit. He shut everyone out. I mean we all took the news of the Azkaban breakout pretty bad, but when the attacks on the Muggles began..." Ron didn't need to elaborate.

Hermione just nodded. Everyone had turned to the Boy Who Lived when Voldemort had showed his hand at Azkaban, only to find that he had locked himself away. Dumbledore did a fantastic job of hiding his breakdown from the general public, but those few within Hogwarts who saw him knew that there was more than the Headmaster would let on.

"Where was he then Hermione?" Ron's tone escalated, and a few of the younger students in the common room lifted their heads. Those who had heard this argument before had enough sense to leave. They did not want to be in the crossfire this time. "Where was Harry when your parents were attacked and nearly killed in that Muggle raid?" his nostrils flared.

Hermione sighed. "Ron, get over it. The key words are nearly killed. They're fine now. Yes, I know you're going to tell me they might still be in danger, but honestly Ron, what could Harry have done? What could any of the DA members have done? All the attacks have happened whilst we've been at school. And most of the DA who've already graduated are in Auror training as we speak!" The arguments were old, but Ron was still angry at Harry over his complete withdrawal from society, and he lashed out and put the blame at Harry's feet for the slightest things.

Ron sagged where he sat. "I'm sorry." He mumbled, realising they were treading old ground. "It's just that we need him. I don't think we can do this without him. I don't want to face those Death Eaters, Hermione. I'm scared." He looked into her face, the fear showing fully in his eyes. She nodded in return. "I know Ron. I'm scared too. But it's not our fight. It's Harry's." Whilst Harry was in his catatonic state, Professor Dumbledore had shared Harry's burden, and told them about the prophecy. They had been wide eyed with awe. They knew that Harry had carried some burden, and that part of the responsibility of the fight against the dark would be his, but to be told that he would be the only one capable of killing You-Know-Who, well, that had been a different story.

Hermione had researched possible causes of Harry's condition for days after his breakdown. Unfortunately, there appeared to be nothing magical about it, apart from the fact that his own wandless magic could fluctuate wildly whilst he was in that catatonic state. She had come to the same conclusions as Dumbledore and Pomfrey - Harry just unfortunately had a complete nervous breakdown resulting in a mental meltdown. The only medicine was patience, the only treatment - time.

His best friends had hoped for some sort of sudden breakthrough. They thought it came when one day Harry just woke up, and started to go about the motions, without even a second thought. Although it looked like Harry, the teenager that lived in his place was very different to the one who had inhabited the same space before. He did talk - occasionally, but he never said more than was necessary, and he was never one to enter a conversation. The most words anyone had heard him use were those he spoke when he refused point blank to ever attend another potions class. Harry would skip class more often than attend, yet on the occasions he was found in solitude, he would usually be reading in a quiet corner of the library. Those times occurred less often, and he would just simply disappear between classes.

He had dropped active participation in all school activities, Quidditch being the main one that had caught everyone's gossip. Gryffindor were at a loss without their Captain and seeker, Ron filling the void as the former during their practices. Ginny Weasley was queued up to replace him as seeker, but at the last possible minute, Harry showed up. Even though he had caught the snitch and the game won convincingly, his heart did not appear to be in it. And that was the crux of the

matter. Harry's heart didn't appear to be in anything, not any more.

The only time that anyone had caught a glimpse of the old Harry, had been after news of one of Voldemort's latest Muggle attacks had been delivered to the school. On this occasion, Voldemort had attacked a crowded street - right outside a Muggle pre-school. Most of the school had watched as the ever silent Harry stood up, and looked directly at the headmaster. A slow flicker of life showed behind the moss filled green eyes in an impassioned plea to Dumbledore. But only for a second. As he realised that dozens of pairs of eyes had fallen on him, the lone figure then quickly stalked out of the Great Hall, robes billowing behind him in a flurry of black fabric.

Hermione shook her head. Harry Potter was an enigma. She sometimes just wanted to wrap him up in a gigantic cuddle, yet whenever she touched him, however accidentally, he flinched and practically ran away. Hermione had suspected there was more to Harry's condition than the Headmaster would let on, and she was intent on finding out. She was brought back to the present as she could still see Ron sitting beside her.

"What did you want Harry for anyway?" she asked quietly. They never agreed these days, not when it came to Harry, but they had both silently agreed to drop their arguing when it had escalated to a certain point.

"What? Oh, before? Oh, it's nothing really, I just heard some juicy gossip. Thought it might put a smile on his face. I know it's the best news I've heard in ages! I just wanted to share it with my friend." Ron sounded a little more animated.

"That would be nice - I honestly can't recall him smiling once this year. I have to think back to the Express, on our way to school, to remember the last time I saw him smile." She smiled herself at the thought. "Whatever it was, it had pleased him no end. Something happened to him over summer. Something big." She said absently.

"Yeah, he left the Muggles. He didn't mention anything else about his summer though. Did he say anything to you?" Ron asked.

She shrugged her shoulders. "I can't remember Ron; that was at least seven months ago. It's been over six months since his breakdown, and I honestly can't remember him telling us anything about the way he's been feeling - not that he was ever the most forthcoming person with sharing his feelings. But I could just sense that something had happened that summer. You ask Ginny, she'll tell you the same thing. We both talked about it, back then. You could tell - you could see it in his eyes." Hermione thought back to the beginning of that school year, and the more she thought about her friend's behaviour, the more she realised that he had been different as he stepped on the train. She couldn't put her finger on what it was back then, but after watching some of her friends now, she thought she might have some idea of what had made Harry so happy back then.

"What aren't you telling me Hermione? Why don't you just spit it out? I can tell you're dying to tell me. What could you see in his eyes?" Ron could tell when Hermione had a bee in her bonnet,

and he always knew she felt better for telling someone.

"I think perhaps that he might have been in love." She said matter-of-factly.

"Love? Hermione, are you barmy? He would have told me if he had been!" Ron sounded hurt. Hurt at the thought his best friend had not confided such wondrous news to him.

"Would he Ron? Honestly? Tell me, how was he acting at the start of the year, you know - what was he doing at night?" Hermione sounded curious, but she had made Ron think.

"I don't know if I can remember back that far 'Mione. It was months ago. Let me think." Ron sat for a few moments, the gears of memory clearly turning. Hermione could see it in her friend's face. "Well, he did have all that detention with Snape. He came back at all sorts of odd hours from that... oh, and he started carrying his invisibility cloak around in his satchel. Taking it to class."

"I remember that. But didn't you think it odd he kept wandering off between classes? On his own?"

Ron shrugged. "I s'pose so." He nodded his head. "You know you could be right. He could have been sneaking off to see someone. But who? I didn't see anyone pining away when Harry had his breakdown." His eyes widened when he looked at Hermione. "It wasn't you? Was it?" his voice sounded hurt, as if he was the last to know a great secret.

"No Ron. I don't love Harry. Not like that. Besides, you knew that he was bisexual, didn't you?" Hermione wasn't sure if Ron already knew about Harry's sexual preference, and hoped she wouldn't cause a stir.

"What? Oh, yeah, I forgot about that. Sorry. You don't speak to someone for months, you kind of forget what they like to do, you know?" His eyes suddenly lit up, and he grabbed her arm. "Hey, you don't think that he and... Snape!"

"What on earth are you talking about Ron?" Hermione sometimes wondered about Ron's mind.

"Well, he never once complained about those detentions, and he always came back horribly late after them. He usually seemed to be in such a good mood the day afterwards too." He shrugged. "You just reminded me that Harry likes to be with guys. You don't think that he and..." he gulped. "He and Snape got it on, do you!" Ron's face contorted in disgust at the very thought. "That would explain why he was so adamant to drop Potions class. Perhaps they'd had some fight." Ron was on a roll now. "Perhaps... perhaps they had some sort of major falling out because of the fact that he's a Death Eater, and Vol... You-Know-Who's back. It all fits! Even their hatred. I never saw Harry react so violently to anyone. It all fits 'Mione." Ron sounded extremely pleased with himself for coming up with such a plausible theory for Harry's behaviour.

Hermione shook her head, pleased to see that Ron was at least trying to think. "It's a good theory

Ron, except you're forgetting that Harry fought just as violently with Malfoy. Are you now saying that Harry was also in love with Malfoy too?" Ron looked at her blankly as she pointed out the flaw in his theory. "I think Harry was indeed in love with someone this summer Ron, and whatever has happened during his breakdown, he either doesn't want to let anyone get close, or he's too scared to let any of us get close to him again. I think he might have committed to something, and then it backfired. That's why he's reluctant to commit to anyone, or anything anymore. You know Harry never does anything by halves. If he was in love, he would have fallen - hard."

Ron nodded, then looked up at the clock and realised it was dinnertime. The pair headed out to join everyone in the Great Hall. They had given up hope of ever seeing Harry at mealtimes. Often he would be seen getting up, just as the rest of the school was sitting down to eat, or arriving just as everyone else had finished eating. On the odd occasion he was there with everyone else, he was left alone. Despite their own desire to help Harry, and to draw him out of his funk, his classmates left him alone, knowing that at least if he was in the same room with them, he was relatively safe.

Hermione was worried that he wasn't eating enough. He was gaunt, and had deep dark circles under his eyes, but after some investigating in the kitchens, she managed to corner Dobby, and discovered that the persistent House Elf had been under strict instructions to ensure Harry was to eat. "Oh he does eat, yes he does Miss! Dobby makes sure Harry Potter eats enough!" Dobby tapped his head. "Dobby is clever! Dobby puts special spells on his food, and even when he tells me to go away, he is still compelled to eat it, and he does, all of it!" Hermione had been at least grateful for that small help for Harry. She surmised that Dumbledore had been involved in that ploy as well.

Just as they were entering the Great Hall, a great dark shadow came rushing around the corner, robes billowing as it mowed down anyone in its path. Some would have suspected it was Snape, but the professor would have stopped and deducted house points for their being in his way. Ron knew from the lack of height that it wasn't the professor. Ron recognised Harry immediately as he stalked out of the hall. Tonight he obviously did not want to share the meal with anyone. "Harry!" Ron called out in vain, but he knew that it was fruitless. Harry was halfway up the stairs, no doubt on his way to the Room of Requirement. Ron turned around and walked dejectedly into the hall with Hermione. As they sat down, Ron suddenly laughed.

"What's so funny? I think it's terribly serious. We've got to help Harry overcome whatever gave him this breakdown. Who knows what he's liable to do if we can't soon help him." She lowered her voice. "You know he's our last hope, Ron." Her voice pleaded at the last.

"Oh, sorry." Ron interrupted his fervent attack on the shepherd's pie. "I wasn't laughing at that. I was laughing about Malfoy. I really wanted to tell Harry. I honestly thought it would make his day!"

"What about that simpering Ferret?" Ron was surprised at Hermione's spitefulness toward the former Slytherin.

"Well, this might cheer you up, seeing as we won't be finding Harry in a hurry." Ron grinned. He spoke quietly, even though it was gossip, he didn't want the likes of Lavender to get wind of it. "Remember I said I heard some gossip? Well, I was in the boys' lavatory earlier, when I heard Crabbe and Goyle talking. Honestly. The pair of them think that closing the door of a cubicle means that their voices won't carry. They had no idea I could hear every word." He rolled his eyes at their stupidity. He continued as he saw that Hermione was listening intently. "Anyway, Goyle's Dad was had come home during Easter, apparently complaining about some sort of guard duty, and how he was totally pissed off at the arrogant little snot."

"Well that could only describe one person." Hermione said as Ron nodded in agreement. "But what's this about guard duty?"

"I'm getting to that. We all knew that the ferret had hot footed it out of here to join his father the minute that his Daddy was busted out of Azkaban, well, apparently there's more to the story. Apparently nobody had seen Draco, not since he was initiated. Goyle's father apparently confirmed that Malfoy was branded with the Dark Mark - he apparently witnessed it. His complaint had something to do with the fact that even though he was supposedly in the inner circle, he never participated in any of the usual Death Eatery type things. Turns out this guard duty - was to guard Draco. Apparently he's lording it over all the Death Eaters and threatening them that he'll tell You-Know-Who if they do anything to upset him. Seems he's definitely on their side!"

"Guard him? Whatever for?" Hermione stopped eating as she looked over at Ron in surprise. She picked up her glass of pumpkin juice.

Ron mashed a large quantity of peas into his potato, and spoke before swallowing a large forkful. "Well, this is the corker. It seems that he's pregnant. Very pregnant!"

Hermione coughed and nearly choked, pumpkin juice sprayed everywhere. "Pr... pregnant?!?" she exclaimed through gasps for air.

Ron patted her on the back, helping her regain her composure. "You er... you did realise that wizards can get pregnant, didn't you?" Ron sometimes forgot that his best friend was Muggle born, and therefore things like wizard pregnancy might seem strange.

She nodded as she regained her breath. "Yeah," she gasped. "I just wasn't expecting *that*! Malfoy's pregnant?" she asked again incredulously.

"Yeah, but this is the kicker 'Mione. Apparently old What's-His-Name has been gushing to the Death Eaters about his heir." Hermione didn't comment. "Don't you see! It's obvious! Malfoy was so desperate to be a Death Eater, and to please Daddy, he let old snake face bugger him, and now he's as useless as a squib because he's pregnant!!! It's the best news I've heard in ages." Hermione didn't seem to share Ron's enthusiasm.

"Don't you see Hermione? The Death Eaters are having to guard him because pregnant wizards lose their powers totally by the last part of a pregnancy. They're having to guard ferret boy around the clock. And they're hating it. Apparently they all realise just how horrid he really is, and to top it all off, they're not allowed to hex him. They're supposed to treat him like some kind of royalty. At least until he's due in a few weeks."

Hermione gasped and sat up, eyes wide. Her fork clattered against the plate. Ron looked at her in confusion. "What? Don't you think that's the best news you've heard in a long time? What I wouldn't give to get my hands on that Malfoy squib... I'd tear his..."

"Ron!" Hermione interrupted Ron's wonderful train of thought. "Did you say that Harry had been sneaking off with his Invisibility cloak? I mean before Halloween?" Ron looked at her. *Why was she still thinking about that?* He thought she would have laughed at Malfoy's predicament.

"Yeah, but like I said, I think he was sneaking around with Snape. I can't imagine..."

"But he would have needed it if he was seeing someone *else* we wouldn't approve of." Ron nodded slowly, wondering what brought this line of thinking back on. "Can't you see? Isn't it obvious? The timing, it's too co-incidental! Think Ron!"

Ron was thinking, and still coming up blank. He shook his head slightly. Hermione huffed in frustration. She was going to have to spell it out fully for her best friend. "Ron, did Goyle say that Draco was due to have his child in just a few weeks?" Ron nodded blankly, still unsure where she was headed. "Okay, don't you see, that means he was pregnant when he left school!!! Remember the stories - before your Quidditch match - how he kept getting caught throwing up in the loo?"

Ron still wasn't quite making the connection, but something struck home. "Soooo... he found out he was pregnant, went running home to Mummy - Daddy broke out of jail and found out, now he's some sort of plaything for What's-His-Name? I still don't..."

"Ron, what was the worst thing Voldemort ever did to Harry? Kill his parents." She answered her own question before he even had a chance to draw breath. Ron was going to suggest luring Harry to the Department of Mysteries, but he nodded and agreed with her answer. "Well, now Harry was being very secretive behind our backs about something during summer, and he kept sneaking off to the dungeons at odd hours. Perhaps the detentions with Snape weren't that long. Perhaps Harry was busy the rest of the time, before coming back to the dorm." A strange tick started in a nerve across Ron's brow. It was trying to tell him something, and he was desperately trying not to listen to it.

She continued as Ron refused to connect the dots. "Harry was fine, right up until the moment Voldemort broke everyone out of Azkaban. His scar started hurting, remember?" Ron nodded. "Voldemort somehow re-established a connection back to Harry, even through his Occlumency. Then Malfoy vanished without a trace from the school the very next day. Ron. Remember when Harry had his breakdown? The night of Halloween."

"What exactly are you suggesting Hermione?" Ron croaked. He knew what she was going to say, but didn't want to think about it.

"I never got around to telling you Ron - I'd spotted Harry early on Halloween coming out of Dumbledore's office. He seemed concerned, but very happy about something, happier than I'd seen him in a very long time. I thought nothing of it, then later that night, after we learned at the feast that Malfoy had gone missing. Remember we couldn't find Harry? Then Dumbledore fetched us in the early hours of the morning, right after Harry's breakdown?"

"Yes, yes 'Mione, I know all this. Although I didn't know you had seen Harry coming out of Dumbledore's office. You say he was happy?" She nodded.

"Ron... just what if..." now that they both knew what she was going to say, she didn't want to voice it, for fear it might be true. "What if Harry and Malfoy..." she couldn't go on.

Ron finished it for her. "What... what if this child is Harry's? Then that would mean that Draco has turned tail and presented Vol... You-Know-Who with the thing that could most hurt Harry - his own child."

They sat there in stunned silence. It was too unbelievable not to be true, and it fit perfectly with the events surrounding Harry's life.

"Ron." Hermione nudged him, snapping him out of his own disbelief. "We have to help him Ron. He's heartbroken, and he's torturing himself. We can't let him go on like this any longer. We have to help him."

"W... what can we do? I'm not going rushing off after ferret..." Hermione put a finger across Ron's lips and shook her head.

"I don't know what we can do Ron. I think we just have to let him know that we are here, and to actually *be* here when he does come back to us."

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Harry sat numbly as his desk in the Room of Requirement. That room had really become Harry's home in the six months since Halloween. Easter break had come and gone, and Harry did not leave the room once in that time. Harry was unaware that the students had been advised that the seventh floor corridor outside this room was now out of bounds, but the DA members knew that it was purely because it had become Harry's room. The DA had not been totally disbanded: the group still met in the DADA classroom, but without Harry's guidance and instruction. They all knew that Harry had changed, but most of the group kept the optimistic outlook that Harry was in quiet contemplation of his role in the upcoming battle. The pessimists of the group suggested he was just holed up there in a massive depression. The truth was that both groups were correct, to some extent.

Harry's days were a blur, mostly going through the motions of living. He didn't distinctly recall waking up from his mental meltdown, but he did know one thing. He was never going to let anyone get close, and he was never going to allow anyone to rely on him ever again. He didn't particularly want to go on living. He built an existence for himself that was devoid of all visible emotion. He would not allow anyone in. Never again.

If Professor Dumbledore hadn't been so meddlesome, he would have been able to just stay in his own little cocoon, at least until his body finally gave in. It didn't matter to Harry how much he pushed the crazy old wizard away, Dumbledore would keep coming back and back. Eventually, Harry gave in, and in a spectacular burst of wandless magic, blew the hinges clean off the infirmary doors, and blew the old wizard completely off his feet. Harry had never seen him smile so widely before. Not that he particularly cared.

In a mammoth effort of coercing and cajoling on Dumbledore's behalf, Harry eventually rejoined the school population, but he was not the same boy who they knew before. He never smiled, and the light had gone out of his wondrous eyes. His attendance at classes was erratic, and after a spectacular haranguing from Professor Snape in Potions class (All designed to make Harry bite back) the Gryffindor just stood up, and calmly told the professor he would no longer be taking this class, and would not be seeking a NEWT in Potions. He calmly walked out, leaving behind a for once speechless, Professor Snape.

Harry was slowly getting used to the detached life he was building for himself. He could shut everyone else out of his life - that was the easy part, but he could not shut down all of his own emotions, not when he felt the seething rage and bitter anger beyond reason. Harry had given in to anger a couple of years earlier, but Dumbledore suggested that "this time", he channel it into something productive. The old wizard suggested that Harry practice advanced defensive skills with his wandless magic, and he found that the constant anger fed and fuelled his wandless magic like never before.

He spent many hours burning off that excess anger and channelling it into his one remaining goal - the total and utter destruction of Voldemort. *After all, isn't that what Dumbledore wants?* He thought sarcastically. Harry had been weak before his breakdown - weak both mentally and emotionally. He had been naive, and had allowed himself to be used, and then abused. It seemed that everyone had wanted a piece of the Boy Who Lived, and now everyone seemed to have got what they wanted, leaving Harry with nothing.

Harry sometimes channelled his anger at Dumbledore, knowing full well that he had been manipulated into this corner by the meddlesome old wizard. He hated that. He hated the fact that he was not allowed to wallow in his own grief. Harry was not listening to Dumbledore because he wanted to do his dirty work. No, Harry had finally discovered what he wanted, and he was going after it.

Harry no longer thought about the betrayal of his lover, at least, not consciously. At first it was all Harry could think of. He had been weak, and played for a fool by the consummate actor - a

Slytherin no less. Looking back, Harry wondered at his stupidity, and he should have known better than to have accepted Draco Malfoy's claims at face value. Now Harry had to live with the fact that not only had he been a fool, but he had endangered an innocent life. The life of an unborn child.

Malfoy had obviously played on Harry's ignorance of wizarding customs, and had engineered the pregnancy, knowing full well that Harry would suffer. The bastard was right. Harry had hurt, more than anyone thought possible. What remained of Harry's heart after Draco had ripped it out and tore it to shreds by his betrayal was nothing. Nothing but a cold hard stone. Nothing but a slow burning desire to see Voldemort, and his ilk, crushed. Yes, it was ironic. All that remained of the Golden boy was the basest of dark emotions. Hatred and destruction. Harry had no capacity for anything else. At least he tried to convince himself of that. Thoughts of his innocent son would creep into his mind on occasion, and a small stab of love would find its way into his heart. But the bitterness and hatred he felt for Draco would squash it before it took hold, and Harry was once again cold and lifeless.

Harry's one weakness had always been family. Always the orphan, always feted as a victim, Harry had played along, and had willingly headed the fight to destroy the darkness. He had a chance at future happiness - yet had it ripped away so blatantly. Harry had realised that you couldn't destroy the darkness, for it existed inside everyone, including himself. He didn't care about what the wizarding world was fighting about. It had become personal, and Harry knew what had to be done.

Harry wasn't totally dark, at least, he told himself that. He could never be like Voldemort, no matter how concerned Dumbledore was about his ever growing detachment and darkness. Harry never wanted world domination. Harry just wanted to live. Live a normal life. And that normality had been ripped from him and he had been destroyed inside. Draco had been correct in his assessment that his defection would destroy Harry. It had, and he guaranteed that he would never love, or trust another person ever again. Harry Potter was on his own side, and the wizarding world had better get used to the fact that he was not their pawn.

The Gryffindor was no longer anyone's pawn. Harry's detachment saw to that. Harry only stayed at Hogwarts because he knew that there were still things he needed to learn, things he needed to know, and the castle was still the best place to do that. He had mastered Occlumency, and Legilimency, but knew that he still needed some assistance from Dumbledore if he was to gain full control over his wandless magic. No. The pawn had moved on. He was now the Queen. He controlled all the moves, and could go where he pleased, within reason. Harry acquiesced to the Headmaster's more insistent demands, and the school, in general left Harry alone.

Far from moping and wallowing, Harry had gained a sense of purpose a good month after Draco's betrayal. Dumbledore had allowed Harry the space and the time to practice his advanced defensive wandless magic, but he insisted that Harry still attend classes. Harry reluctantly agreed, only because he could not argue with the Headmaster's logic. If Harry wasn't attending classes, then the school's Board of Directors could expel him, and he would no longer be able to set foot in the school grounds. Harry maintained a minimum class schedule, attending DADA,

Transfiguration, Charms and Herbology.

He had intended on keeping Potions class, but one lesson after his return, Snape turned his vehement temper on Harry one time too often. Harry did not hear the potion master's latest tirade. *All Harry could see was the broken body of the Potions master being dragged away from Voldemort's feet, interspersed with his ranting and raving at Harry about how irresponsible he had been for getting Draco pregnant. Of course, he had been right, and Harry could not bear to see the smug look on the slimy git's face.* It had not helped that Harry had overheard him talking to Dumbledore a few days before, and realised that Snape was still in contact with Draco. It had taken a lot of his barely non existent self control to stop himself from hexing the Professor right where he stood. He could not look at that face and maintain his composure. So Harry did the next best thing. He quit the class.

In the blur between going through the motions, avoiding contact with anyone, and keeping his rage in check, Harry did find time to read. And read voraciously he did. Harry opened the book lying precariously atop the stack on his desk, and began to skim through the chapters. Flitwick was expecting a rather important Charms essay in the next week, and Harry wanted to make sure he had covered all aspects of the assigned research. He had found that the library held too many distractions (namely in the form of an overly helpful Hermione) and he just brought the books back here to concentrate. Harry was well up on his reading for Charms and Transfiguration, and he had possibly read every book regarding advanced defensive magic that the school had ever owned.

How the book in Parseltongue had come into his possession, Harry couldn't remember. He realised its dark contents when he was halfway through it. It took him a few minutes to realise that it was indeed written in Parseltongue, and not English. He had scoured every corner of the library in his research, and surmised it had possibly fallen out between two books he had checked out of the restricted section. It had been the most informative, and interesting of the defensive books around. Sure, it explained the intent and the purpose behind dozens of dark curses, but it also contained valuable knowledge about ways to counteract these curses, despite their distinct lack of direct counter charms.

Harry knew that Dumbledore would have loved to know the contents of that book, but Harry chose to keep its existence to himself. After all, it had no library slip, and he had certainly not remembered borrowing it. No need to let anyone know that he knew exactly how to perform the Unforgivables - wandlessly. Indeed, the Ministry had no way of keeping tabs on wandless magic, something Dumbledore had mentioned several times. After the invaluable lessons in this little book, along with his daily dose of anger, Harry managed to successfully practice the curses on whatever animals just happened to wander into his imagination, then into his Room of Requirement.

Harry had started off small - spiders and rats had been common. But soon, after Harry grew bored with such small fare, he had moved on to cats and small dogs. Of course, they weren't real animals - nothing was when it appeared in the Room of Requirement. He knew that he could cast the killing curse without a second glance, and that knowledge did scare him slightly, but he

refused to back down. He would not let emotion sway him. Not ever again.

Those dark curses and counter measures were not the only interesting things in the small volume. A good few pages had been dedicated to Parseltongue sex magic, and Harry had read it in fascination, before realising he had become rather aroused. He closed the book, all the feelings welling up inside bringing on memories that were best forgotten. Harry quickly shoved the book away that first time, and had taken a cold shower.

Not only had Harry denied himself all emotion, but since rationalising that his sexual urges had been what weakened him in the first place, Harry had abstained from touching himself or releasing himself in that way. There were times that it was nigh on impossible, but Harry surmised that was probably part of being nearly eighteen years old. Whenever the urge came upon him, he headed straight for the cold showers, and remembered not those long passionate nights in his lover's arms, but the cold hard look in the same eyes as his former lover denounced him and broke his heart. It wasn't hard to quell any desire when that image came to mind.

By far, the hardest part of Harry's days were in fact the nights. Sleep was not something that Harry knew any more. His nights were no longer his own. No matter how hard he cleared his mind, and practiced his Occlumency, Harry spent a good portion of many nights in the company of Voldemort and the Death Eaters. Strangely enough, it wasn't the nights that Voldemort was most active that he watched. Instead, he witnessed those nights that Draco was present with the Dark Lord. Those nights were strange indeed. Harry could not sense any severe emotion from Voldemort, but he assumed that whatever caused the Dark Lord to break through his mental barriers, he revisited the torture upon Harry purely to torment his now darkened soul.

Harry felt nothing from the visions - how could they harm him any further when he had no soul left to speak of? On those nights that he wasn't tortured by visions of the betrayer, growing heavier with his child each day, he would barely sleep at all. Some nights, he would give in to that small sliver of emotion that sometimes crept into him, and he would spend the night weeping for the son he would never know.

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After touching up his Charms Essay, Harry closed the books, and sank into the chaise-longe beside his bed. He no longer had any desire to return to the Gryffindor dormitory - he had no intention of rekindling relationships with the boys there. It was the middle of May, and in four weeks, Harry would never have to see, or speak to anyone from school again. By the same token, in four weeks, his son would be born, and would either be an orphan, or have at least only one surviving parent. If Harry couldn't kill Voldemort, and Draco for their betrayal by that time, then he would have at least died trying. Either way, Dumbledore's precious prophecy would be fulfilled, and someone could go on living.

Four weeks. Harry thought as he put his hands behind his back as he leaned back into the chaise-longe. Something hard dug into his kidneys, and he fished it out from between the cushions. Holding the small book before him, he was torn between throwing it onto the fire, and

opening it, and reopening old wounds from between the covers. *Protective Charms,* the title read in worn gold leaf. The leather bound copy had been lovingly thumbed thousand of times. The book was at least a few hundred years old, and Harry had been surprised when Flitwick had loaned it to him from his personal library.

Harry should have returned the book to the charms professor months ago, the essay he had needed it for had been handed in ages earlier. It really didn't contain much information he needed for the assignment, but Harry had read it from cover to cover, and had come across some interesting information. He couldn't give the book back, not just yet. Harry saw that the wily charms professor had left it in his care for more than one reason, and he knew that his resolve weakened the moment he read the chapter.

The words of the chapter were permanently etched into his mind. "*Protecting the helpless, children and the elderly, is something that can be achieved when a strong charm weaver is a direct blood relation of the one being protected. Protective blood magic is actually quite simple, but its potency is increased with the power of the charm weaver. The following paragraphs describe the history of the Servavitutus charm, and its various derivations."*

The discovery of the one spell that had protected him from Voldemort as a child had indeed had a profound effect on Harry. The first time he read the book, he sat stunned, and countless unshed tears had formed and fallen. But it wasn't just that knowledge that had affected Harry so badly. It was the scribbled notes in the margin that had opened the sliver of love in his heart. "*Ask James if this will work with Fidelius... Harry?*" Just a few simple words in fading ink, but they were all he ever had of his mother.

Harry touched the words again, not allowing himself to fall into the trap of grieving. Grief was a weakness, and Harry needed all his strength to make it through the next month. Harry had seen through his Charms professor's obvious token to force Harry's emotions, but Harry would not give in to the emotion, at least, not in public. As his finger followed the contour of the book's binding, Harry felt the thick wad of the letter sticking out from within the back cover. This was the other traitorous item that Harry could not bear to part with, yet he cringed every time his eyes fell on it.

Harry never needed to look at the wizarding photograph ever again. He already knew every line, every curve of the image. At this late hour, he once again gave into his weakness, and looked at it, marvelling at the image before him. At first, he had no idea what the image was, but after reading the inscription on the back, he immediately knew it for what it was - a wizard ultrasound picture. Until the anonymous envelope containing the photo had arrived, Harry had tried to forget the existence of his son. Things were easier that way. This photo indeed proved that his son was real. He could see the frantic heartbeat; the line of his head; the shape of his nose. The fact that he was sucking his little thumb was what had broken through Harry's barriers, and he tried desperately not to give in to his repressed feelings of profound sadness, for he knew that he would just have to spend twice as long putting them back together the next morning.

Harry wasn't as strong as he hoped. Again he looked upon his son, and wept for all that he had

lost. The repressed feelings for his son were overwhelming. For one short day - if that - he had been overjoyed at the thought of becoming a father. His every feeling moment since then had been full of bitter recriminations and seething hatred for Malfoy. Harry could not bring himself to hate his child, but he could try to deny himself the false hope of happiness. And try he did, but in the cold light of the early morning, Harry would allow himself to grieve.

He eventually cried himself to sleep, the moving photo of his son in one hand; his mother's handwritten words clutched tightly to his chest. In the morning he would wake; shove the photo into the book and toss it somewhere else in the room, hoping that he will not find it again.

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The mysterious arrival of the photograph had not been the only anonymous letter that Harry received. Harry would receive at least one letter a week, each one in the nondescript scrawl, and each sealed with the strange crescent moon and stars seal. The first letter had contained just the photograph. Subsequent letters contained rough notes on what looked to be a medical chart. Harry surmised that someone in Voldemort's team had decided on another form of torture for the Boy Who Lived. They would keep him apprised of his son's development, and they were diligent in their schedule of updates.

After the second letter, Harry never bothered to open the letters. He had discovered the sender, and been driven to new depths of rage by his audacity. Harry knew from heart wrenching experience that the letter wasn't from Malfoy. The script was too plain, and the seal was nothing like the Malfoy crest, which he would have recognised anywhere. No, the u-shaped crescent moon, surrounded by three stars was a family crest he had not seen before, but it didn't take much investigation to find its owner. The first book on heraldry that came off the shelves told him exactly what he needed to know.

The crest was unmistakably that of the Pettigrew clan. Only one Pettigrew that Harry knew of would have access to such information, and his hatred had turned to more un-channelled anger at the thought of that rat. Of course, this sort of thing was typical of Wormtail. It hadn't really hurt Harry. The taunting letters were just an annoyance, but they did raise his ire. Harry's flesh crawled at the thought of his own flesh and blood being within striking distance of that rat -- and he sincerely hoped that he would anger Malfoy enough that he would deal with him before Harry could touch him. That was the most thought he had given to his ex lover in days, and he refused to think of him in any other light. Not any more.

Because Harry knew that even if Draco had strangled Wormtail with his bare hands, it would be nothing compared to what Harry would do when he could lay his own two hands on the filthy stinking rat.

Still the letters continued. Week after week. Harry tried sending them back. They could not be returned. He realised that the Death Eaters were untraceable, and that recourse was futile. He tried burning them, but the sneaky rat had obviously cast an indestructible charm on them. He couldn't even tear them up. So he resorted to just leaving them unopened, gathering dust in an

ever increasing pile in the corner of his desk.

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Harry's sleep was blissfully undisturbed by late night meetings with Death Eaters, betrayers and Dark Lords. However, one tiny thought did creep into his sleeping subconscious. One tiny repressed memory had surface, one that had tempered his thoughts of anger and annoyance aimed at the simpering former Gryffindor rat. Had anyone been watching Harry as he slept, they would have noticed the smile; the wide and satisfying grin that crossed his face. A grin that softened the lines that had prematurely formed on his brow. A grin that formed as his subconscious mind recalled the fact that the traitorous rat still owed Harry a wizard's debt.

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Chapter: 8

(Crying Over) Spilt Potions

by Azhure

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Chapter 7 - A Time for Discoveries

Draco groaned as he attempted, once again, to get out of bed. He had only meant to nap for a short time, but when he woke he realised it was dark. He should be getting ready, as he was due to meet with Professor Snape soon, and he knew how short tempered the man could be. If only getting out of his bed wasn't such an ordeal. In these final days of his pregnancy, Draco needed more time than ever to achieve the simplest of tasks. It would take at least ten minutes just to roll on his side. That was followed by another ten to get his feet dangling over the edge of his four-poster bed. Of course, the sheer effort of trying to then lift himself up and off the bed was the hardest part. That bed had been designed for cosy comfort - not quick movement. Moving was sheer hell, and he was the size of a whale. He wasn't giving birth to a child, but something that was possibly related to Hagrid. Just making it to the shower was another ordeal that needed complete rest before the next hurdle - showering and getting dressed.

Draco didn't feel much like showering, but knew that he would be expected to be in his best dress robes for yet another terrifying dinner with Voldemort. Draco had become utterly sick of having to dine with the Dark Lord, his appetite lost at the sight of the repulsive creature. He eventually managed to slide out of the bed, and into the shower. Draco hated the way his body felt, so bloated and lethargic, but what choice did he have in the matter? This baby had taken over every aspect of his life, and he could see little else beyond the daily grind.

Eventually showered and dressed, Draco sat mercifully at his desk. He gathered up his assignments and quickly checked he had completed them all. It would not do to upset Snape any more than he already was. As he was lifting the last parchment, he spotted his journal. He quickly felt a pang of regret as he quickly put it back in the hidden compartment of the desk. As he lifted the hidden compartment, he felt the other occupant of that space, the letter he had written to Harry all those months ago. He couldn't bear to think about that now. It wasn't the right time to lose his composure, at least, not whilst he was psyching himself up to dine with the Devil. He quickly closed the hidden compartment, returning the surrounding books and parchments to their normal random order. It would not do to have that journal found. Not at all. He glanced at the clock again, realising his *escort* was late. At least he would be able to blame his tardiness on someone else.

He realised absently that he was yet to do his hair. Snarling in frustration at his forgetfulness, he made his way to the dressing table, again resting comfortably on the stool. He was desperately looking forward to the day he could have his magic back, and become a real wizard again. But having thought that, he was also utterly terrified of the next stage of his life. Seven months. Seven months since he made a foolish choice. Why was he still here? Draco had no idea. It had been the most terrifying seven months of his life.

Draco's thoughts had become more desperate the closer he got towards the baby's birth. As he brushed his hair he wondered why he even bothered. He once again thought about how he landed himself into this mess. He had thought long and hard over the past months about his actions, about fooling the Death Eaters, but he could still see no other way he could have survived. That wasn't to say he had not done everything he thought possible to get out of his situation. It had just been that everything had been against him. He had not wanted to give up hope of getting away from the Death Eaters, at least, not when he first arrived. But with the passage of time, and his own shortcomings, that avenue was slipping away faster each day.

With events coming to a head - soon - he could not help but ponder how he could have done things differently. Then perhaps he would not be due to give birth in the midst of a Death Eater enclave. The weight of his impending fate rushed towards him faster than a speeding bludger. The intense charade of posing as a dedicated Death Eater weighed heavy on Draco, and he hoped that he could hold it for just a few more days.

The strain of keeping up the haughty exterior whilst he posed as a Death Eater was beginning to show. Draco's plan, whilst not backfiring, had not been completely thought out when he had been faced with the Dark Lord. He had never expected that he would be practically feted by the Dark

Lord, and treated so well by his minions. It had been a comfortable period of his life. But he had never expected to be branded as one of their equals either. He had worked hard to avoid a Dark Mark, only to have it thrust upon him to ensure his survival. Unfortunately, he had made his bed, and he had to lie in it.

The Mark itched and burned - a constant reminder of his survival instincts, and of his perceived betrayal. The mark had meant that he was expected to now play this role indefinitely, no matter how distasteful he found the company, or their actions. Draco was constantly on his guard, ensuring he would not slip up by word, or most importantly, by action. Luckily, Voldemort had made that task easier than he anticipated.

By virtue of the fact that he was now carrying the Dark Lord's heir, Draco was not expected to carry out regular Death Eater duties. Oh, he had attended a couple of Dark Revels, but thankfully, he was only an observer. The Death Eater meetings he did attend had been full of trivial matters. Despite being initially welcomed by the inner circle, Draco found that with the passage of time, and his inability to be an active member of the team, he had been relegated to the meetings with the lower echelon. Draco knew that the meetings he attended were trivial. They discussed little but the progress of his pregnancy, the guarding of the Manor (which had become Voldemort's new lair), and plenty of clean up activities.

It was only after overhearing his father and his aunt in discussion in the library that he learned of the upcoming Muggle raids and some rather serious incursions in the middle of the London Underground. Draco had been shocked. He was unaware that Voldemort had already created such a ruckus, and had successfully tortured and killed hundreds of Muggles. In his shock, he had made his presence known, and Lucius was unhappy that he was being spied upon. After that, the pair had clammed up tight.

Draco didn't know how to feel about that knowledge. Their activities disgusted him, but the fact that he was being kept out of the loop fed his ever increasing paranoia. This paranoia had been slowly feeding from the moment he had been branded with the Dark Mark, and it had festered and grown to obsessive proportions.

After being marked, Draco had been wary of his father. He didn't know what to expect. The man had kidnapped him, against his will, from school, and had surmised the truth of Draco's situation. The older Malfoy had acted coolly toward his son after his marking - behaving as if Draco was truly a brilliant son, one worthy of the accolades given by their Lord and Master. But Draco had known his father all too well. He could not read behind the steely gaze, but knew that, like himself, the words and actions could belie his true thoughts.

Lucius had never spoken about the night of Draco's initiation, yet he never accused his son of lying either. Lucius spent the first couple of weeks at the Manor, strengthening the wards surrounding his family home. If it was going to be the new lair for the Dark Lord, then they wanted security to be tight. After that, Lucius spent more time away from the Manor, ostensibly on business for Voldemort.

Draco would have thought nothing of the wards being enhanced around the Manor. Except for the fact that he knew it was already one of the most heavily warded places in the country. Draco fully understood the complex wards that surrounded his childhood home, and in the days before his magic diminished, he watched as the wards were *strengthened.* Apparently, the Dark Lord wanted to ensure that the Manor would protect Draco and his heir, but Draco could see the wards were preventing someone from *leaving* the Manor. His reconnaissance told him what he had feared. They were turning the place into a prison. His prison. They obviously didn't trust him. They were Death Eaters after all, why would they trust anyone?

Draco's life became one of Constant Vigilance. Constant vigilance, and constant paranoia. He could not trust anyone. He didn't think he could even trust Professor Snape. He knew the professor was a spy for the light. But suspicion and mistrust fuelled his thoughts, and he was unsure if the professor was truly a spy for the light, or a spy that was playing both sides. It would not pay for him to reveal his true thoughts to the man, not if it meant he could possibly be exposed to Voldemort. That was a risk he wasn't willing to take.

After realising he was a prisoner, he found all avenues of escape were closed. His magic began to diminish as the pregnancy progressed, and he found himself one day totally unable to perform the simplest of childish spells.

Draco could trust no one, and he retreated into himself. His days became a dull routine. He would walk around the gardens at the manor, or spend time in the library. Flying was out of the question, as was going out in public. He had been expected to continue with his studies, so most of his day he read and did research for his written assignments - the only task this pregnant wizard was capable of. As part of his charade, Draco relied heavily on his public person. He was the same smarmy and demanding spoilt brat that everyone knew the Malfoy heir to be. The charade was flawlessly carried out. Despite the charade, he took every given opportunity to look for a way to get himself out of this mess, however, he wasn't having much luck.

He was thankful he was not expected to spend every waking moment in the Dark Lord's presence. He didn't think he could do that and stay sane. Dinners were an unmitigated terror. The fact that Voldemort practically drooled over Draco was more terrifying than the thought of facing his wrath. *Could be worse,* Draco thought. *I could be his catamite, and that would be a fate worse than death.* He refused to entertain the notion that Voldemort had that fate in store for him after the child's birth.

He did not miss his father's company. For that matter, he did not miss his mother's company either. He had not heard a word from her, and had no idea if she was even still alive. There was only one person's company he wanted, but he would not think about that. He couldn't. Despite this, he rarely wanted for company. As promised, the Dark Lord provided Draco with a variety of companions. He would have preferred the term guards, but his spoilt brat persona soon had them off guard, and acting as his personal servants. They soon learned to jump at his every word, and he wanted for nothing.

That last statement wasn't quite true. He wanted for many things, one in particular, but he didn't

think he'd ever have that again, so he went through the motions every day. Despite having read every NEWT text from cover to cover; despite having managed to alienate every Death Eater over his incessantly childish demands; despite his survival instincts placing him in this precarious position, Draco was only now starting to lose his composure.

As the clock ticked closer to the birth, the closer Draco came to losing it all. With each passing day, Draco realised that any plan he might formulate to escape grew more futile. He knew he was being watched very closely, and could not risk the chance. He would not risk his child in some foolish escape plan. Had he been a Gryffindor, he probably would have tried the first avenue of escape that presented itself - without thinking. But he wasn't. He was a cool and calculating Slytherin, over analytical and terribly ambitious. At present, his ambition was to just survive. Survival for himself and his baby. Draco's hand slipped to his belly as he thought about the child he carried. At that moment, his son had chosen to play beater, using his internal organs as bludgers. He could feel the veneer of his charade starting to crack at the thought of the future. He only had to hold it for a few more days.

Despite every action of his public persona, the real Draco Malfoy was a blithering mass of emotions. He had been for months. He could have blamed the hormones, but mostly, he blamed himself for the way he felt. Once the doors on his rooms had been closed (and no doubt magically sealed for his protection) each night, Draco found himself giving in to his abundant emotions. The overwhelming hopelessness of his situation took hold each and every night. He would lay out his escape plans, only to be overwhelmed with the enormity of the situation, and his complete lack of control. Draco hated losing control. When his emotions took over, he was at his worst.

He found himself moving into a depression. It was easy to switch off his emotions during the day - it made it easier to maintain his charade, but at night, he would give in to them. The major cause of his undoing were thoughts of Harry. Draco realised that his life was never going to be the same again. His fleeting hopes and dreams had been crushed, but he had no one to blame but himself. He cursed his survival instincts - those same instincts that had controlled his course of action that lead him to this point. This depression and the hormones must have clouded his ability to think clearly. Draco tried hard to think his way out of his predicament, but kept coming up with dead ends. This futility made him even more depressed. The longer he was a prisoner, the less chance he had to get away. The grief and the hopelessness would sometimes overwhelm him, and the depression would deepen.

At first Draco had known that he would lose Harry forever - he had no doubt about that. But a small voice in the back of his head had held out a hope that perhaps he had misjudged his lover - his one true love (for he knew that he could never love anyone like that again). He lived in the slim hope that Harry would pull one of his crazy Gryffindorish stunts, and rescue him from underneath Voldemort's nose. Draco knew that it was a crazy, reckless fantasy. It was even crazier that a Slytherin like him was dreaming of rescue by a reckless Gryffindor.

Any hope of that was well and truly dashed when he had learned the horrifying truth about just how badly he had crushed Harry. All desire to get out of his predicament faded at the realisation

that there was nothing left for him outside of the Manor. By now, the entire wizarding world would know that Draco was a Death Eater. It's likely he would be sent to Azkaban if he bothered to show his face at Hogwarts again.

When Professor Snape had confirmed Harry's mental state to Voldemort, Draco had nearly lost it on the spot. He could not look his professor in the eye, but knew that it had been entirely his fault. He felt sick the entire time he mockingly pretended to be overjoyed at the news. He doubted he could have felt worse if he had pushed Harry from the Astronomy Tower with his own bare hands. He had done that by virtue of his own actions. Draco deserved to feel his own heart tearing in two. It was only fair considering what he had done to Harry.

At night, Draco tortured himself constantly by reliving the memories of his time with his love. He would never feel that touch again. He recalled those calloused and rough hands - so gentle and tentative, yet so full of confidence. Draco relived their nights of passion, but he would mostly remember that first time he had allowed Harry to take him. The night their son was conceived. Draco now slept with Harry's t-shirt under his pillow. If he concentrated hard enough, he could still smell his unique scent on the well-worn cotton. If he let his fantasy take him away briefly, he could imagine that Harry was lying beside him in the bed. In the cold grey light of morning he would wake, and realise that it would only ever remain a fantasy. He would push the thoughts and emotions aside, and put on his 'Death Eater Mask' before facing another day.

Harry would never love him again. If Professor Snape was right, Harry had become totally disconnected from everyone. Draco knew that his perceived betrayal was the cause of that. Harry would not risk being hurt again, so he turned inward. Draco accepted the realisation that if he ever did see Harry again in the flesh, it would no doubt be at the end of his wand, and possibly an Unforgivable curse. He didn't need to speculate on which one, and he knew that he thoroughly deserved it.

Draco's self-torture didn't end with just reliving his fondest memories. When he had been left to his own devices, Draco wrote in a journal. He had no idea as to the motivation for his writing, he just needed to let out some of these emotions. It was a journal he hoped his son might one day find. A journal that catalogued the love that had produced the child. A journal that didn't contain the pain, but the sheer inexplicable love that Draco had for Harry. He wrote of his hopes and fears for his child, the dreams that every parent imagines. He outlined every single thing that he had done wrong against Harry. He never expected forgiveness for them, but he hoped that their child might one day understand. He had addressed the writings to his son, and he had written his feelings plainly, for all the world to see.

Although Draco had left Harry with nothing but bitter memories, Draco still had their son. At least, he hoped he still had their son. He would have been a fool to assume that his future was all wine and roses. As the birth drew closer, Draco's fears for his son, and for himself, increased.

He had certainly learned about getting in touch with his emotions from this pregnancy. He felt himself dripping with them at every opportunity. Still, it wasn't the strangest side effect of his pregnancy. Draco's most immediate fear, the one he lived with daily, was not the discovery that

he was pretending to be a loyal Death Eater. It wasn't that the Dark Lord would discover that he loved Harry with every breath and that he would gladly give his life for the foolhardy Gryffindor. It was something that even the witch doctor had not discovered.

Draco's pregnancy had progressed as expected, and at the end of the first trimester, he lost his magic. Although he had expected it, and had witnessed his own powers fluctuating, the actual loss had come as a complete shock. At least it had for two days. After that, his magic returned. It didn't feel quite right, and he could not grasp it easily, but it was still magic. Finding himself levitating two inches off the floor was a rather disconcerting experience. When he tried to do it again, he failed miserably. Whatever it was, it was powerful magic, and he could access it wandlessly. It was far from normal, and it had scared Draco half to death.

At first he was terrified that he might have lost the baby. After much reassuring from the witch doctor that he and baby were perfectly fine, Draco had put on one of his spoilt brat performance and the Death Eaters had left him alone for the day. He could not work out where this magic had come from. What was its source? He thoroughly checked every wizard pregnancy reference for any mention of this possibility. It was unheard of. According to every reference, Draco's magic was being solely used to sustain the systems that surrounded his son.

Despite these unexpected surges of magic, Draco had difficulty controlling any of it. When he knew he was alone, he tentatively tested this sudden surge, but it failed to ignite. After several attempts, he discovered that he had little, if any control over what he did when he tried to use this powerful magic. When he could grasp it, it was greater than anything he had ever felt. He was terrified of it. How would it affect his baby? He thought it prudent to avoid using it, rather than risking something unknown on his child.

He wisely kept this knowledge to himself. He could only surmise that by some quirk of fate, his pregnancy was going to be something rather special. Perhaps the baby was showing early signs of magical power. That was the only plausible explanation Draco could think of. Either the pregnancy was messing with his own magic, or the magic belonged to his son. Occasionally, his guard would slip, and he would find himself using the magic that built up inside him. He had to forcibly attempt not to use it, which he found added more strain to his current predicament. When the magic surged through him, he could feel it building up more than his own regular magical levels. On a couple of occasions, it was out of control, and he stopped actively trying to use it. He would not run the risk.

After assimilating the enormity of the situation, Draco wisely played his role of squib with great aplomb. His guards soon learned to bend over backwards to cater to his every whim, lest they not only face his wrath, but the wrath of their own Dark Lord.

Yes, it had certainly been a trying time for the pregnant blonde. A time that would soon end. He loved this child unreservedly, how could he not? He had put himself in the most dangerous of situations to protect it, and possibly ended up placing it in even more danger. He was a prisoner, with no escape. If he did manage, he would not have anywhere else to go, not anywhere he could be free. He wasn't even going to try to use this strange magical power, even if he wanted to; he

doubted he would be able to rely on it when needed. He had nobody to confide in - he was surrounded by Death Eaters. The very type to sell him out just for sneezing the wrong way. His rampant paranoia told him that he couldn't even trust Snape, the one person who probably could have helped him. No, he had done the right thing staying where he was. At least he was comfortable, and still alive. For now.

Voldemort had not discussed his plans for after the birth. Oh, he had gushed over the very idea of his heir, and had rubbed his hands in glee at the very thought of Potter being so disconnected from reality. Draco did not want to ask what would happen, for fear of the answer. Not knowing if he would live or die didn't matter to Draco. Not knowing if Voldemort would allow him to raise his son was something else. Although he had indicated that this pregnancy had all been designed to trap Harry, Draco publicly spoke about his child also being the Malfoy heir, and his desire that his son be brought up to reflect that legacy.

When the elder Malfoy was home, Lucius avoided discussion about Draco's condition, and in particular, the fact that this child was technically the Malfoy Heir. Draco knew his father's thoughts about half blood children. In Lucius's eyes, this child would never be a suitable heir. Draco strategically mentioned this once in front of the Dark Lord, and had not once flinched when he watched as Voldemort put his father under the Cruciatus curse for his insolence. Lucius sometimes forgot that his own Master's blood was not entirely pure, and Voldemort never liked being reminded of his flaws. This child was a child of power, and that's all that mattered to the Dark Lord.

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Draco was still lost in thought, brushing his hair, when he drifted back to reality. He looked at the clock again, and realised that whoever was supposed to escort him had still not arrived. He resented the constant guards, particularly since most of them were unmitigated morons. Draco had thought he might have an opportunity for intelligent conversation, but after seeing the Death Eaters he was placed with, he realised they were all talented at surveillance work. Yes, the Dark Lord was keeping a close eye on him.

His paranoia was fuelled by the presence of his *companions*. He worked twice as hard to fool them. He treated them as house elves, only they had wands, and could retaliate if he pissed them off badly enough. He realised that it was Peter Pettigrew's turn to be his guard this evening.

Surprisingly, Draco actually found that he didn't despise his time with the rat as much as he did with many of the other Death Eaters. Wormtail wasn't really a part of the inner circle, but he was higher up than the general minions in Voldemort's service. At first, he found the craggy and simpering former Gryffindor to be an easy pushover, but he soon realised he was far from stupid. Pettigrew's perceived stupidity was a fairly clever charade, possibly one nearly as well crafted as Draco's. A charade that had allowed others to either trust in him, or think him too low in the food chain to bother with.

He had actually managed to have some decent conversations with the animagus, and actually

managed a few genuine laughs. Wormtail had spent considerable time discussing the Animagus transformation with Draco, as part of one of his Transfiguration assignments. The rat freely told of how he and his school friends had secretly learned the transformation, and had not censured his words. Draco knew that Peter was the one to betray Harry's parents, but rather than feeling utter hatred toward him, Draco could see that something weighed heavily on the older man's shoulders.

He would deny that they were friends, but he did act friendly towards the one Death Eater who had caused the most pain to Harry. Perhaps it was something to do with the fact that between them, they had caused Harry to lose every member of his family - across two generations. Draco refused to dwell on that fact. Perhaps he just preferred the company of Gryffindors, and Peter's innocuous retelling of anecdotes about his school pranks were genuinely funny. Especially when it came to learning how they had tortured Professor Snape, or Snivellus.

Draco had craftily manipulated the man to tell him stories about Harry as a baby, or about James Potter. Draco claimed he wanted to know if his child would have any nasty Potter habits that he would have to nip in the bud quickly. Hearing about his lover just ripped his heart even more, but that was his cross to bear. Apparently Harry had been a rather active child. He had been quiet and easy to sleep, and constantly happy, but rarely ever sitting still for one minute. Draco could not believe how casually Peter spoke about James. He betrayed and murdered James, yet he spoke about him as if he were a long lost friend. Either Peter was genuinely stupid, or there were more levels to the man than Draco could possibly imagine.

At times, he could see the regret on Peter's face, and knew that perhaps he had more in common with the rat that he thought possible.

Pondering the strange man, Draco finished brushing his hair. He absently thought about the powerful surges of magic that occurred randomly, and he was grateful that he had not accidentally given himself away. He was so preoccupied with this thought, he didn't realise that he had wandlessly summoned his snake hair clasp. As it landed in his hand with a solid 'thunk', he silently cursed his inattention. At that moment, he heard the door behind him close, and a gasp of surprise reached his ears. He turned toward the mirror to find Peter leaning against the door, his mouth open in surprise, but his eyes narrowing knowingly.

Fuck! Draco thought. *He saw that!* Peter raised an eyebrow as he saw the look of fear that crossed Draco's face. The Death Eater moved towards Draco, who stood there unmoving, the incriminating clasp in one hand, and his other holding back his pony-tail. Peter's silence was more than unnerving, and Draco's eyes widened even more as Peter came right up and stood before him. Peter quietly flicked his wand and summoned the clasp from Draco's hand. The blonde let go of his hair with his other hand, wondering what was going through that rat-like mind. He had not expected to see Peter pick up the hairbrush, and begin to gather his hair and recreate the pony-tail.

"Well, you're full of surprises, aren't you Malfoy?" Peter's tone wasn't menacing, but Draco knew that he was in no position to bargain.

"You can't say anything Peter." He pleaded. "I honestly have no idea why I can do that. It's not like I can control anything." His eyes implored Peter not to tell anyone.

"Still. Wandless magic. Our Lord would be most interested to hear about that." Draco's eyes widened even further in fear. "Oh, don't worry, I won't say anything... yet." It wasn't looking good. Peter's words indicated the unspoken language of blackmail. Draco knew he would be paying dearly for Peter's silence. "How long have you been holding out?" The rat was fishing for information.

Draco didn't think it could get any worse. Why hide the truth? "Pretty much the whole pregnancy. I did lose my magic totally, at first, but then the sudden powerful surges just happen. I... I can't control them."

Peter nodded. "It's typical. Harry wouldn't make things easy, would he? Probably your kid is just as powerful as he is." Peter shook his head at the thought.

Draco looked at Peter with pleading eyes before whispering, "Was Harry this powerful? I mean, before he was born?" Peter saw the aching look in Draco's eyes.

"No." he sighed. "At least, I don't think he was. Lily was a powerful witch, but I didn't hear of her doing anything extra powerful whilst she was pregnant. Don't forget that witches don't lose a single bit of power."

Draco was slumped in his chair but Peter poked him with his wand. "Hey, you'd better hurry up. Snape's here to see you, and he's more pissed off than I've seen him in a while."

"You promise you won't say anything? I'll... I'll make it worth your while." Peter waved him away, but had a knowing smirk on his face. Draco could see the concentration on the rat's face as he mentally calculated the worth of this information. Draco knew he couldn't trust the man, but perhaps by buying him off, he could possibly buy loyalty. He was a Gryffindor after all, and he might be persuaded to be loyal to him and the baby.

"You'd better make it worth my while." With that reassurance, Draco followed him silently down the hall. He felt as if he was on his way to a beheading, with Peter's eyes boring into his back. Draco couldn't walk terribly fast, but desperately wanted to get away from the rat-faced man.

Peter opened the door to the library. Judging by the look on Snape's face, Draco knew he would have been better off staying in bed that morning. The Potions Professor was pacing angrily before the fireplace.

"So nice of you to finally join me Mr Malfoy. Unlike some, I haven't got all evening to lounge around whilst lording it over the other Death Eaters. I have detentions to supervise, and exams to prepare." Something had ticked off Snape, and Draco was glad he would only have to spend a few minutes with the foul tempered man.

"Just watch yourself Snivellus." Peter stood confidently between Draco and Snape. Both men looked at the rat in surprise. Neither had seen him so confident. Draco knew why, and inwardly knew it was his fault. "Just remember Snivelly, that Malfoy here could have you cursed for talking to him that way. You know he's the bearer of our Lord and Master's heir."

Snape waved him away. "Put a sock in it Wormtail. Honestly, if it isn't one petulant Gryffindor, it's another!" The professor snapped back at Peter.

"Peter, please leave us." Draco drawled as he re-established his protective and arrogant persona. "Unless you wish to sit with us and discuss NEWT subjects? I'm sure you could do with the help." He glared at Peter, who narrowed his eyes slightly, before nodding and closing the door. Snape seemed satisfied that Draco managed to get rid of the annoying rat.

"I trust you are well Draco?" Snape asked.

"Professor. I'm sorry I was late. Wormtail was late arriving, and I'm a little... cumbersome at present." He offered in way of apology. "I'm as well as can be expected for a two hundred pound elephant. So, tell me? How's school? Slytherin house coping without my presence?" He asked, hoping for the slightest piece of information. Draco was truly isolated, and missed many things, even, admittedly, some of his housemates from school.

Draco handed his professor the pile of completed assignments. He could not understand why his former head of house had been so helpful in ensuring he kept up to date with NEWT studies. It wasn't like he was going to be able to return to Hogwarts, probably not ever, and he doubted the Ministry would just let him walk in and sit the NEWTs. He knew that Voldemort had asked him to do it, and he surmised that the spy had probably taken the opportunity to keep an eye on the betrayer. He was sure that their every encounter would be reported back to Dumbledore.

"This isn't a social visit Draco." The professor was curt. "I have classes to teach in the morning, so let's keep it brief." He pointed to a pile of papers on the table. "Your latest assignments. Most likely the last batch. Finish those, and we can discuss your theory exams."

Draco raised an eyebrow is surprise. "You mean the Ministry are going to let me sit my exams? I thought they would rather put me in Azkaban. After all, I'm a known Death Eater." He spoke mockingly.

Snape shook his head. "Don't be silly. Your Father has arranged for you to sit them through Durmstrang. As for the practical components, you can sit them any time during summer. After your... condition... is no longer an issue."

Draco nodded absently. He was busy sifting through the pile of assignments, casually looking at the work to be completed. "You never did answer my question Professor. How is everyone at Hogwarts?" He didn't know why he wanted to press the issue, but he doubted he would get a chance again soon.

The hidden meaning behind the question was not lost on the professor. For months he had been carefully watching his favourite former student. He had been more shocked than anyone else at Draco's actions when he gave himself, and his child over to the Dark Lord. He had long suspected Draco of having sympathies for the side of light. Admittedly, he had been totally floored by the revelation that he was carrying Potter's child, but the professor had not forgotten about the day in the hospital. The day Draco discovered he was pregnant. The actions of the boy that day differed greatly from the boy who confronted Voldemort a mere day later.

The professor had his suspicions, but had never voiced them. Too many years as a spy had taught him never to reveal his hand. He had no proof that Draco truly was dark, but on the other hand, he didn't know if he truly was light either. Snape had been keeping his eye on the boy for months, but could not tell if he was playing a role or not. He was as cool and haughty as all Malfoys, and that was the biggest stumbling block. He would not risk his entire career just because he suspected Draco of not being a true Death Eater. Still, he did notice the barely perceptible changes in the blonde boy's demeanour when the damned Gryffindor's name was mentioned. He made sure to do so at least once in every meeting. Perhaps there had been some true feeling there. He doubted Draco could have convincingly tricked the Gryffindor if there had not been.

Snape was known in the Death Eater circle as an Order spy for Voldemort. Every Death Eater, including Draco, had been present during Snape's reports about the Order's workings. However, Snape wondered if Draco knew that those reports were carefully orchestrated as part of his true assignments from the Order. His allegiance to Dumbledore and the Order was not something he could risk revealing to Draco, for fear that the boy truly was dark, and his cover would then be blown. The machinations of being a Death Eater were not to be taken lightly. The games, the constant vigilance, the paranoia, it was endemic to his lot in life. It was a strain being a spy, yet Snape had many years to perfect his tools. Draco *could* be a genuine Death Eater, or he was just a bloody good actor. Snape would not take any chances.

"If you're asking after certain Gryffindors, then they are doing as well as they were last time, Mr Malfoy." Snape glared at his former student, and he saw the imperceptible flinch at the indirect mention of Potter.

"Oh yes, do tell how dear old Potter is doing." Draco spat the name vehemently. Snape was surprised. The boy's words belied his body language. "Has he jumped off the Astronomy Tower yet? Can't cope with the thought his son will be our Lord and Master's heir? Has he tried to leap from his broom? AK himself..."

"Draco, that's enough!" Snape hissed. "It's bad enough I've had one run in with the petulant Gryffindor this morning, I don't need you whining in my ear about him. You know he's practically a wraith, barely attending classes, hardly even living..." Draco again felt the pain as he heard his professor confirm that Harry was indeed suffering. He almost didn't hear what the professor was quietly saying. "... I still don't understand your motivation for your little scheme Draco, but whatever you were trying to achieve, it seems you have succeeded. Don't gloat too

long over your victory. You have succeeded in turning Potter into a broken shell. You won. Now move on to the next stage of your plan." Snape watched as Draco quickly turned, the glint from a tear catching the light as he looked away. The tear made the professor doubt some of his assumptions about the boy. Was he that good an actor?

Draco regained his composure by reading through the list of assigned potions to study. He would pine over Harry later, when he knew it was safe. The baby kicked him in the kidneys at this point, and he willingly accepted the low blow. He deserved it. As he flipped to the next parchment, he read on in interest. Not being able to brew any potions without his magic, Draco had to thoroughly research the various ingredients and write long and detailed accounts of each potion's properties, it's uses and possible problems. He frowned at the list of ingredients of this particular potion.

"Er, sir? Since when do we do fertility potions in the NEWTs? Besides, where on earth are you going to get petrified Pogrebin pubic hairs? I didn't think the Russian Ministry allowed anyone into the tombs of the ancient Pogrebin aristocracy..." Draco looked over the ingredients again. They were rather obscure. He didn't want to think about collecting fresh sphinx semen, or Erkling eggs from a ritually slaughtered Erkling.

"What are you talking about Draco?" Snape looked at him sideways.

Draco indicated the parchment. "This potion here. The Fertilitatumas. You couldn't expect anyone to brew this. For starters, half the ingredients are illegal..."

Snape interrupted quickly. "What! You can read that?" His eyes widen in shocked surprise.

"Of course I can. I'm pregnant, not illiterate." Draco huffed sternly.

"Read it to me." The Potions master asked urgently.

Draco raised an eyebrow, but looked back, and read the parchment aloud to his professor. He read the complete list of ingredients, along with the brewing process. This Fertilitatumas was to be brewed around the phases of the moon, and the final result had to be used within a short period of time after the final brewing stages. Draco frowned as he continued. The rest of the page explained more than just a potion. It explained in vivid detail a sex magic ritual that accompanied the use of the potion. A strange feeling crept up his spine as he read, but he thought nothing of it. The baby was most likely moving in a different position again.

The sex magic ritual that was used in conjunction with Fertilitatumas involved many things. This potion would work for any couple, regardless of sex, but there were a number of factors that needed to be perfect. The one being impregnated needed to be a virgin, for starters. There was a considerable amount of laying of hands on the 'mother's' body. This was followed by a rather intricate series of chants - in Parseltongue. The page ended mid sentence, and Draco turned it over, but the other side of the parchment was blank. He flicked through the pile, searching for the rest of the potion, but there wasn't any more to it. The other page was missing.

Draco immediately realised that this was perhaps some potion that the Professor was supposed to brew for Voldemort. Who else would go to such lengths to brew such a potion? Things started to fit together. Perhaps Voldemort wanted Draco to learn about some more dark and interesting potions. This must have been the important potion that Snape stuffed up. Draco looked up at his professor questioningly. "This is for Voldemort, isn't it? This... This is what you failed to brew properly the night of my initiation, wasn't it?"

Snape snatched the aged parchment from Draco's hands, grabbing the younger wizard's wrist in the process. All colour had drained from the professor's already sallow skin. Draco couldn't understand the sudden fear in his professor's eyes. He could feel the tendrils of a Legilimency attack as they tried to force their way into his mind. He slammed his barriers down fast, and Snape drew back in surprise, blinking rapidly.

"How? How did you manage that?" Snape asked in surprise. He suddenly sat eye to eye with his student. "Draco, listen to me. Listen carefully. You will tell me now - tell me truthfully - your very life depends on your answer." Snape spoke quietly with a tone of urgency. Draco was about to protest at the professor's hand, as it was beginning to crush his own wrist. His formerly broken wrist, which still ached. "You can drop the act Draco. I know the truth. I need to know something else. Something very important." Snape hoped in that moment he was right, but his gut feeling told him that he had made the correct guess.

Draco was taken aback. The professor knew? How? In the space of an hour, two Death Eaters knew things he had spent months keeping secret. He sagged in his seat, defeated. There was no way now he could overcome this, not if Snape knew. He nodded to his professor.

"I need to know. That night you and Potter... copulated. I have to know. Did anything remotely resembling that ritual..." he shook the parchment in Draco's face. "... take place during that night. It's vital Draco. More than your own life depends on it." He poked Draco's stomach, indicating his unborn child.

Draco closed his eyes. Of course he remembered that night. It pained him to do so, but he brought the memory to the forefront of his mind, just like he did every night when he tortured himself. Harry's unbidden tenderness. Harry's amazing hands. Draco drifted off into his memory, but a sharp pain around his wrist reminded him where he was.

"There were candles, hundreds of them." Draco mused dreamily, and smiled. He closed his eyes as he remembered the candles he lit in the room. Harry had conjured more, but not the floating kind, just hundreds of those little tea light candles and had them scattered over the room. "I had dared Harry to brew this ultra slick lubricant with increased pain numbing potential. He did it right under your nose Sir. Right there during his detention. He said you were distracted." Snape released his hand and took a sharp deep breath.

"Go on." The professor's voice cracked as he sat stonily.

"Harry's hands seemed different. They seemed... soft. He ran them all over my body. Draco ran the back of his hand across his jaw at the memory. "I had wanted him to... it was my first time. Usually I made love to Harry, but that night, I wanted to give myself to him..." Draco continued dreamily. "You know, he mutters in Parseltongue a lot. When he swears and when he... comes. It's so beautiful and sexy..." Draco drifted off.

"Sweet Merlin!" Snape stood up, running his hand through his hair. The professor became agitated, and started pacing quickly before the fireplace.

"Sir?" Draco seemed confused. "What? I'm sorry, you didn't need to hear all that..."

"Too bloody right." The professor continued pacing and muttered to himself. "I don't know how he did it. How the hell did he manage to get it on his skin? I should have never trusted the arrogant little snot..."

"Sir? What's wrong?"

Snape's eyes darted around the room. "Draco, had I known this months ago, we could have done something. As it is, we have to get you out of here now."

Draco could not believe what he was hearing. Snape wanted to take him away. "But..." he shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh for goodness sake, you are as ignorant as your bloody lover sometimes." He shook the parchment in Draco's face. "Can't you see? I brewed this potion for our Lord. Potter was supposed to take it to my quarters because some other fool Gryffindor was poisoned when his cauldron blew up. I had to take him to the infirmary. I can only assume he used it with you. Congratulations Draco. Your child is the product of a very dark and very ancient fertility potion."

Draco just stood there, mouth agape. Things fell into place. The whole ritual, the amazing ambient magic of that night. His own supposed infertility. It was all starting to make sense.

"But Harry didn't say... I mean, he didn't take any potion beforehand. I thought he set some protective charms as well..." Draco's thoughts were a confused jumble.

"Potter didn't do any Prophylaxis charm, Draco. He told me himself. He thought you wanted a silencing charm around the room. That's what he'd been setting. Besides, he didn't need to take the potion. He only needed it to get on his skin, and it was absorbed into his system. Goodness knows what he did..." The two men were equally oblivious to how Harry managed to somehow get the potion onto himself. "We have to get out of here Draco. There's no telling what Voldemort might do if he finds out that this baby was conceived with the help of that potion."

"Why would that make a difference?"

"Has your brain turned to mush from this pregnancy Draco? Honestly. Perhaps it's a side effect

of letting a Gryffindor bugger you. They sap your common sense. Goodness knows you haven't shown much of that in the past few months. Think carefully. Why would Voldemort want me to brew a fertility potion?"

Draco nodded. He was starting to see what the professor meant. "There was all that Parseltongue... in that ritual." Snape nodded his head.

"It's dark and very ancient. I have no idea what it would do to the child, but it's obviously something of great power. Why else would our Lord want it? Now come on. We're going to have to risk you flooing back to Hogwarts. You think you can cope?"

Draco nodded as a tear formed in his eye. He was going to escape after all. "I'll risk it. I... Sir, I have to tell you..." Now that the professor had suspected his duplicity, he felt like confessing all. His own suspicions had been proved correct if Snape was going to help him escape. He should have given in to his initial thoughts, and approached the man earlier. Curse his bloody paranoia. Why had he not done it sooner? "I've not been totally useless, sir. I've had some magic. I don't know where it came from, or what, but a few days after my own magic left, I started to get these powerful surges. I can't control them, but when I get them I can do a lot. Wandlessly too." The professor just stopped and stared at Draco.

The professor nodded. "I suspected as much. Bloody hell Draco, have you been absorbing bloody Gryffindor genes from this child? Are you out of your mind! Why didn't you say something? Did you not know where my loyalties lie, Draco? I would have thought Potter would have clued you in on that piece of information. You should have come to me!"

Draco just stood and stared at his professor. All this time, the two of them, stepping around each other, each playing for the same team, yet concerned they would blow their covers. How could he have been so stupid? Perhaps his brains had been addled since the pregnancy. Realising the impatience in his professors stance, he responded. "Let's get out of here, Sir. I don't need anything here." That wasn't true. He had plenty of belongings, everything he owned was in this Manor. "Everything I want is at Hogwarts." *Whether or not it wants me is yet to be seen,* he thought.

As he helped Draco up, Snape hissed under his breath. "If the Dark Lord ever discovered the truth about what you've been hiding, or about my true loyalties..."

"Yesss, it would be *most* interesting if I ever discovered the truth, wouldn't it?" Colour drained from both their faces and Draco's heart stopped momentarily. They slowly turned to see the menacing visage of the Dark Lord standing just inside the library door. They spied Peter Pettigrew skulking behind the door, his face as pale as their own.

Snape bowed obsequiously. "My Lord!" He did not get up. Draco bowed his head before Voldemort, hoping against hope that none of their conversation was overheard apart from the last sentence. Voldemort walked slowly to where Draco stood. Draco flinched as Voldemort raised his hand. The red eyes stung with their piercing gaze.

"Draco my child." The cold scaly hand rubbed across Draco's cheek, before lifting his chin. He snapped his fingers away in disgust as he tutted. "It would ssseem you've been hiding thingsss from me. I dissstinctly recall you told me that you had instigated relationsss with Potter in the desire to break him. Judging from that charming recitation of yoursss, it would ssseem that you indeed have feelingsss for the traitor."

Draco thought fast. "Of course not my Lord. I merely was feeding falsehoods to this traitor here. I find it interesting that he's been spying on you for years." *Oh Merlin, I don't want to sell Snape out!* But it was the first plan that came to his mind. *Curse my bloody survival instincts*. "Here's your spy my Lord. Right here." Draco attempted to kick Snape in the stomach, but failed dismally. He didn't want to lose his centre of balance, not so soon after standing up.

Snape looked up at Draco with understanding in his eyes. He was forgiven for selling him out. No doubt Snape had expected this moment, and understood that Draco was at least trying to save himself. But he couldn't understand the confused look on the professor's face.

Voldemort paced slowly, circling Snape. Circling his prey. "Perhapsss I could believe you. Perhapsss Ssseverusss has been my ssspy. But I think I might have uncovered two traitorsss in my midst." His gaze bore right through Draco, but he tried to maintain his ever crumbling composure. He didn't think he'd last much longer. As he spoke, he realised that if Voldemort had heard his confession to Snape, then he would have heard Draco practically confess he was not loyal. He hoped that Snape's transgressions would make his pale into insignificance. It was his last hope.

"My Lord? What do you mean?" Draco asked coolly.

"Tell me Draco? When did you become a Parselmouth?"

"My Lord, I don't understand." Draco frowned. What the hell was Voldemort talking about? He couldn't speak Parseltongue. He couldn't understand a word Harry said when he spoke it.

"Well then tell me how we've been conversssing for the passst few momentsss in the language?"

Draco looked from the Dark Lord's stare, across at his professor incredulously. He also looked over to Peter, who was looking at him in the same puzzled way that Snape had been earlier. "Sir?"

"You've been speaking in Parseltongue to our Lord, Draco." The professor hung his head. He knew that there was little hope for the young man now. Draco looked between the two confused wizards, then back to Voldemort. He was very confused. Yes, it was official, the pregnancy had messed with his brains.

"You know Draco, you are a brilliant actor. Consummate, as are all Malfoys. You nearly had usss all fooled. I've been keeping a clossse eye on you however. For a pregnant wizard, sssomething

just didn't ssseem right all these monthsss." Draco looked over at Peter, wondering if the Rat had sold him out. Voldemort saw the look. "Oh, don't worry, he didn't give you away - at leassst, not consciously. I'll forgive him just this once. He's not very good at Occlumency, and his mind was screaming at me when he came into the room. Rather interesting newsss he had to tell me. I had to come and sssee for myssself."

Peter could not look Draco in the eye. He looked shamed that he had unwittingly betrayed Draco. As the blonde was distracted with Peter, he felt the tendrils of Legilimency attacking his mind again, and his automatic reflexes slammed down hard. "Congratulationsss Draco. Well done. Your Occlumencccy ssskillsss are remarkable. I would never have guessed you are equal to Potter in that regard." He bowed slightly to the younger man. "Ssstill, I find it amazing that a pregnant wizard due to give birth can perform Occlumencccy, as well as speak Parseltongue. Your wandlesss sssummoning trick was a little sssurprise to discover as well. Tell me Draco, is there anything you *can't* do?" he asked sarcastically. Draco remained speechless.

Voldemort continued, this time addressing the professor, who was still bowing before him. "It would seem I owe you an apology Ssseverusss." The Potions master looked up at his lord in confusion. "It seems the Fertilitatumas you brewed for me did indeed work. Care to tell me *now* how you let it get into Potter's hands? Better yet, I'm curious as to how it got *onto* Potter's hands.

Draco started to move towards the door, seeing the open exit and escape just beyond. Peter saw the direction of his gaze, and held his wand against the blonde's back. Draco stayed still. In blind panic, he attempted to reach for the magic that he sometimes found there, but found, as he had suspected, it was missing when he needed it the most. What bloody good was it when he couldn't even grasp it.

"My Lord..." Snape stammered. "I don't know how Potter managed to get it on himself, but a student injured himself gravely in the class. Potter was the only one who could deliver it to my quarters in time for the scheduled pick up. I could not leave the student. I did not think that Potter might try to use it, or even know what it was."

Voldemort looked at Draco to provide the rest of the explanation. He shrugged. "He told me he had to deliver something to the Professor's office. I didn't know if he used it, or spilt the potion or anything."

"A fassscinating anecdote. I sssuspected as much. Oh, I know it *all*. I heard all of your conversation earlier. I heard you reciting my parchment Draco. That's when I was curiousss. I wondered how you could have read the whole thing, considering it was written in Parseltongue."

Draco realised now why the Professor had been so eager for him to read the whole parchment. Understanding was starting to sink in. *I can understand Parseltongue? How*?

As if reading his mind, Voldemort continued. "It would seem that the potion hasss worked correctly. If I'm not wrong, then this child will have the powersss of both his parentsss, tenfold. No doubt you are feeling the child's magic, and channelling it whilst your own is sssustaining his

growth. Guess he's a little Parselmouth, just like his dear old father." The knut finally dropped for Draco, and now the fear finally set in. He saw the gaze in Voldemort's eye, and knew his time was quickly drawing to a close. He would be lucky to see the sunset. He could see the concentrated panic rising on Draco's face. "What's wrong? Can't grasssp the magic Draco? What a pity. To know it's at your fingertips - ssso clossse, yet ssso far." Voldemort came closer to Draco with each word. "You want to use it, don't you? You want to ssstrike me down with it?" Draco agreed with each one of Voldemort's taunts. If he had ever been able to grasp the magic, he would have not hesitated to strike the repulsive creature down with it! Circumstances had just gone totally wrong for the blonde. Nothing had gone right, not since the moment he had returned to the Manor.

The Dark Lord suddenly turned on his heel to face the Potions master. "Ssseverusss, get up!" Voldemort screeched. The professor complied. "How am I going to repay you for your treachery?"

Professor Snape mustered all his dignity, looking his betrayed master in the eye. "I forfeit my life to you." Draco looked at him in shock. The man *wanted* to die a ritual death? He was stunned at the thought. He realised the man was proud, but he was stunned by his actions just the same.

Voldemort laughed that high-pitched squeal. "You want to die with honour Ssseverusss? I don't think you dessserve that. No! You shall not fall on your own sssword. Wormtail! Take him out of my sssight." He waved them away, and turned to face Draco. The killer gleam in his eyes lead Draco to think his time was ending. But as quickly as his wand had been drawn, the Dark Lord turned to the door.

"*Avada Kedavra!*"

The lifeless body of Snape fell to the floor in a flash of brilliant emerald green light. Peter jumped backwards several feet and scurried into a corner, bowing in subservience to his master. Draco just stood there. A curse in the back. A death with the least honour. He began to shake, he didn't know why, but his fear was beginning to overwhelm him. Instinctively, he placed his hands across his belly. It was a futile gesture, but a universal gesture every bearer uses to protect their unborn child. He didn't realise he was hyperventilating until he nearly blacked out. He grabbed for the nearest chair, sitting down. The silence after the curse was deafening.

"Wormtail! Take *that* away." Voldemort was referring to Snape's body. "Take it to Hogwartsss. Let his remainsss be a reminder to Dumbledore and Potter. They're on their own." His eyes turned and bored directly into Draco. Peter levitated the lifeless form as he left the room. The rat was shaking as well; he had not expected the sudden curse. Draco would have thought that Voldemort might have wanted to play with Snape a little more - a few hours of Cruciatus here, a little bit of rape there. After all, that was the Dark Lord's usual pattern. Draco had seen it often enough during the past few months. Draco looking away from Snape's corpse, not wanting to see the vacant stare. Another betrayal. Draco was certainly wracking them up right before his own demise. He wanted to be sick.

"Asss for you young Malfoy. Why am I not sssurprised." The venom dripped off Voldemort's tongue. "You are a sycophant. A weakling, just like your father." Draco was stunned at that insult. He thought that Voldemort thought more highly of his father. "Your Malfoy survival instinctsss are legendary. You change your allegiances as often as your under-robes, as long as it meansss the survival of the family name. Your haughty pureblood idealsss are archaic, but they suit my cause well. For all your hard work, you Malfoys always come up smelling like rosesss. Luciuss got away with it by saying I put him under Imperiusss. I punished him for that you know Draco. He now knowsss the true meaning of being under Imperiusss. Perhapsss that sssame lesson would asssssist you."

Draco was going to throw up. He turned to look away, not able to look the grotesque creature in the eye any longer. As he turned, he suddenly found himself unable to move. "Magical bondsss of air young Draco. Mossst effective. I don't think you realissse just how powerful you presently are. I don't think I want to risk you suddenly getting a grassssp on your son's magic." Draco struggled, but the more he did, the more he could feel the air constricting his body, and against his windpipe. His eyes widened in fear.

"Oh, don't worry my pet. I'm not going to harm you yet. It would be silly of me to sacrifice you, when your son is everything I've been waiting for."

Finally, Draco found his voice. "What do you want from my son? Isn't it enough you're going to make him your heir?" he spat.

"Oh, don't worry about your ssson Draco. He's going to be perfectly fine. I don't want much from him. Not much at all. Just his sssoul. Thought he might want to sssacrifice it in the name of his gracious host." Voldemort added casually.

"What? You won't touch my son. I'll kill myself before I let you lay a filthy..."

"Tsk, tsk, tsk. Hasty words Draco. I'd be careful if I were you. I could crush you with a flick of thisss wand." His tone suddenly changed to that sing song voice he used when talking of his grand plans. "Ssseeing as you were ssso kind to use my potion Draco, think it's only fair that the Familiatumus that you are carrying isss mine. After all, he wasss bred for one purpose only."

"What are you going to do to him?" Draco was resigned to his fate. All the months of wondering, of living in hope were now gone. He had just served his son to Voldemort on a platter, and he could do nothing about it. Somehow, just knowing a little about his fate was cathartic. He could feel the weight lifting from his shoulders.

"The Familiatumusss is the child born from the Fertilitiatumasss. His powers are ten timesss greater than those of his parentsss. At least Potter's child will be almost asss powerful as my own flesssh and blood. Can you imagine having that much power Draco? Of course you can. You've had a tassssste of it. But imaging having that much to wield every day!" Voldemort's eyes lit up in the joy of that much magical power.

"What do you mean you're going to offer his soul in sacrifice?" Draco knew what it meant; he just needed to hear exactly what would happen.

"Why I'm disappointed in you. Didn't Luciusss ever tell you about soul binding and soul giving magicsss? I would have thought the sacrificial ritual would have been on your curriculum."

"I think father was in Azkaban when I was due for that lesson." He drawled back. His fear gone, he wasn't afraid to bite back at the Dark Lord's words. How could he make it any worse? "Why don't you bring me up to speed?"

"Feisty too. Tell me, does falling in love with a Gryffindor automatically mean you start to act as restless and foolhardy as they do. You are reminding me more and more of a certain young man I would dearly love to get my hands on." Draco just stared him down. "Never mind. Okay, I'll indulge your wish Draco. When the boy is born, we'll perform the ritual that will destroy his soul. I'll replace it with my own soul, and I'll not only have a new body, but I'll also have the child's powers as my own to master!"

Draco had never heard of such a ritual before. "Won't you be a little vulnerable? At least until you grow up?"

"Surely you didn't think I wouldn't realissse that. I'll need your asssissstance in that part of it Draco. You'll be ssssacrificing a part of yourself to allow me to age the baby to whatever age I choose. I'm thinking I'd like to be in my early twenties again. How would it feel to be the bearer of someone who is suddenly older than you? Hmmm. Just think. No dirty nappies, *Mother!*"

"If you think I'll help you to destroy my child, then expect me to look after it..." Draco was livid. His blood was boiling, and his face red. He had tried every spell he could think of, but he could not feel an ounce of his son's powerful magic. Perhaps the magical bonds suppressed the ability.

"Who sssaid you'd live to look after me, Draco! Tell me. Honesssstly. Wasss he worth it? Wassss it worth giving up a life like thissss? You could have had everything Draco. I had even toyed with making you my heir." Draco cringed in disgust at the thought, but Voldemort nodded. "I even toyed with the possibility of using the potion with you, but you had not yet joined my ranksss. Tell me, wasss it worth betraying your father for the love of a Gryffindor?" Voldemort seemed to be trying to understand Draco's motivation for falling in love with Harry. Draco had no conscious motivation.

"You think it was a conscious decision?" Draco had nothing to lose now. "What would you know of love, My Lord." He bit back mockingly. "You can't choose who you love. And I love Harry. Always have. Whilst there's breath in my body, I'll still love him, and I'll love his son - our son. Even if you strike me down, I'll still love them both."

"You're an overemotional fool. Your acting skills are to be applauded, but in the end, the traitor is always discovered." The disappointment was coming off the Dark Lord in waves. Draco could not have cared. The emotion was bubbling in his chest, and he realised the tears were streaming

down his face. Draco hadn't realised that other Death Eaters had entered the room. It took him a moment to realise that one of them was Lucius.

"Father!" Draco pleaded. He didn't expect any help from that quarter, but the natural plea just fell from his lips.

"Luciusss, take this traitor away. You know what to do." Draco didn't look his father in the eye. He knew what he would see there. The cold Malfoy stare. No warmth whatsoever. Voldemort tipped his head, and Lucius spoke.

"Come with me *Son*. I believe we have plenty to discuss." Lucius grabbed Draco by the arm. He found that despite the magical bonds, he could walk. He surmised that the bonds would allow him to move when touching another wizard. As soon as Lucius stopped touching him, he could not take another step. No doubt his fate would be decided there. He could feel the Dark Lord's gaze burning through his back as he left the room. He awaited the curse that had recently destroyed Professor Snape, but was startled when he had made it out of the room unscathed. He was being returned to his own rooms.

As Lucius dragged him across the threshold, he immediately sensed the release of the air bond. A sense of wrongness permeated the air, and as he took a deep breath, he doubled over in pain. An agonizing throbbing ripped through his belly, and he felt as if his innards had been completely melted. He gasped for more air, the stabbing pains increasing in strength. "Arrrrgh! Merlin. What the fuck is going on? Father?"

Lucius didn't rush to his son's side. He casually removed his outer robe and jacket, and nonchalantly began rolling up his sleeves. "Oh stop being so melodramatic. The room has been magically dampened. We're now in a magical void. Wouldn't want you to have a sudden surge of power. Wouldn't want to risk you trying to send off any messages to your little boyfriend, or his cronies either, could we?"

"What?" Draco tried to get the word out between panting breaths. Another searing pain struck and he fell to the floor. A gush of wetness flooded his lower robes, and the distinct coppery tang of blood filled the air. He didn't want to fathom what was happening.

"Oh, I'm sorry," Lucius casually kneels down next to Draco. "I *might* have neglected to mention that since the room is magically shielded, your son's magic won't work, and neither will yours. Your artificial womb is starting to deteriorate..." Draco's eyes widened as the realisation was confirmed. "I'm afraid you're in labour, Son." He hissed the word through his teeth.

"But the birth..." Draco wheezed. "I need magic to help deliver..."

"Oh, that's right... you need magic to help you deliver, don't you? How careless of me!" Lucius drawled sarcastically. "I guess I'll just have to deliver this child without the aid of magic." The cold menacing stare held no pity, but the voice played the pity card to perfection. "I'm afraid this might hurt a little Draco." He did not mistake the glint of the ceremonial dagger Lucius

unsheathed from his belt.

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If either wizard had been less preoccupied, they might have noticed that Draco's room had been ransacked. Nobody noticed the misplaced items on the writing desk, or in the jewellery case on his dressing table.

Peter Pettigrew Apparated to the edge of Hogwarts wards. He dropped the body of Severus Snape by the gates. Looking down upon the vacant death glare on the face of his former nemesis, he noticed it had lost most of its harshness. In death it was replaced by an unnervingly glassy stare. Peter closed the eyelids, and muttered quietly. "Sorry Snivellus." Looking up to the heavens, he added the final epitaph. "Padfoot, Prongs; give him hell." He darted away as he quickly transformed into his rodent form. He had no doubt that by now Dumbledore would know of Snape's fate. Harry's scar would have seen to that.

Peter didn't return to the Manor. He had more important tasks this evening. If anyone had witnessed the strange scene, they would have expected the rat to head off into the Forbidden Forest. Nobody would have expected his errands would lead him *towards* the castle.

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Chapter: 9

(Crying Over) Spilt Potions

by Azhure

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Chapter 8 - Hope Springs Eternal
...if it isn't one petulant Gryffindor, it's another!
...After all, I'm a known Death Eater...
...This potion here. The Fertilitatumas. You couldn't expect anyone to brew this. For starters, half the ingredients are illegal...
...I need to know. That night you and Potter... copulated... Did you do anything remotely resembling that ritual...
...you are as ignorant as your bloody lover sometimes...

... Your child is the product of a very dark and very ancient fertility potion...
...I've not been totally useless, sir. I've had some magic...
...Yesss, it would be most interesting if I ever discovered the truth, wouldn't it?
...You've been speaking in Parseltongue to our Lord, Draco.
...You know Draco, you are a brilliant actor. Consummate, as are all Malfoys. You nearly had usss all fooled.
...If I'm not wrong, then this child will have the powersss of both his parentsss, tenfold.
...Avada Kedavra!
...What do you want from my son? Isn't it enough you're going to make him your heir?
...You think it was a conscious decision? What would you know of love, My Lord. You can't choose who you love. And I love Harry. Always have. Whilst there's breath in my body, I'll still love him, and I'll love his son - our son. Even if you strike me down, I'll still love them both.
...You're an overemotional fool. Your acting skills are to be applauded, but in the end, the traitor is always discovered...

Harry woke with a start - sweat pouring from him. The bed linens were twisted around his robes. His scar throbbed fiercely in an erratic beat. He'd had a bad headache and been in a foul mood for the past few days - at least it was more foul than usual. As he glanced at the clock, he could see the numbers fuzzily through his throbbing eyeballs. He slowly realised it was still fairly early. No doubt dinner was still being served in the Great Hall. Harry had not bothered to join the rest of the school, and went to lie down for a rest, and to get rid of his headache.

Wincing in pain as he sat up, he buried his head in his hands. It had taken a few moments to realise the erratic beating was his own heart, gradually slowing as he returned to wakefulness from the vision. He felt a heavy stickiness against his hands - too thick for sweat. He flinched as he wiped his brow, and a ripple of pain tore through the puckered edges of his tender scar. A stray beam of the early evening moonlight crossed his bed, and he saw the blood on his hand.

It had indeed been a virulent vision. Vivid imagery came flooding back and Harry recoiled as he recalled Voldemort's vehemence. This vision was the worst he had experienced in the past few months. But even so, Harry had a hard time believing in its authenticity.

At first, the visions totally devastated Harry, particularly when they would usually feature a sneering and simpering Draco coveting the Dark Lord's company. After Harry had learned to live with the heartache, he would accept their intrusion into his life. Oft times he would report on some aspect of them to Professor Dumbledore, even if they weren't terribly informative about Voldemort's activities. It seemed he wasn't getting visions about those meetings, which Harry thought strange.

As the fog of pain began to clear, he could see that the vision played out like a well enacted script - carried out with the sole purpose of affecting the one wizard audience; or it was indeed the very surreal truth. Harry thought he knew his adversaries well enough to assume the former. But the longer he sat there, the harder the niggling feeling of doubt pushed at him. *Snape can't be dead. I only ran into the git a few hours ago. Pissed him off too. Like that's anything new.* Harry shook his head.

A jolt of realisation struck through the pain clouded fog. All he had to do was find Snape, and then he would know that this whole thing was a farce. Harry carefully got up, and planned to make his way to the Headmaster's office. He flinched in pain again as he accidentally bumped the scar. Harry had no idea how Voldemort had reconnected their link. Harry had mastered Occlumency, and practiced diligently. He could only surmise that the snake was using some dark, dark magic to try and taunt Harry with these images.

Voldemort knew he had successfully tricked Harry with his vision of Sirius a few years earlier. Perhaps he was relying on Harry's recklessness, so sent these last vision in the hope he would come to 'rescue' Draco. Harry was not *that* foolish. Honestly, Voldemort was the stupid one if he thought Harry would fall for the same trick twice. Harry had learnt that lesson with a terribly costly mistake. Unfortunately, he thought, I always have to learn things the hardest way.

Harry had made his way to the bathroom, splashing water on his face to ease away the pain. Some pain could not be eased so readily, and Harry still found a part of him *was* hurt each time he saw Draco in the visions. The betrayal still stunned Harry, even after all these months. He had, after all, closed himself off from all emotional contact with others. To see the blonde betrayer growing heavy with their child whilst fawning over the Dark Lord - that did pull at the one corner of his heart that still had room to love. The one traitorous corner of his heart that would refuse to let Harry completely get over the blonde and get on with his life.

As he thought on that, he recalled the rest of this latest vision. He admitted that Draco's acting skills were consummate, even if the whole thing reeked of one of Aunt Petunia's soap opera's. He almost had Harry fooled into thinking that he wasn't a loyal Death Eater, and had been hiding away pining for Harry, awaiting rescue. Harry momentarily stopped in his tracks - then shook his head. *No, that could not be the truth. He would never have done that. He's a sneaky, conniving Slytherin. Even if it were the truth, he would have done his damnest to get out of the situation. It wasn't like him to just sit there idly for months and just accept what was happening to him. Or was it?*

Harry's thoughts were becoming confused. Why was he suddenly doubting everything he had seen these past months? All because of one vision. He brought himself back to reality and realised he had to talk to the Headmaster. Once he saw that Professor Snape was alive and well and stalking the school halls, he could then dismiss the entire thing as a complete farce, and he could get back to his existence.

He barely noticed the few students in the halls as he stalked wraith-like to Dumbledore's office. The students would have barely noticed him anyway - they had become accustomed to his odd behaviour - and nobody ever thought to question his actions. As he made the journey, he thought on his goals. If Voldemort were sending visions this dramatic, then he was obviously starting to escalate his plans. Harry knew their encounter would have to come soon. Too soon, but Harry knew he was ready. Harry guessed that his son would be born any day now, and he had plans to get to Voldemort. There was not enough room in this world for both of them.

Harry had not discussed his plan with Dumbledore. He didn't need the old man's approval - he didn't need anyone's approval. Harry would go when the time was right. Judging from tonight's vision, that right time was now. But he couldn't just go rushing blindly into some trap that Voldemort was setting; he didn't even know how he would get himself to the Manor. Harry smirked. He knew they were at the Manor - they had been quite open about mentioning it often in their visions. Besides, Harry had recognised that library from the one time he had been to Draco's home. That trip was a whole different lifetime ago, and the Harry who had visited then, was a totally different wizard to the one who was planning a comeback.

After rounding the last corner before Dumbledore's office, Harry saw the staircase behind the gargoyle open and the wizened form of the Headmaster hurring away at a rapid pace. The old man spotted Harry, and beckoned him over.

"Harry. I was expecting you. You saw it all then?" Dumbledore's face looked grave, and there was a different glint in his eye - a glint of sadness.

Harry was a little puzzled by Dumbledore's words. "Sir? I just..."

The Headmaster put a reassuring hand on Harry's shoulder and nodded. "You did see it all, didn't you Harry?" he asked hopefully. Harry's confused gaze made him elaborate further, a lump in his throat straining his voice and showing the wizard's true age. "I've just had word from Hagrid. The Death Eaters must have dumped Professor Snape's body at the gates. I'm heading to the infirmary now." Seeing the stunned look on Harry's face, he stopped. "You did see Voldemort killing Severus, didn't you? I can see your scar looks tender." Harry just nodded.

"I... they..." Harry could not say another word. *It was true! Snape really was dead. Then the vision... Oh fuck!* Harry could not get past that last thought. *If Snape's dead, then Draco must be... Oh sweet Merlin!* Harry faltered visibly, and the Headmaster held him before he could fall.

"I think you should go and wait up in my office Harry. You go on up there and take some rest. I do have to see to Severus." Harry didn't remember climbing the stairs, but he was now in the Headmaster's office. He did notice, however, that all the other portraits were awake, and had been in animated discussion before Harry arrived. They silenced themselves when they saw the surly young man enter. Many averted their eyes at his gaze, but true to form, Phineas Nigellus attempted to stare Harry down, only turning away when he realised that Harry was not staring at him, but past him; staring at nothing. The former Slytherin headmaster shook his head and left his frame, muttering all the while about the boy being 'not all there'.

Oh Merlin. Snape's dead, which means what I saw was at least partly true. Harry's hands started to shake as he was being overwhelmed. The truth of the vision began to seep into his conscience - a conscience that had suppressed everything for months. *If it's true, then Draco didn't betray me! He's been helpless all along!* Harry sat down in shock. *I've been wrong. Why the hell was I so quick to judge him?* Harry bereated himself. *Did I really have so little faith in him to think he would set out to deliberately hurt me?* Harry realised the horrid truth. He had been wrong. Once again he had been reckless. Not reckless in action, but reckless in his thoughts. It had been so

easy to believe that Draco had betrayed him. After all, everyone would believe that of a Slytherin.

How could I have got it so wrong? Harry could feel the cold hard barrier around his heart start to crack. He had loved Draco unreservedly. He had then judged him as traitor without even a second thought. He was a fool, and didn't deserve the love that Draco obviously still had for him. *Of course Draco could only see one way of self preservation when being held against his will in the snake pit. It was the truly obvious Slytherin thing to do. Look at Snape. He did it for decades! Draco did this to protect our child. Our son. Draco loves him - and he loves me!*

At thought of the baby, Harry recalled what Draco and Snape had been talking about. He thought it odd that he had seen that part of their interaction, when Voldemort wasn't in the room. He could only suspect that Voldemort had overheard. *A potion. That potion.* It was all starting to make some sort of strange and bizarre sense. He remembered carrying that potion for the professor. He could even remember being scared by Peeves, nearly dropping it; before spilling it on his hands. He remembered their subsequent lovemaking. It had been a magical night, and Harry had not fully understood the consequences - at least - he still didn't fully understand. Somehow this potion was partly responsible for Draco being pregnant, and this was causing some strange side effects for the blonde. *He can read and speak Parseltongue?* Harry shook his head.

Harry tried to recall every part of what he had seen, and for once fervently wished he could have put his thoughts into a pensieve. Not to remember them, but just to look upon Draco's beautiful face. He could see the glow that the pregnancy had given him. He surmised that Draco probably felt horridly fat and ugly - he always complained if he wasn't groomed properly, or if he found a spot on his face. Oh, he was looking cumbersome, and somewhat uncomfortable, but Harry thought he was the most beautiful man in the world. Harry would love him always. That damned traitorous corner of his heart was unfurling and taking over. Harry didn't stop it this time. He had been repressing his emotions for too long now.

Harry could see that he had been the stupid one. Judging Draco that way, and without any second thought was a really reckless thing. He guessed that he was in shock from the events and could not think clearly, most likely because of the baby. *If I was in Draco's shoes, I probably would have done the same thing. Still, I'm not the smart one. He was only doing it to save his skin.*

Harry suddenly realised the urgency of the situation. Here he was, sitting and mulling over Draco's beauty, when Voldemort knew that the blonde was not loyal, and had taken him away. He had to go after him. He looked around the room desperately. Screw his carefully laid out plans. None of them mattered now. He had to get to Draco and to his son, before Voldemort did anything to them.

Harry was startled by Fawkes as the phoenix squawked. Rising up from his perch, the phoenix suddenly dashed from the open window. Harry thought nothing more, but a few moments later the bird was back, alighting in his lap. He had never seen Fawkes hunting before, but as the bird lifted from his lap, he realised that the prey from its mouth was not just some random vermin.

This was indeed no stray rat.

Harry was on his feet instantly, the rat dropped unceremoniously on the floor. Before it could scurry away, Harry's wand was pointed at it, and a spell muttered. A very flustered and shaken Peter Pettigrew transformed in the rat's stead. Before he could even blink, Wormtail found himself on the receiving end of a full body bind, with his mouth the only moving part.

"Harry, please." Peter pleaded. His hands had been raised in supplication just before the body bind struck. "I.... I'm surrendering." The stuttering voice sounded sincere. It sounded a little more confident, and the look in his face was more serene than anything he had seen or heard from his visions over the past few months. Looking around, the Death Eater noticed his location. "Ah, g... good. D... Dumbledore's office."

Harry was angry. The bottled up anger flared at the sight of this traitor in his midst. "What are you doing scuttling around here you... you scum?" Harry's itchy wand hand desperately wanted to do something unforgivable to Pettigrew, but he held off. He knew that he needed to have the air cleared before Pettigrew died. As much as the rat deserved to die horribly, Harry wanted the truth to be finally told.

"H... Harry, I c... came to talk to you." Peter stuttered.

Harry looked at him sceptically. "You wanted to *talk* to *me?* Why on earth would you even think I'd even *want* to listen to you? Didn't you think I might just want to hex first, ask questions later? Besides. Why should I trust you? What could you possibly say that would make me believe you?" Harry's eyes had narrowed as he closed in on the trapped animagus.

"B... because... Draco's in danger... The Great... Lord Vol... Voldemort knows the truth Harry. You... I came... you have to rescue him Harry." Peter looked directly into the green eyes, the same green eyes as Lily's. Peter noticed the raw power festering behind the emerald pools, and he realised for the first time that perhaps his plan to come to Hogwarts had not been well thought out.

Harry snorted. "You came all this way thinking I'd help a traitorous Death Eater? What makes you think I won't just kill you on the spot? After all, I gave you a chance before, and look what you did. You went running back to Voldemort, and now hundreds of people are dead." Harry could see the look of remorse on the rat's face. He continued. "Does it ever bother you to sleep at night, Wormtail? Do you ever feel the shame of your actions? I saw you looking into my eyes before, Peter." Peter was intimidated by Harry, and would have cowered had he been able to move. When had the young man become so powerful? *Harry's no ordinary wizard,* he thought. Harry continued talking. "You saw Lily in my eyes, didn't you? Yes!"

Peter lowered his eyes in total and utter defeat. Harry saw this and stopped, backing off slightly. They stood silently for a few minutes, before Peter forced himself to look at Harry again. "I... I ne-never doubted you'd be a powerful wizard Harry. Anyone who can capture the heart of a Slytherin completely has to have some potent power. I don't know if you'll believe me, but I can

prove what I've got to say. P... please just hear me out. If after that, you still want to curse me..." he looked around the room. "... or give me over to Professor Dumbledore, I'll go quietly. You have my word. You have my wizard bond."

Harry stood shocked. He had momentarily forgotten about his hold over the animagus. A wizard debt must be repaid when asked, but when being offered, well, Harry would hold off on questioning that until he'd heard out Peter. Harry's eyes narrowed slightly, and he flicked his wand imperceptibly, muttering lowly under his breath. "You won't mind then that I've just cast a small *Veritastus* spell, will you?" Harry had cast the rather unknown and slightly dark spell at the rat. Peter would have trouble holding back his words, particularly if he had been wanting to lie about them.

Peter was the one who was now shocked. "Harry... that's a dark spell! Does... does Dumbledore know?" Harry quirked a smile at the corner of his mouth.

"Oh, I'm sure he can overlook its use, just this once. Besides, with the witnesses in here..." Harry glanced up at the portraits, all of whom were being terribly obvious about trying not to listen. "... I don't think anyone will be telling tales out of class. At least tales that don't deserve to be told." Harry let out a deep breath. "Tell me why you're here, Wormtail. I know you dumped Snape's body. I know you were there when Voldemort AK'ed him in the back. I know you had been evesdropping on Snape and Draco. Now - just what in the name of Merlin and the stars could you possibly have to say to me?"

The older wizard again looked into the brilliant green eyes, seeing the weariness surrounding them, before glancing up at the enflamed scar. "Y... you've seen? Haven't you?" He didn't need Harry to answer the question. The slight nod confirmed it. "I... well... I know that Draco does love you. He was telling lies - all these months. He's a Slytherin for goodness sake. He had to do it - to protect himself, and your son."

"I was there with Lord Voldemort when Narcissa first came and told us about discovering Draco's pregnancy, and about your relationship. He was livid, to say the least. We pulled everyone out of Azkaban - he wanted Lucius to know the news. At one stage, he wanted to destroy Lucius because of his son's actions, but, Malfoy convinced him of a better plan. Lucius asked Voldemort to let him deal with his own son first, and that's when he kidnapped Draco, taking him to the Manor. Voldemort kept mumbling about plans to destroy you by destroying your child, I... I'm not sure, but I think he was ready to kill Draco on the spot."

Peter paused. Harry was rigid, but indicated for the rat to continue. "When Draco was brought forward, he surprised everyone with his story of how he tricked you, and how he wanted to offer your child to Voldemort's service. I'm pretty sure nearly everyone was fooled by it. At least Voldemort was fooled enough not to have Draco killed on the spot. We were ordered to protect and to guard him after that. I wasn't terribly convinced of his story, and I don't honestly think his father was either; but Lucius wasn't about to contradict our Lord, not after things were looking so good for him. The reflected glory of Draco's successful humiliation of you was enough to keep Lucius from saying anything, but I'm sure he suspected. At least the Manor is a veritable fortress

now."

"But I've been watching... for many years. I've known that Snape had reported to both sides, it was obvious. As for young Draco, well, he's a very convincing actor, but I managed to get close enough to see through that façade. You see, I had one piece of knowledge that nobody else had."

"What's that?" Harry asked, not wanting to hear how this traitor could know what Harry had not for months.

"I knew it for the act it was. I'd seen it all before. With Lily and James." The look of regret on his face at the mention of their names was evident. "Whenever anyone mentioned your name whilst Draco was present, he'd get this look in his eyes. Oh, I could see him covering it up rather quickly, but I knew what to look for. I'd seen it years ago. When Lily looked at your father. It's something about you Potter men. When someone falls in love with you - truly in love, they get this look on their face. It's hard to describe, but I had seen it before. Not just your mother and father, but I had met your grandparents Harry. It's something about your Potter magic. I don't think anyone thinks about it, but it was there. I saw that same look in Draco's eyes that Lily had for James." Peter paused as the information sunk in.

Harry wasn't looking at Peter any more, he was looking down to the floor. He could not form words. *Draco must truly love me. Peter can't be lying. I've got him under a truth spell.* "... My parents." Harry murmured, forgetting for a moment that Peter was under a truth spell.

Peter's tongue had loosened, and he found himself telling everything. "H-Harry, you have n-no right to keep me alive. I betrayed your parents - and you most of all. They were friends, but you have to believe I didn't know Voldemort would kill them, at least, not that quickly. Yes, they were my friends - always good to me. I didn't deserve their friendship, and now. Well, I've made a lousy mistake once - well, more than once - and I came here to see if I couldn't make some amends for that by helping you rescue Draco. You deserved to know the truth. I've got some things in my pocket if you still don't believe me. Draco hasn't stopped loving you, not from the minute he was captured."

Peter indicated to his top pocket, and Harry carefully pulled out the shrunken items. As he enlarged them he saw what they were; a journal, a letter and something wrapped carefully in a silk handkerchief. Draco's silk handkerchief. "Don't open that yet!" Peter exclaimed. "A... at least not until I finish explaining." Harry started leafing through the pages of the journal, his finger running across the paper as he started to read some of the words. He was shaking visibly by the time he reached the letter, and he dared a glance at Peter.

He dared to open the letter, and Peter watched as tears fell on the page from Harry's eyes. Harry sniffed loudly when he finished, folding up the letter. Realising where he was, he wiped his nose and his eyes on his sleeve, not wanting to mar the perfection of Draco's silk handkerchief. "Where'd you get these?" Harry's voice was hoarse. A huge lump was just below the surface, ready to explode forth. His earlier inkling had been correct. Harry had misjudged Draco's actions. He hadn't sold out to Voldemort. He was merely just scared and confused, and coped

with the situation in his own Slytherin way. The journal was full of loving words - words from the heart, and Harry knew he was the one who had made the grave mistake, not Draco.

"I... I stole them from Draco's desk. He doesn't know I have them. He doesn't know I'm here. I... I saw him with the letter a few months ago. I read it - I am sorry Harry."

Harry slumped visibly, all confidence shaken from him by the revelations. He was the biggest prat in the world. He'd misjudged Draco, and now Voldemort was going to...

He sat up suddenly and looked at Peter in earnest. "Wormtail! Voldemort now knows. He confronted him after you took Snape away. He's talking about some ritual... he still wants the baby - my son!" In a sudden blur, Harry began pacing back and forth. The bound Death Eater attempted to point, but still couldn't move. He settled for a nod of the head.

"Harry, that's what that parcel is for." He indicated the small item knotted up in the silk handkerchief. Harry looked at him quizzically.

"What? How?" Harry didn't understand.

Peter attempted a wry smile. "Harry, it was only a matter of time before Voldemort found out about Draco's deception. Lucius was so paranoid, he's had the wards around the manor secured tighter than at Azkaban. I... I had to bring this to you Harry." Peter paused, breathing deeply. Harry saw the worry lines smooth from his face, and a serenity overcome his senses. "Harry, I've wronged you on more occasions than I care to measure. I couldn't do this to you - not again. I needed this... this closure. I can't go on like this any more Harry. My days were numbered in Voldemort's service anyway. That's a portkey. Draco's personal portkey. It will get you into the Manor. I don't know about getting out, but you're a Gryffindor - we're Gryffindors. We make half baked plans, then we realise at the last minute we haven't worked out our escape routes."

Harry eyed the silk carefully, unfurling the knots. Draco's signet ring - his Malfoy ring glinted in his hand. *So that's how Lucius got him out of school in the first place.* Understanding was starting to cross Harry's brow. He looked back into Peter Pettigrew's face, and saw the man looked worried, but some of the tension seemed to have left his face.

"Harry, do this for me, please. I've wronged you in so many ways - your parents, Sirius, and of course, bringing Lord Voldemort back. I've been a fool and I know that a million apologies can't be accepted. Go after Draco and your son, Harry. Go and fulfil your destiny - get Voldemort and wipe his scaly arse of this planet."

Harry was still stunned. He looked between the portkey ring, and Peter's face. "Why now? Why suddenly will you do this for me?"

"I'm a weakling Harry. I don't deserve your pity. Just go. You're wasting time. Leave me here. I'm sure I'll be right. After all, you've bound me, put a truth spell on me..." Harry heard the door to Dumbledore's office open. Thinking that the headmaster had returned, he turned to look, but a

sudden flash of light blinded him. He was thrown back from the impact of the blast, and when he came to, it was to the sight of Ron and Hermione, both wands pointed at Peter Pettigrew.

"Harry!" Ron looked, offering a hand to help his friend up. Harry looked at Ron - really looked at him for the first time in months. He could see no hatred, no bitterness on his friend's open face. "You right mate. Er, sorry, I might have overdone it on the body bind." The red-head turned back and scowled at the animagus.

Harry was a little dazed. "What are you guys doing here?" He straightened his glasses, his grip on his wand firm. He spotted the silk wrapped portkey on the floor a few feet away. He scrabbled to pick it up as he stood up, the parcel still safely wrapped.

"Well Harry, we... er... borrowed your map a few weeks ago." Ron looked sheepish as he explained. "We didn't think you'd mind. After all, it was just sitting in your trunk, unused." Harry nodded, understanding starting to show on his face.

"We saw Professor Dumbledore race out of the Hall during dinner." Hermione added. "I've never seen him move so fast before. We didn't know what had happened, and you didn't come down to eat, so we went to find you - we got the map."

"Yeah, can't tell you how shocked I was to see you here Harry - with *him*!" Ron's voice spat out the last word as he addressed the rat.

"Hey, I had it under control. It's okay. Peter's surrendered. He's here to help." Harry spoke calmly.

"Help! You trust that rat! What could he have possibly said..." Hermione put her arm on Ron to stop him from getting into a rant. She could see how concerned Harry was, and that Peter had indeed been subdued before they even got there.

"Harry? Is everything alright?" Hermione could see that it wasn't.

Harry was starting to shake. The revelations of the past hour were enormous. For the first time in months, he truly looked at his old friends - his former friends. "Will you guys do me a favour? Harry didn't like to ask. He had not been a very good friend to them these past few months, and he didn't expect them to agree.

"Of course mate. You don't need to ask." Ron smiled genuinely at his friend.

Harry was overwhelmed. "I don't deserve friends like you guys."

"We're always here for you Harry. Always." Hermione smiled.

With a sudden burst of adrenalin, Harry paced over to the headmaster's desk. "Could you guys keep an eye on Wormtail here? He's confessed a fair few things already, and the portraits will

corroborate my story. But I have to go... go rescue my son."

"Oh, has Draco had the baby!" Hermione blurted. Harry's eyes widened. *How did she know? Judging by the look on Ron's face, he knows too.* "Er, sorry Harry, we sort of worked it out - at least I thought I had. I was right? Wasn't I?" Harry nodded, a tear forming in his eye. Ron had not spoken, but his look was grave.

"You're going after him - right now, aren't you? You're going after Voldemort." It was a statement more than a question, but Harry just nodded in affirmation. "Well we should be there too! You can't go on your own Harry. You need backup. I'll organise the DA..."

"No!" Harry stopped Ron from leaving. "I have to do this on my own. I've been a fool." He shook his head. "Voldemort knows Draco's been lying. He really isn't a loyal Death Eater. He only tricked them into thinking that to save his own skin, and to save... our child." Harry whispered the last words.

"Harry! You can't just go off on your own... you have us. We're always there for you!" Hermione interjected.

"Look, there's no time! I've shilly-shallied around long enough! Wormtail's has just confirmed it. Snape's dead, and Draco might very well be." He looked down at the portkey, then over at Peter.

Wormtail nodded. "I already activated it before I left the Manor. Just put it on, and you'll be right at the Manor."

"Why should Harry trust you? You... you... rat!" Ron's wand was back in Wormtail's face. Harry couldn't afford to waste any more time. He looked at Hermione, pleading with her for understanding.

"I have to go. Now!" He proclaimed.

Hermione nodded. "We'll look after things at this end." A tear formed in her eye, and it was plain to see that she wanted to say so much more. "Good Luck." She whispered quietly.

Harry held the silk wrapped ring firmly, and placed it on his finger. He watched as the room spun violently away from him, and the familiar feel of portkey travel overwhelmed him as his stomach was wrenched through his backbone.

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Harry landed with a softened thud - the kind you feel when falling against a well padded floor. As he opened his eyes and adjusted his glasses, he was momentarily disoriented by the darkness. A sudden overwhelming sense of being lead into a trap was at the forefront of his thoughts. He lit a quick *lumos* spell. He noticed the cold, grey stone; obviously padded with cushioning charms. An elegant Persian rug lay before an unlit fireplace with an ornate wall hanging. Ornate

vines of ivy wrapped themselves around a large angular letter 'M', stylised from silver snakes. The deep green of the ivy was in perfect contrast to the silver serpents woven into the warp and weft. A truly Slytherin crest. Harry had seen that tapestry before; had been in this room before.

Harry's sense of danger was heightened as he realised he was in the arrival room - or at least one of the arrival rooms at Malfoy Manor. Harry had been here the previous summer. Draco had smuggled him into the Manor, right under Narcissa's nose. Of course, Lucius had been in Azkaban back then, so it wasn't as dangerous a journey as it might have been. This was the very same room they had Apparated into during that wondrous summer. If Harry guessed correctly, this time he would no doubt find not only Lucius somewhere in the Manor, but also other - more dangerous creatures.

Harry moved to get out of there - fast. He had no way of knowing if the strong wards around the Manor had monitored his arrival. He would work on the assumption that they had, and he would need to get moving. He went for the door, checking it wandlessly for any traps, before opening it silently. He peered out nervously. The hallway seemed to be unmonitored, and the low level of light coming from the sconces lead Harry to the assumption this part of the Manor was mostly unused.

As he crept quietly into the dim hallway, he was stopped in his tracks by a spine-chilling cry. A scream. A shriek of utter pain. The sound wrenched at Harry's heart. He knew the owner of that voice; had heard it crying out in ecstacy during happier times. *Draco!* The cry had been heightened by the empty hallway, echoing around the stone walls. The sound urged Harry to quicker action, and gave him some idea of which direction to head. It had definitely not come from the dungeons, but from above. Harry was silently thankful for that small mercy. As he heard the scream again, he pinpointed it to the West Wing. Draco's rooms were in the West Wing.

Harry moved stealthily through the deserted corridors. His concern grew the longer he went without meeting any other Death Eaters. Surely they would be on the lookout? He thought, but another blood chilling cry had escaped Draco's lips, and he was spurred to faster action. He instantly regretted not bringing his Invisibility cloak, but he thought it probably would have been more a hindrance than a help. He recalled how to set a Self-Disillusionment Charm and quickly cast one to help him avoid detection sooner. *Of course, I probably have just lead them to me*, he realised belatedly. *They've no doubt got wards telling them when unauthorised magic is taking place. Ah well, they'll know I'm here soon enough*.

He climbed the stairs to the second floor. The light was more intense in this part of the Manor, but Harry still kept to the shadows, even though he was yet to see anyone else. The tense feeling behind Harry's scar told him that he definitely wasn't going to be alone much longer. Harry's anger rose at the thought of Voldemort being anywhere near Draco. A strange feeling overcame Harry as he rounded the corner towards Draco's rooms.

The air was rent with another chilling cry of gut wrenching pain coming from behind the doors of Draco's room. What had alerted Harry's sense of wrongness was the complete lack of magic coming from that direction.

The longer Harry had been in the wizarding world, and the longer Harry had been at Hogwarts, he had noticed the difference in the inherent magic within a person or a place. Most parts of the Muggle world were totally devoid of magic and felt - empty. Every now and then he might stumble across pockets of magic, but this room felt entirely - wrong. Harry could not feel a single scrap of magic from the end of the corridor. It was a complete void. Harry quickened his pace to the main doors of Draco's chambers, but stopped in his tracks as he spotted two burly Death Eaters guarding the main door. The distinct lack of magic behind the doors was in stark contrast to the magical auras of the pair of guards.

Harry pulled his head back carefully. He crept into a space behind the nearest statue - a bust of some ancient Malfoy forebear. Harry had no idea which Malfoy it was, and he had absolutely no interest in finding out at this moment. Harry was carefully watching the pair of Death Eaters, waiting to catch them off guard, when another of Draco's screams ripped through his very being. This one had ripped through Harry's heart. A sense of guilt was creeping through Harry. *Why didn't I see this earlier? I'm such a ruddy fool for judging him so quickly. He's put himself through all this to protect our child. Even if we get through this, I don't think he'll be too happy with me. I've let him down. Just like I've let everyone else down.*

Harry was slowly crawling into another fugue of self deprecating doubt. He stopped momentarily in his thoughts. *Have I forgiven Draco? Of course, there was nothing to forgive. But the question is will he forgive me?* He heard the cries and thought in a non-sequitur that Draco never liked pain at the best of times. Once again, Harry's actions were causing another person pain. He had managed to get Draco into this mess all on his own. If he had not been so foolish in the first place, then perhaps Draco would not be pregnant. Then again, Harry had no idea that Wizards could even get pregnant, so it may have been inevitable.

Harry stood carefully against the wall, unable to go further because of the Death Eaters. He was soon snapped out of his thoughts again by another of Draco's well timed and well timbred cries. He could have sworn that his own name was being ripped from the blonde's lips, but the sound had spurred him out of his maudlin thoughts. The two Death Eaters were now talking in low tones. In the incessant silence between cries, Harry could hear every word.

"So is it true, Nott? This kid..." the taller Death Eater jerked a thumb in the direction of the door. "...going to be part of the ritual?"

"S'pose so. Our Lord asked Bella to prepare the dungeons." Another of Draco's cries filled the air, and Nott cringed. "Guess we'll be having it soon enough."

"If it survives the birth." The nameless guard added.

Nott looked at his partner. "Oh, don't you worry. Lucius will make sure the kid survives, even if he has to kill Draco in the process. Besides, even if by some miracle, the annoying chit does survive, Our Lord has plans for him."

"Malfoy doesn't care one bit about Draco - not any more. I don't think he's been too happy ever since he found out about him and Potter. He'll make sure the child survives this birth. But you're right. Judging from the sounds coming from in there, I doubt young Draco will survive."

"What possessed Our Lord to make him give birth now - in a magical void no less? There's no way he can give birth naturally without the aid of magic, is there Zabini?"

Zabini shrugged. "I don't think so." He sighed. "I don't know if I'm going to miss the annoying little snot. He was always nice to Blaise. I had hoped once... ah never mind." He waved his hand away. "Still, Lucius is chuffed to bits that this grandson will be at the centre of the ritual. It's not every day that your own flesh and blood gets to be at the centre of a soul magic ritual. To think, when Our Lord possesses the child's body after ripping out its soul - well, can you imagine how unbearable Lucius will be then? It will be worse than it was in the early eighties!"

Nott had a concerned look on his face. "But doesn't that mean that he'll have Potter's blood too? I mean, Potter's only halfblood, which means that this kid..."

"Shhhh," Zabini shushed him quickly. "You know how sensitive Our Lord is about his own parentage. I don't think he cares one whit about Potter's pedigree. It's nothing... but his power... now wouldn't that be something?" Zabini's eyes widened at the prospect of carrying as much power as Harry had.

"Still," Nott continued. "Can't wait until we can tear down this magical void. It's giving me the creeps."

Harry didn't listen to them any longer. He had once again been struck dumb as full realisation came to him. If Draco was indeed behind the magical void, then he would no doubt be unable to carry the baby, which meant those cries were not torture, but the torture of labour. A magically unassisted labour. Harry had read what happened during a Wizard birth, and he knew that magic would be needed to help Draco deliver. Men can't deliver naturally, and the magic was needed to help create minor changes in anatomy to assist in the birth. *Sweet Merlin!* Harry's heart hammered in his chest as he realised that the pain Draco was going through was probably more excruciating than the Cruciatus. What spurred Harry's next action was the realisation that without magic, Draco would most likely die during the birth. He would have to hurry.

He could go out - wands blazing - and knock out Nott and Zabini, but chose instead to feel out and dismantle this magical void. If there was a way to erect it, then it could be torn down. If Harry could rip it down, he could get magic in to help Draco. Merlin, the baby's on his way! Harry couldn't think joyous thoughts just yet. He probed the door with tendrils of magic. So far, his magic had apparently gone undetected, so he was confident this incursion would go unnoticed. The wards on the door were strong, and Harry could feel them repelling his magical inquiry. He had to be able to find a way past them. He just had to!

With an even greater sense of urgency now that he realised Draco was in labour, he pushed and probed his magic across the nullifying void against the doors. But he needed to get closer. It

wasn't the best plan, but he'd seen someone use it in a Muggle movie once, and it was the only thing he could think of at this moment. As Harry wandlessly waved his disillusioned hand, a stumbling noise, followed by a muffled voice, came from down another corridor. Harry smiled.

"What's that?" Both Death Eaters looked down the corridor.

"Better go check it out." Zabini directed to Nott, who nodded in response. "Bella said that the rat might come back - she saw him scampering away when he was supposed to be delivering Snape to Hogwarts."

"Either that, or Potter." Nott added as he quickly moved away. Another of Draco's cries came from behind the doors. Harry thought that it sounded weaker than those before, and he urged himself to faster action. He had scoured the entire surface of the magical void, and needed to be closer to give it a finer analysis. There had to be some crack - some weak point in the barrier.

Indeed, Harry thought, *the diversion worked, there's only one left*. At the second mention of Bella's name, Harry grasped his wand more firmly. Subconsciously, he had hoped that she would be around. He was contemplating which hex he would use on Zabini, when a shrill voice cut to the core of his very being. He instantly froze, the reflex action unaware that it wasn't necessary, as he was disillusioned.

"Zabini! Where's Nott?" Bellatrix LeStrange came stalking down the hall, her feverish eyes aglow with rage. "I thought I told you two to keep this door guarded."

Blaise Zabini's father cringed visibly in the presence of the imposing woman. "He.. he went to check out a noise. He thinks perhaps that Wormtail..."

Bellatrix waved her hand. "The rat's long gone. Potter's here though!" she trilled in that sing song voice. Harry momentarily stilled, even though he had been breathing quietly, his heart was hammering harder in his chest. *How in the four hells did they know I was here?* Harry supposed. *Maybe they did notice my magic after all.* She continued ordering Zabini. "Go and follow Nott. He's going to need all the help he can get. Particularly if it's against Potter. Try and keep him away from here. Ickle Harry's probably dreadfully lost in the big bad Manor, and we can't have that, can we?" Harry saw the wild look in her eyes turn to excitement at the prospect of meeting him. Zabini followed her orders without question, and Harry found himself alone in the corridor with the one woman he had no compunction in casting an unforgivable curse on.

He crept closer to the door, hoping that the light from the wall sconces would favour his disillusionment and not reveal him to Bellatrix. He crossed the hall, and was hard against one of the redwood dragon statues posted on the side of the large oak doors. He began to once again wandlessly probe the magical void with his senses. The void seemed darker - more imposing - now that he was closer. Harry wanted to recoil and run far away from it - the sense of having his magic drained was intense, but he persevered. More than his own life was at stake. He had probed it thoroughly when he sensed a tiny waver in the ward - just a glimmer, where his magic wasn't repelled so easily. Harry pushed further, prompting the ward to ripple. In his excitement at

finding the edge of the wards, he stepped forward, stubbing his toe on the plinth. The sudden noise caused Bellatrix to turn in his direction.

"Come out, come out, wherever you are Ickle Harry!" Bellatrix taunted. Harry cursed himself mentally, but did not give up on probing his magic through the crack in the magical void. She continued in that frigid, icy tone. She was not looking at Harry directly, but she knew he was around. "Why am I not surprised the worm turned?" she bawled out. "You Gryffindors are all the same. So bloody noble minded. Of course I *let* him get close to little Drakey." She folded her arms, her wand casually entwined in her fingers. Leaning back against the doors, she continued in her swank manner. "Of course, my nephew was doing a splendid job of fooling everyone - even had me going there for a while. I don't know whether to be proud of his skill, or to be utterly disgusted. What do you think Harrykins? I mean, we all know what happens when you start consorting with Gryffindors. At least, the last Black who did that anyway." Bellatrix snorted the last, and the wild sneer crossed her face, making her features even more grotesque.

Harry had to work hard to stop the low growl itching to escape from his throat. Memories of Sirius triggered his temper. The sight of her standing as close to him as she did that day two years earlier made his blood boil. He was angrier with himself for letting her get to him. Of course she was trying to anger him. She was probably banking on him doing something rash. He was willing to bet she had no idea of what he had learned since their last encounter. He knew without a doubt that he could cast Crucio and definitely mean it this time.

Harry overcame his anger, and concentrated on the job at hand whilst she babbled on in her childish voice. She was nothing more than an annoyance to him. He had managed to slip his magic under the edge of the barrier, and had worked his way into the void. An unfortunate block stopped him from going further, and he gave an exasperated sigh. Unfortunately, it was a little louder than he expected.

Bellatrix cackled triumphantly. "So you really *are* here Harrikins! I'm impressed. You're learning control. Excellent. I do so love a challenge!" She had her sights set in combing the room in his general direction, but was yet to fix her eyes on him. He did not move. "Still," she continued her taunts. "It must be torture listening to your lover crying out in pain just a few feet away, and not being able to do a damn thing to help him." She pouted. "On the other hand, I'll give you marks for good taste. Draco is - or was - a rather good catch. He's actually more Black than Malfoy you know, takes after our dear departed 'Cissa. Oh, didn't anyone tell you Harrikins? Our great Lord decided to dispense with her when she wanted out. If she didn't want anything to do with the Malfoys, then Lord Voldemort didn't want her sharing herself around. I hear Lucius wasn't terribly upset at her demise. I don't think Draco knows. It might have upset him and the baby to learn she was killed." Bellatrix whispered the last, as if it were juicy gossip.

Harry had not been fully listening to her ravings, his concentration was on passing the second barrier of the void wards. He was having success, but it was hard work. He inadvertently flinched, causing a noise, and Bellatrix's eyes were fixed directly on his position. He knew he'd been caught when the room lit up like a blaze, and she pointed her wand at him. The anti-disillusionment charm struck home and he felt the familiar melting sensation as his

concealment disintegrated. Harry saw the triumph in Bellatrix's eyes as he appeared within just a few feet of her.

"Tada! It's just like magic!" She crowed. "Welcome Potter. So pleased you could join us for this auspicious occasion. After all, it's not every day you get to witness your son's ultimate sacrifice. Still, rather fitting really, after all, it was you who reduced Our Lord to tatters. Why not your son to help him on his way to even more greatness?"

Harry let her babble on, his wand extended defensively, but his mind was on working the wards wandlessly. He cast another surge of his wandless magic at the wards, his impatience starting to show. Without warning, he felt the strange void start to shimmer and fade away. Bellatrix must have sensed the void breaking down as the magic of the Manor was restored to its normal levels. Harry was no empath, not by a long shot, but he didn't think anyone could miss the levels of pain, terror and fear emanating from the room before him.

"*Expelliarmus!*" Bellatrix shouted. In his distraction, the Dark witch had Harry's wand in her hand before he could retaliate. She laughed at the look of surprise on his face. In her moment of euphoria, she snapped Harry's wand in half. The red and gold sparks fizzled and spat as the golden phoenix feather was freed from its prison of holly. Harry feigned his horror at her actions, but a sense of freedom imbued him at the same moment the wand was snapped. A barrier had been broken, and for the first time, Harry could feel his own magic coursing through his own veins.

Wands are used by Wizards to control their magic - to channel it. In Harry's case, it was holding his innate magic back. He'd been doing great things wandlessly, but finding himself without the wand he had grown to love, and to despise - the freedom was a blessing. Bellatrix showed signs of worry as a grin of realisation crossed Harry's face. He could sense her trying to magically re-establish the wards, but with a flick of his wrist, he dismantled her feeble attempts.

"What's wrong Trixie?" Harry smirked. "Didn't think I'd be any good without my wand? I really should thank you, you know." He was about to continue, when he heard a final long and low guttural cry from behind the door, followed by the unmistakeable hearty wail of a newborn child. Harry's heart leapt at the sound, and he faced Bellatrix one last time.

"Well Harry, it's really been a pleasure chatting to you, but my job is done. I've stalled you long enough..."

"Oh you're wrong Trixie." Harry was ready to burst down the door. "Say hello to Sirius for me." With the emerald in his eyes flashing, Bellatrix had a foresight of her imminent fate. "*Avada Kedavra*". Harry barely whispered as he flicked his wrist. The bolt of pure green lightning that extended from his fingers knocked her swiftly aside. The shock and surprise in her eyes was still evident as her lifeless body fell limply to the floor.

He didn't give his former tormenter a second thought as he fumbled with the doorknob. He realised it had been locked, and in his frustration, he blew the doors apart and they exploded.

Harry was eager to get to Draco and his son. He hoped it wasn't too late - after all, he had heard the sound of his son's cry, but Draco's last cries had not sounded promising. He stood stock still at the tableau before him - the sight and the stench assaulting his senses. The sounds of Lucius's mellisonant voice reached his ears.

"This... this *abomination*! It's impossible. Even for Potter." Lucius sounded incensed.

He heard Draco's plea, "No, father, *please*! You can't..."

"I'm sorry Draco, but I have no other choice."

A gurgle as the newborn's lungs erupted into fresh cries, interrupting the tableau. This hearty and healthy cry was in complete contrast to the sight before him. Once the dust from the broken doors settled, Harry did a quick survey of the room to discover that Voldemort was nowhere in sight. His scar was not even remotely tingling. But despite the tableau being frozen momentarily, the players very quickly regained their places and continued.

It all happened so fast. Lucius spotted Harry at the same moment as Draco - the blonde's face was deathly pale and the stench of blood and afterbirth permeated the room. Later Harry would recall Draco's hoarse cry - "Harreee!", but his eyes were on Lucius. The man's shirt was covered in blood, and his pony-tail was slightly askew, and the sweat was also dripping from his brow. Yet despite this, his aristocratic air simply dripped from him. The business end of his ebony wand was pointed at the small and wriggling mound of flesh in the crook of Draco's arm. Their son! Harry's heart leapt at the sight of him, but he had no time to process his happiness.

Lucius raised his wand and began the first syllables of the killing curse. "*Avad...*"

Draco cried out, but found a surge of energy to throw himself over his own child.

As the killing curse struck, it was Lucius whose eyes showed the most shock. Draco's head was buried in a pillow, protecting his child from his fanatical father, knowing that this last act of his would be all he could give to save his child, but as he saw the flash of green in the corners of his vision, he felt no pain. After a dull thud and a looming quiet, he dared to look around.

Lucius's mouth was still open in surprise - either that or he had still been mouthing the killing curse as he was struck down. Draco looked up through the unbidden tears to find Harry standing there, his right arm extended and still pointing at the air where Lucius stood as he took his last breath. Harry blinked. Once. Twice. He then came to his senses as he spotted Draco and their mewling son on the bed. Draco's face was even paler than it had been before, and he could smell fresh blood. Draco coughed, but a shudder of pain wracked his body. He was still alive, but for how long he didn't know.

Harry walked right past Lucius's rapidly cooling body to get to the bed. He placed a hand on the blonde's cheek as tears came to his own eyes. Draco tried to speak, but Harry bade him quiet. He could feel the life force ebbing away from Draco with each weakening heartbeat. Harry shook

his head, and cast all his concentration on healing charms. Harry worked quietly, diligently on his lover until the colour in his face returned to a healthier shade of pale. He had managed to stop the immediate bloodflow, and had begun to heal the bruises, but Harry knew that Draco would need professional care for his other wounds. At least he was out of danger, and Harry could get him out of there.

With a few cleaning charms, most of the blood and afterbirth vanished, but the smell of it was still rife in the air. Draco had been dozing as Harry performed the most urgent of the healing. Harry suspected that Draco would be delirious, but the smile on the blonde's face was radiant. "I so badly wanted you to come, Harry. I thought... well, I thought you might never come. I thought I'd lost you... destroyed you. How can you forgive me?"

"Shhhh," Harry quietened his lover. He kissed Draco's brow. A brow he thought he would never see, or touch, again. "You rest. I'll tell you soon. But first, we have to get you and our son out of here."

"No, Harry! Look! Aren't we clever? Look what we made!" With a self satisfied smile, Draco presented the child in his arms to Harry. Harry felt all fingers and thumbs as he held their child, his hands touching the shock of pure white hair. He whispered a gentle cleaning charm, and the hair now lay perfectly against the high brow, although a large clump of it refused to sit down; a cowlick marring the soft and smooth lines of hair. Harry smiled - unreservedly. A soft contented gurgle escaped the lips as a pair of brilliant green eyes opened - looking straight into Harry's. A hand escaped the cloth to grab Harry's finger. As he counted the perfectly formed fingers - elegant long fingers like Draco's - his hands and eyes glanced over his child's body. Ten fingers, ten little toes clenched mightily against the rapidly cooling air. Harry's eyes widened in shock and surprise as Draco pointed out the most glaring feature of all.

"But... how? I didn't think?" Harry was speechless. Draco tried to giggle, but coughed instead. Harry looked at Draco in awe. "I still don't understand this whole mess..."

"You think I have any idea how it happened? I'm as clueless as you are as to how it happened."

"But Draco - we have a *daughter*! How do you suppose you can explain that?" Harry was still in shock over the fact that this perfect child before him was female. How could two wizards produce a girl child? It was impossible - wasn't it? Harry's mind was reeling at the thought. He took one look between the features of his beautiful daughter, when he glanced at Draco. He could see that he was going to need medical attention sooner than he expected. How the blonde survived the delivery without magic, Harry would never know, but he put his daughter back down on the bed in Draco's arms. She protested the movements, another cry ripping from her definitely well developed lungs. Harry got up, but Draco grabbed his arm.

"Don't leave me Harry... Don't leave us." Draco pleaded.

Harry smiled at Draco - his helplessness was evident. "I won't love. I promise. I won't leave you. But you need help. I'm going to try and get you out - and back to Pomfrey. She'll have you up

and about in no time." Harry was leaning over Draco and his daughter. He was too mesmerised by the vision of the two blondes before him - his family.

The slow steady clapping startled him, and he turned quickly. Before he could reach for his magic, he found his arms bound to his side, and a block came down, shielding him from his magic. He tried to struggle, but the bonds only tightened as he did so.

"Well, well, well Potter. Thisss isss sssuch a touching ssscene. What a pity you won't be going anywhere. Not you, and not your preciousss child." Harry's scar burned as the overwhelming swell of Voldemort's glee coursed through it and became a torment in his mind.

Harry was bound.

Draco was wandless and dying.

And his daughter gurgled on in complete oblivion.

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Chapter: 10

(Crying Over) Spilt Potions

by Azhure

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Chapter 9 - Faith of the Heart

Voldemort slithered towards the bed slowly as he absorbed the tableau before him. Harry struggled within his magical bonds and realised that he was unable to sense his own magic or even move his arms from his side. The pain rippling through his scar overrode the blinding panic rising within, but Harry could see Voldemort's grotesque face adorned with a wicked grin as he looked down at the new born child. He'd never felt such urgency and desire to kill the Dark Lord. The fact that he couldn't get the slightest grasp on his magic simply increased his panic.

"Well, well, well. Issssn't this the touching little family reunion?" Voldemort did stop momentarily to look down at Lucius' body. "Tsk. What a pity. First Luciusss, next Draco, then your ssson." He shook his head as he looked from Draco to Harry. "What a pity that none of you

shall live to sssee the dawn. I do believe tomorrow's going to be a sssspectacular day."

Voldemort reached the bed with clear intentions of approaching the baby. There was, of course, no doubt that Voldemort had plans for the child which only augmented Harry's desperation. He knew he was bound and his magic was inaccessible to him, but there was some part of him, something in his heart that significantly needed to ensure the safety of his offspring, which drove him to continue searching for a solution. He refused to be overwhelmed by his temporary inabilities. Draco and the baby didn't deserve the events that would result if Harry gave in to the panic.

Looking over at Draco, he could see that the blonde's health was deteriorating more rapidly due to the block on his natural healing magic. With Draco's own magic unable to help him, the only option had been Harry's rudimentary healing charms. Unfortunately, those charms required frequent maintenance which meant that they were ceasing to work now that Voldemort had bound the lot of them. Harry felt a cold, clenching fist around his heart as he saw Draco's tired visage pale even further and caught the sudden scent of fresh blood, no doubt coming from the blonde's unchecked birth wounds.

Feeling a swiftly increasing need to reach his lover and child, Harry struggled in vain to get out of his magical bonds. The Dark Lord watched wordlessly, mirthful in the face of Harry's pain. "You know I've spent yearsss envisaging you in this very sssituation. You can't essscape me this time, Potter. I've waited too long for this moment." Voldemort laughed, and looked down at the baby once again.

The insidious laughter continued as Voldemort brought his withered and scaly hand down to touch the baby's head. Harry watched his daughter closely, brimming with a need to protect her from the morbidly twisted caress. With every passing moment, Harry was being faced with additional reasons to struggle, and each time he was reminded that he was essentially helpless. A niggling sense of failure and hopelessness tried to overcome Harry, his fears telling him that nothing would get him out of this but sheer dumb luck. He couldn't accept that, couldn't allow himself to think of the seemingly imminent outcome. Instead, he mentally forged ahead, redoubling his efforts to find some way to break the magical bonds that held him.

The scaly hand was resting against the child's cheek. A robust wail accompanied the touch, and the Dark Lord flinched momentarily. Harry assumed it was a grin crossing Voldemort's face, but he couldn't be sure. "You know it's fortunate that he took the Malfoy colouring." Voldemort noted absently, and grinned again as the child cried her defiant protest at being touched by the Dark Lord.

"Keep your filthy hands off my child!" Harry startled even himself with the vehemence of his own cry. Voldemort looked at him with a barely concealed smile.

"Oh I intend to do much more than that Potter." To immediately prove his point, the Dark Lord's evil face turned even more grotesque as he tried to smile and coo at the child. "There, there. It'sss alright. Everything will be just fine sssoon, little one."

Harry's heart dropped to his stomach. He wasn't going to give up without some sort of fight. At least he would be able to maintain that he was a true Gryffindor, right to the last. "No! T...take me instead. It's always been about me... not them." Harry looked at his daughter, his eyes displaying as much love as he had for the tiny blonde bundle. His eyes flickered from her unusually calm gaze up to Draco's exhausted and panicked look. Harry's heart slowed minutely, some small part of him sighing in relief that at least Draco was still alive. Despite this, he could see the pain and resignation in Draco's eyes. Harry bristled and fuelled his rage with the helpless feelings and the thought that Draco might give up. He needed Draco to believe, needed to know that they would not be defeated. "You've always wanted me Voldemort. Leave them alone."

Voldemort's eyes moved from the child, and his gaze bore into Harry's. Moving away from the bed, he walked over to where Harry stood, bound and helpless. *Perhaps my recklessness will pay off after all*, Harry thought. Voldemort seemed to be deep in contemplation as he stopped - wand length away from Harry. The pain in his scar was insistent, but Harry found that it wasn't getting any worse, and by this stage, he had become used to its piercing throb.

"Ah, you sssee now Potter, that'sss not entirely true. It may have been about you once, but I've had a change of plan. You sssee, when I discovered that you were going to be a father, I thought it was too good to be true. I could not believe you would be foolish enough, but I wasss wrong. You had managed to play into my plansss perfectly, and I didn't even have to try to coerce you. I was terribly pleasssed when Draco seemed to be playing along with my new goalsss." Voldemort's voice was screeching in fever pitch. The tone made Harry's daughter start to cry again. From the corner of his eye, Harry could see Draco weakly trying to grab their daughter and bundle her up. Voldemort's gaze was still intently locked on Harry.

"You ceased to interest me Potter when I dissscovered your child. Of course, finding out the whole truth this past day had made my plans change again. Normally I don't like sssurprisesss, but this one has made me most happy." Voldemort began pacing, and he looked at Harry questioningly. "Tell me Potter, how did you manage it? The potion I mean? Did Severusss give it to you? Or was it as Draco said - by sheer chance? I find that to be... incredible to ssswallow."

Without waiting for an answer, Voldemort threw his arms up in the air and cackled. "To think - Harry Potter was the designer of his own destruction." Harry couldn't begin to guess what Voldemort had planned, but in his desperation he could think of nothing but trying to get to his magic. Harry didn't want to go down like this - without a real fight. He hated being cornered. He had not worked for months to let some ruddy binding spell stop him from his ultimate goal. Still, the longer he kept Voldemort talking, the more time he had to get himself out of this mess. "I wonder..." Voldemort continued his spiel. "... if you understand the sssignificance of what you've done."

"No doubt you're going to enlighten me!" Harry spat back, a glob of sputum hitting the Dark Lord directly in the eye. Voldemort ignored the insult as he walked even closer to Harry, the scar's piercing pain burning even more furiously. Harry could barely concentrate.

"Your child is a Familiatumus; bred for power. He hasss power tenfold that of your own - but you knew that already, didn't you?" Voldemort touched Harry's scar, and he flinched. At least, he tried to flinch, but his bonds prevented him from moving more than his head. "But that's not all. I bet you came here tonight thinking you were invincible? A veritable well of power? I hate to burssst your bubble Golden boy, but it'sss not you. It's your son'sss magic you would have been feeling. You sssee, one of the rather interesssting side effectsss of the Fertilitatumasss is that you and your lover..." Voldemort spat the word in disgust, "... and your ssson are all linked magically."

Harry's eyes widened at the revelation. Voldemort laughed as the recognition crossed Harry's face. The Dark Lord nodded. "Yessss, it's true. Rather clever of me to put that block up againssst your magic, isn't it? What a pity you can't jussst reach out and grab it." The Dark Lord walked nose to nose with Harry, no fear of being injured. "You mussst really hate me now. I can see the rage ssssimmering inssside you."

Harry was shocked at Voldemort's boldness, but chalked it up to the dark wizard's feeling of having the upper hand. Harry had the distinct notion that he had walked into a trap - of sorts, but couldn't bring himself to think it a mistake. Had he been more cautious, stayed away, or tried to get help from someone else, then Draco and their daughter would have certainly died. At least now, even if they weren't able to escape, Harry could die knowing that he hadn't given up - that he had done everything in his power to save the last of his family. Voldemort's references to the baby as a boy hadn't escaped Harry's attention. There was something intriguing about the notion of their bound magics as well as Voldemort's assumptions of the child's gender. Harry had a nagging feeling that Voldemort's ignorance regarding the baby girl could very well offer him the extra time he needed.

"Poor Draco here has already experienced the effectsss of the link to thissss child. His channelling of the magic was actually hisss undoing. Pity he never told me sssooner." Voldemort feigned his lament. "We could have done sssomething about it, and taken stepsss to keep you out of the picture." Voldemort turned quickly and moved back around to the child. He seemed to suddenly remember that he had more pressing issues at hand. "He's linked to you, and sssoon I'll inhabit hisss body..."

Harry interrupted the Dark Lord's mad ramblings. "Over my dead body." Harry wasn't going to lie down without some sort of fight.

"If you wish it, Potter. Although I do need to keep you around, jussst for a little longer. Thought you might like to watch asss I take away the lassst of your family.

A sense of recklessness imbued Harry. He was curious about one thing since learning about the potion. He had to ask. After all, what did he have to lose by asking? "I'm curious Voldemort," Harry didn't stumble over the name. "Who were you planning on boffing? Who did you want to link your powers to? Who was going to play your little fuck toy?"

Voldemort looked at Harry, a sense of hatred and anger burning in those red eyes. "Language, Potter! Really. There are young earsss around after all." A calculated look crossed Voldemort's

face. "I sssuppose it won't hurt to tell you that Bella was mossst disspleased that she could not provide this one ssservice for me. She was a powerful witch, and I'm disssappointed in her."

"Disappointed that she was a lousy lay, or disappointed that she got what she deserved?" Harry watched as Voldemort's wand twitched, but he could see the control the Dark Lord was trying to keep. "So, here we are. Just what are your plans for me Voldemort? A swift AK in the back like Snape? Or wanting me to grovel and plead at your feet?" Harry was feeling cocky, and had no idea why he was being so brash. His desperation had reached critical levels, and he couldn't feel a single tendril of magic. Harry didn't want to die that way - without his magic.

"Oh no Harry, I have no intention to sssee you off ssso swiftly, at least not any more. Once I've releasssed this child'sss sssoul, and completed the ritual to place my essssence inside his body, I'll be taking what is rightfully mine, and *then* you'll have repaid me for all the horror you inflicted on me when you were a child!"

Harry looked at Voldemort quizzically. "Oh, are you confusssed Potter? Don't worry, all you need to know is that once I'm inssside that body, I'll be linked to your powersss, and I'll drain you of every lassst drop of your magic. You and your traitorousss lover." Harry glanced in Draco's direction. The look of fear intensified in those deep grey pools of his eyes, but he could see that Draco was too weakened to help. "If you sssurrender willingly, I might even leave your corpssse out for the ressst of the Wizarding World to mourn." Voldemort's mocking tone was evident. Harry was raging internally. He still felt utterly helpless, but this only added to his frustration and the desire to stop this madman with his crazed plans. Harry would protect his daughter with his very last breath if that's what it took. Whatever the plans, Harry was determined to sabotage them in any way possible.

Voldemort sensed Harry's desire to stall for more time. "Enough! Time growsss short. I must ssstart the ritual!" Ignoring Harry's whimpered protests, he raised his wand and started to chant low in what could only be Parseltongue. Harry could barely make out the words through the excessive sibilant hissing. At that moment, Harry's powerlessness to help burst through. Instinctively he sought every protection spell, every defence he had learned over the past months. Even though he could not feel his magic, he just had to try.

Through his efforts, Harry could sense the hollowness of his magical centre suddenly welling up, not with magic, but with love. Seeing the innocence of his daughter, and the grim sight of his lover near death's door, made him reach out with every fibre of his being. He had to protect them somehow. It was a peculiar feeling - he'd felt it first the moment he clapped his eyes on his daughter, and he could feel it filling his senses and every hollow space within his body. It wasn't magic, but Harry felt he could almost manipulate it like magic. Its power seemed - endless.

As this powerful love imbued him, Harry recalled the Protective charm - *Servavitutus;* it was the magic his mother wove as she paid the ultimate sacrifice for him. Harry felt a distinct empathetic connection with her at that very moment, and instinctively chanted the words of the charm under his breath. Despite its apparent futility, something was urging Harry to speak the charm. Something as desperate as his own desire. Here was his own child facing down ultimate evil, and

he was forced to act on instinct as his only possible way of helping her.

Harry gasped as he saw the pure tendrils of gold wrap around both Draco's and his daughter's auras. Only moments before their auras had been invisible, but as soon as the Harry completed the charm, they showed. Harry reached out for his magic again, but the block was still in place. He wondered what had caused the magic to happen when he couldn't touch his source, but with all the love he held, he continued to weave the protective charms around his daughter and lover. He could feel the love in his heart guiding the weave, and suddenly it all became crystal clear.

Harry didn't need traditional magic for this charm. Oh, he had very powerful magic when he could grasp it, but Harry held a secret weapon - the same one his mother had sacrificed herself for. Harry's secret weapon was love. The pure, unfettered, innocent and whole love he felt for his daughter imbued him with a sense of purpose, and he knew that he had given his daughter this last gift. He only hoped that she would revere him for his sacrifice, just as he revered Lily for hers.

He watched as Voldemort raised his wand and cast the final words of the dark soul magical incantation. A shot of luminous red light leapt from the end of the Dark Lord's wand and headed straight for his daughter's heart. Harry heard a cry. He watched in horror as he saw that Draco had roused and was lunging awkwardly toward their daughter, but it was too late. In a brilliantly gold flash of light, the red beam rebounded away from her, and bounced harmlessly off the walls. Voldemort looked at the child in stunned silence. The violent anger rose on the Dark Lord's face. She lay there, untouched and unmarked, a gurgling chuckle coming from the child's lips.

Everyone looked on at the child in stunned silence. Harry had expected a number of things to happen, but not that. She had stopped Voldemort from attacking her. It was the only possible answer. His heart leapt in joy as he felt a surge of honest and unencumbered love being sent through him. *His daughter.* He could feel his link to her, her presence like a tingle in the back of his mind, but he could feel her magic and her love wash over him in a calming wave. A sharp cry left her lips, and Harry realised the extent of her courage. Another tingling presence in his mind, and Harry could feel the familiar signature of his lover's magic in his own mind. Their link was complete, and Harry could sense them. Even with his own magic out of reach, Harry could feel the love and devotion being sent his way from the two blondes.

It had only been scant seconds since Voldemort's curse had rebound, but Harry began to feel the hollowness of his magic once again filling with the love from the pair - his family; and he realised that one or both of them were casting the same protective spells on him that he performed moments earlier. He could sense the determined, yet weakened magical signature of his lover, and inwardly chuckled at Draco's Gryffindorish tenacity to help him. A trickle of this pure love wound its way around the block against his magic. A sudden snap, and Harry felt his magic returning in gushing waves as the dam of his block was burst. This all happened in mere seconds, the breakdown of the block all over by the time Voldemort had regained his senses from his failed spell.

"W...what is thisss? What did you do? I... I don't understand!" Voldemort seemed truly stunned

and speechless at his failure. Looking down at the child, she squealed and giggled in apparent mirth as she waved her hands and legs about. She had been swathed in a makeshift robe, which had loosened in the aftermath of the magic. With a deft kick, the swaddling clothes were cast aside, and she displayed her true self to the Dark Lord. Harry could not be sure, but he could have sworn that he saw a twinkle in the corner of those mesmerising green eyes. They were so innocent, yet had all the shrewdness and sagacity of an old soul.

Voldemort recoiled visibly. "W...what is... how... NO! T...that's impossible! It can't be! Impossible... NO!" He was utterly inarticulate at the shock of discovering this was a girl child. "It can't be... this is some stupid joke. What did you do Potter?" Voldemort turned on Harry, his rage evident. "Where's your son?"

Harry would have laughed, but a harsh rasping sound was coming from the bed. Harry turned to see that it was Draco who was laughing, a cough wracking his frame and he winced as he tried to move. "More fool you Voldemort." Harry could now touch his magic, and with renewed vigour, he attempted to get out of his magical bonds. He diverted his magic and channelled it to Draco, his concern was for the blonde, who had been suffering more than any of them this night. Harry could see the blonde's colour return, but was startled when Voldemort slammed a block down against Draco.

"You'll pay for this Potter, and you too Malfoy. I might have shown the pair of you mercy. You've meddled in my affairs once too often boy. Think you've outsmarted me? Ha! Thought it would be funny to watch me bind myself in a girl-child's body? Well think again." Harry had seen that glint in the eye once before, and anticipated what was coming. "Watch, Harry, as I take away, once again, that which is most preciousss to you!"

As he looked into the innocent green eyes of his daughter, he felt the strongest surge of protective paternal love for her. He had done all that he could, and instinctively sent out all his magic to help her. She looked directly at him, and he could see that there was no fear in her eyes. Seeing her steely determination, and the blind terror in Draco's eyes, Harry frantically grasped at all the magic welling within him, and he could feel the snap as the raw power flooding into him broke his bonds. He was free.

Harry watched as the Dark Lord raised his wand in a swift arc, the words preparing to leave his lips. He heard the desperate plea from Draco's lips. A plea that echoed that his own mother had made sixteen years earlier.

"No! Not my daughter. Please don't..." Draco's desperation was evident in the plea.

Harry acted on instinct as he saw the words of the killing curse forming on the Dark Lord's scaly lips. He didn't recall actively reciting the words, but though his sheer force of will, the killing curse leapt from his own eyes and aimed at the Dark Lord. Years of anger, hurt and suffering all melded into this one curse, erupting as it struck its intended mark. He watched in morbid fascination as his curse struck at the same moment as that which had been aimed at his daughter reflected from her own eyes and rebounded back onto the source of all their woe.

The Dark Lord never stood a chance. Not against two sets of those powerful green orbs, and not against their combined magic of his own reflected killing curse on top of the powerfully vengeful one Harry had cast with his own eyes.

Voldemort's cry was pitiful in its tone and the length of its screech. Not content to just fall down dead, the Dark Lord seemed to take an eternity as his resurrected body and soul first separated, the soul shattering in an explosion of brilliant green light. The empty husk of a body fell limply, a cry still escaping the scaly lips as he then was immolated into a flaming pile of ash.

In the deafening silence, Harry found his heart hammering, and the sweat dripping freely in his eyes. A small cry from his daughter brought him back to his senses. There was no pain in his scar - not any more. Harry looked over to the bed, to his family, and was urged to his lover's side. Draco grabbed him as he drew closer, and pulled him down into a kiss.

"Is it over?" the blonde gasped weakly. Harry nodded. He couldn't speak. His voice was choked with tears as he held his family tight. It was over. Truly over. He had everything he needed right here. His family, his life, his future. Now he could do as the prophecy truly claimed. Now he could live.

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Part 2 - Picking up the Pieces

In the weeks that followed the joyous defeat of the Dark Lord, the wizarding world celebrated. Ron Weasley had gathered the DA and had alerted the Order of the Phoenix members to come and clean up at Malfoy Manor. They arrived only moments after Harry and his daughter helped to destroy Voldemort. The wards around Malfoy Manor had fallen due to the energy backlash when Voldemort was killed. The Order had been immediately alerted to this and realised that something momentous had happened at the Manor.

Peter Pettigrew had been handed over to the Ministry, and his testimony had exonerated Sirius Black, as well as Draco Malfoy, of any crimes. Based on his evidence, the remaining Death Eaters were routed and were all now safely ensconced in Azkaban, or on the wrong end of a Dementor's kiss.

Despite the joyous mood of the vast majority of the wizarding world, there was one family that was not celebrating. The dark spectre of one very tired and sleep deprived Harry Potter was again holding vigil in the Infirmary at Hogwarts. When he had managed to bring Draco back to the school, Madame Pomfrey had spent a great deal of time working on his injuries. Harry was not allowed to see him during this time, and his anger was dangerously close to flaring. In his infinite wisdom, Dumbledore suggested that Harry look after their daughter, a move which had kept Harry sane for the first few days.

Pomfrey had called in the leading specialist in Wizard pregnancy to help tend to the injuries

Draco suffered during his magic free delivery of their daughter. It had been touch and go for a while, but in the end, Draco had been kept in a magical stasis until he had healed sufficiently. Harry had been frantic with concern, but the equal concern for the new bundle of joy in his arms kept him sane.

She was a beautiful child - at least Harry thought she was. Although she was still only learning about her environment, Harry could see that all knowing look in her eyes. Often he would happen upon her watching him knowingly, but she would quickly turn away and Harry would wonder if he had just imagined it. Seeing this new life - this wondrous child that he and Draco had created, combined with his concern for Draco, had brought all his unfounded concerns to the surface of his mind. Once again, Harry was brooding.

A week after they had defeated Voldemort, Harry was firmly ensconced by Draco's bedside, his daughter fast asleep in the crib on his other side. In the dim evening light, Harry pulled out the crumpled letter Draco had written to him all those months ago. A letter he had not read until the week before, but a letter he now knew by heart.

I don't know if you'll ever get this my love, all I know is that Father has kidnapped me and brought me here against my will. I honestly had no idea that I would fall pregnant - there must have been something wrong with your prophylaxis charm - but now that I'm in this situation, I know it is the right thing. I wouldn't change this for the world. I love you totally, and I know that If I manage to get out of this debacle alive, that you'll still be there for me - for us.

Father found out about my pregnancy from an ancient Malfoy Tapestry - one that was mainly used to determine parentage when it came to Bastard Malfoys (I know what you are thinking here!) Guess who set the alarms off when this child was conceived? Mother took the liberty to inform Voldemort, who, in turn, decided that my father needed to get out of Azkaban to set me on the straight and narrow.

In a few hours I'm supposed to be meeting Voldemort, and I don't know what my chances of survival are. In these dark hours, all I can think to do is write to you. I did have one crazy thought - one wild and terribly Gryffindorish idea (You're rubbing off on me in the most horrible of ways love). If I go ahead with my plan, you'll no doubt hear of it, but I need you to know right now that it's a complete ruse. Don't believe a word of what you hear.

If you do ever manage to get this letter (I have no idea how, I'm under tight guard, but I'll find a way), I need you to know that whatever I've done, I've done for you and for our child - our son. You did know that pregnant wizards always produce sons, didn't you? I have a multitude of hopes and dreams, Harry, and I want you to be a part of them. But in these dark times, I just had to let you know how much I love you. I used to be obsessed by you Harry, and then I was simply enchanted by my love for you. I want you to know that even if I don't make it, or if by some crazy notion I don't and our son does, that I would not exchange these past few months for anything...

A tear came to Harry's eye every time he read the heart wrenching letter. He could just imagine the day that Draco wrote it - just before Harry suspected him of performing the ultimate betrayal.

Harry could see that Draco had obviously taken it out and reread it many times - the creases in the parchment were starting to wear thin. He turned his attention to the accompanying journal. Harry was still trying to come to terms with Peter Pettigrew's sudden willingness to help Harry.

"Perhaps, deep down, there is some good in all of us Harry, and Peter finally came to terms with his demons, and did what he could within his power to rectify the great wrongs he had inflicted in his past." Dumbledore had been his usual vague self when Harry had questioned him in passing, but the more he thought on it, the more he was inclined to agree with the Headmaster.

As Harry again reread the journal, Harry's gaze would flicker from Draco's quietly sleeping form back to the words he had written for their child. As was his wont, Harry would again bring all his guilt to the fore as he read the blonde's thoughts from those dark months. A tale of hopes, dreams and undying love for Harry, and their inexplicable courtship filled the pages. How could he have been so wrong to misjudge Draco? The words in his journal were heart wrenching and Harry was no longer in any doubt that Draco had still loved him. Could he have rescued Draco? Could that final debacle have been avoided? Perhaps he could have helped get Draco out and have defeated Voldemort alone, as he originally intended, without anyone getting hurt. But then he realised that he probably could not have done it alone. It had been his deep and sincere love for his lover and his daughter that had helped him to get in touch with the power of his own love, and destroy Voldemort once and for all.

Ten days after the dramatic events at Malfoy Manor, and ten days after his daughter was born, Draco Malfoy woke from his magical stasis to the sight of Harry sleeping in the chair, his glasses crooked, and their daughter wrapped snugly against his chest. His journal lay face down in Harry's lap. Draco smiled at the sight, and returned to a natural sleep. The only healing left was for the pair to mend the wounds of their very raw and confused emotions.

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Their words were stilted at first, each man's guilt overwhelming him and clouding his decision making processes. The common link of their daughter and the sheer intensity of their feelings stopping them from just walking away from each other. Draco was still recuperating, and he relished this time as his magic was coming back to its full extent and he was getting to know his daughter. In point of fact, it was only through the quality time that Harry and Draco spent with their daughter, and the bond shared by the three of them, that the new fathers were able to reconcile their differences.

"Draco..." The exasperated tone in Harry's voice told Draco exactly what was coming next.

"Don't... I'm not interested." Was the blonde's curt reply.

"But..."

Draco waved a silencing charm in Harry's direction. Much to Draco's delight, he had discovered that his own wandless magic ability had been aided by their uncommon link. The link forged by

the ancient and dark Fertilitiatumas that had lead to the downfall of the Dark Lord. Harry's eyes widened in surprise.

"If you're going to apologise again Harry Potter, then I'm just going to be forced to maintain that silencing charm. Now are we going to talk properly, without you trying to ask for my forgiveness? You have nothing to forgive, you wool headed Gryffindor. Besides, even if you did, I would have forgiven you now, so that's the end of that discussion." Harry let out a giant sigh of relief at the blonde's surprisingly intense words. With another flick of his wrist, Draco removed the silent ban on his lover.

"I... I don't deserve you Draco. Either of you." Harry looked down at his blonde daughter who was snuggled firmly in the crook of Draco's other arm.

Draco put their daughter down, a strange gurgle and the beginnings of her father's smirk on her face. "Now listen to me Harry Potter." Draco took a stance long remembered from their infamous duels in their early years at school. "Even if you don't think you deserve us, we aren't going anywhere. You aren't the only one suffering from guilt trips. I spent months acting like a ruddy Gryffindor. Honestly, I don't know how I handled all those hormones. I can't believe I was such an emotional basket case! I was overly needy and crazy, but the one thing I never doubted was the fact that I love you, and that I am the one that really doesn't deserve you!" Harry just stared blankly at Draco's declaration. The blonde continued.

"I'm the one who should be apologising to you Harry. I'm the one who needs your forgiveness." The plea was evident in Draco's eyes. "I had wanted to tell you all those months that I was only pretending to be a Death Eater. I was only trying to make a bad situation better. I thought taking the mark..." Draco indicated his rolled down sleeve, not wanting to see the horrid scarred flesh of his Dark Mark. "... would help, but all it did was prolong the inevitable. In the process *I* was the one who caused you the most pain. I thought it was the right thing to do. I don't know why I didn't trust Snape. I wasn't sure if I could. So I took the better of two cautions - I kept my silence. Of course, when I heard how you reacted to what I'd done, well, I just assumed you never wanted to hear from me again."

"But you were cornered. It was the only thing you could do..."

Draco shook his head furiously at Harry's words. "No, it wasn't. I could have escaped. I could have trusted Snape, I could have sent that ruddy letter to you, and then none of this would have happened.

"Well aren't we just a matching pair of prats." Harry's face broadened in a grin, and Draco's trademark smirk soon followed. "Just out of curiosity, why did you fall in love with me?" he cocked his head to one side.

Draco shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know why I've always been obsessed with you Harry - ever since we were children. I guess when I was younger, I was so jealous, and I truly wanted to hate you. My hate was an obsession, and that obsession just turned one day. I think I first started

to see it for what it really was after father went to Azkaban. I don't know why, but I just fell in love with you. I don't know what spell you've cast on me, but I think about you every day, and have done since we first met! How that turned into love, I just can't understand, but I do know that if I have to spend one minute without you, well I just know that I should have died in birth if that's the case. But when you were there after she was born, I could feel your love seeping through me, willing me to live again, and well, here we are. I'm just sorry you had to spend those months dwelling at the bottom of the pit of despair. And don't try to deny that - I know you were there - everyone had great pleasure in telling me that."

Harry looked deep into Draco's eyes and could see the truth of the words. He could see the anger smouldering behind those eyes, and the look of pure longing he had seen so often all those months ago. Draco truly loved him? "Someone said it was a Potter thing, Draco. Apparently my mother and my grandmother felt the same way when they fell in love with my father and grandfather." Harry shrugged. "I don't doubt you love me Draco..." he held up the journal of Draco's words. "I... I just don't know how to start saying I'm sorry. I've caused you more pain..."

Harry was stopped in his tracks as Draco swept his lips into a soul devouring kiss. The effect was what Draco intended. Not only did it prove how much he loved the wool headed Gryffindor, but it gave Harry a chance to return it in kind. After their lips reluctantly parted again, Harry was silent. "See," Draco smirked. "Much more effective than a silencing charm." Both men turned as they felt their bond to their daughter tugging, and all amorous thoughts were pushed aside as they attended to their little bundle of joy.

A few days later, as the new family was enjoying a quiet Saturday afternoon together, Harry struggled once again with his conscience. He'd had a building feeling of guilt since that confrontation at Malfoy Manor but hadn't been able to pinpoint the cause. A rather unpleasant dream that morning had brought the events leading up to Voldemort's demise back into his head. Now, as he watched Draco reading to their daughter, he found himself distracted by those memories until he realised that he was playing one particular memory over and over.

Lucius raising his wand and beginning to say the killing curse.
Draco throwing himself over their newborn child.
Harry's focus as he stepped into the room and wandlessly cast the same curse.
The shocked blue eyes and still open mouth of Lucius Malfoy's lifeless countenance.

Yes, Harry had finally figured it out. He was to blame for the death of Draco's father and he hadn't so much as offered the simplest of apologies. Lost in these thoughts and debating how in the world he would ever make up for such an action, Harry didn't realise that he was being intently watched by a a pair of blondes - one with intense blue-grey eyes; the other with deep emerald green pools.

"Harry?"

"Hmmm?" He didn't even look up, still contemplating what needed to be done now.

"What are you brooding over?"

This caught his attention. He'd nearly forgotten that both Draco and their daughter were in tune with his magic and therefore picked up on his stronger emotions. The guilt was weighing heavily on his conscience, but he was utterly uncertain as to how he could ask forgiveness. He looked up, catching the baby's gaze first, and seemed to draw some powerful confidence from her. When he finally raised his eyes further to meet those of his lover, he knew it was now or never.

"I'm sorry, Draco. I've been thinking there was something wrong and it's finally hit me that I… I killed your father. I don't know if you remember, but… well I didn't do it intentionally, more like instinctively. He was aiming at the both of you; I couldn't take the chance that…"

Before Harry could form any further coherent thoughts, Draco had reached around, pulling him into a family hug with Faith between them. He held on earnestly, amazed at the feelings of comfort and love in spite of his previous actions. "How can you…?" He couldn't bring himself to ask the question - how could Draco overlook that, how could he forgive the murder of his father, how could he love a killer.

"Honestly Harry, you did what you had to do to save our child, and for that matter, you saved me too. Lucius Malfoy was my father in name alone. I miss Severus more than I do Lucius. That useless excuse for a father convinced Voldemort to kill my mother. There's nothing to apologise for," Draco added as he leaned in to offer a reassuring kiss. "Now, don't argue or I'll have to silence you again." Harry smiled at the teasing jibe and moved to indulge in one more kiss.

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A full month after the defeat, and Draco was allowed out of the bed and began venturing out into the world. He was itching to be able to spend a whole day without Madame Pomfrey telling him it was time to get back to bed and rest. It had not been pleasant when she had caught him flying on his broom. But she had been right. Draco had had to redesign all his cushioning charms, and the ride had not been as exhilarating as he had hoped. But on this day, he had taken his family down to Hogsmeade.

School had finished, and for their classmates, they would not be returning to Hogwarts. Draco was quite willing to stay at the castle until he was fully healed, and Harry wasn't going anywhere without Draco. Malfoy Manor was still crawling with Aurors, and would be for considerable time. Besides, Draco had little desire to return to the home, the memories too fresh, and he didn't want those memories for his daughter. As the afternoon wore on, they found themselves in Madame Puddifoot's Teashop.

"So what's happening next, I mean for you guys that is?" Hermione asked Harry as she sipped her Darjeeling. The former Head Girl had indeed excelled in her NEWTs and was planning a life of study in Transfiguration.

Harry shrugged as he held his daughter close in the crook of his arm. "Oh, you know, feed,

change, wash, play. Then it's time to do it all over again with Faith." Harry grinned and winked at Draco.

Ron coughed and blushed redder than his hair at the unconcealed innuendo in that statement. "I... I think she meant after this summer - when *Malfoy* gets better." Ron didn't glare at Draco, but he tried his hardest to be civil, for everyone's sake. Ron was one for holding grudges for a considerably long time, but he was working hard to accept Draco, only because he saw how the blonde git made Harry very happy. He buried his head in his coffee mug to hide his embarrassment.

Draco smirked. "Well, Weasley, we're planning on both sitting our NEWTs next year, so we'll be redoing the entire seventh year."

"But what about Faith? Who's going to look after her when you are in classes?" Hermione asked.

"Oh, well I'm only going to continue with the same four NEWTs I started this past year, so I'll be free some of the time. It's not like we have to both totally redo the year. We just want to be able to attend and do the practical side of our work. I know Dumbledore is planning on working on our Wandless Magic, but I know he's just itching to find out how our link works." Harry frowned at this, as did Draco.

"So how does this link work?" Ron asked Harry, as the glare coming from Draco was rather frosty.

Harry shrugged. "It's hard to explain. I know where they both are, and I can feel it when Draco does magic - I can even feel it when Faith is doing her magic. I think that's what happened when we all defeated Voldemort."

"Not to mention the fact that's how your visions started up again." Draco mentioned. He explained to Hermione. "Because of our link through Faith, he could see everything that was going on, that's why he got the visions back, not because of a failure of Occlumency or any dark spell." It was all starting to make sense to Hermione.

"Yeah, that's why I could only see what Voldemort was up to when he was with Draco. It was the first sign of our connection, but it's gone - now that Voldemort's gone." Harry absently rubbed at his scar, which had faded drastically since the demise of the Dark Lord.

"So it was one of the side effects of the potion?" Hermione asked out of curiosity. One month out of school, and her thirst for knowledge had not waned. "Did you manage to find out any more about the brew, and what it was intended to do?"

Draco shook his head. "They've been right through the Manor, and Riddle House. They can't find anything there that's about the potion. I guess the parchment that Snape had was all we'll ever find. So I guess if there are any other side effects, we'll just have to find them out as we go along." Draco looked lovingly at Harry, hinting at their shared journey in his words.

Ron sat there, swilling the dregs of the coffee around in his cup. Faith hiccoughed, and Draco took her from Harry. Both fathers could sense that she was hungry, and it was time for a feed. Draco wandlessly produced a bottle from her pram, and proceeded to feed her, the soft suckling sounds soothing to both men. Ron was still surprised every time he saw either of them doing wandless magic. "So just how'd you get your hands on this potion in the first place Harry?" Ron had been curious, but really had no desire to hear all the sordid details of his best friend's sex life.

Fully aware of Ron's incessant curiosity, and his squeamishness, he gave both him and Hermione a rather edited version of events the night that Snape brewed the Fertilitatumas.

"And you didn't wash your hands Harry! Every first year knows that you always wash your hands after a spill." Hermione showed her disappointment in her best friend. Harry shrugged. Draco grinned up at him as their daughter fed soundly.

Harry sighed. "Not you too. I've got this one," he indicated Draco, "harping in my ear about that all the time, and now you. I sometimes sit and wonder if Snape's ghost is going to start haunting me and reminding me at every turn." But Harry looked longingly at his lover and his daughter and knew that he would not regret his actions.

Draco scowled at Harry. "I hope you've been washing your hands before and after you've been touching our daughter."

Harry laughed. "Hell yeah, I'm almost becoming obsessive and compulsive about it. Soap, water and scourgify charms. I have apologised, love, haven't I?"

Draco rolled his eyes. "Only every time someone mentions the potion, which is at least twice a day. I'm thinking you should be apologising instead for the foolish Gryffindorish notions you've passed on to our daughter."

Harry's mouth gaped open in surprise. "Gryffindorish! Besides, I'm pretty sure she knew what she was doing when Voldemort was ready to attack her. A rather Slytherin plan of hers - exposing herself like that... I'll be spending a lifetime keeping her off the dark path!" Harry grinned. This was obviously a point they would be discussing for many years to come. They all laughed.

"But there's still one thing I don't understand." Hermione was still fishing for clues on the effects of the potion. "How did you end up having a girl?"

Both men shrugged, but Harry blushed. "I think perhaps that..."

Draco interrupted. "I'm sure Weasley doesn't want to hear about the sweet nothings Harry whispered into my ear in Parseltongue as we..." Ron started coughing loudly, choking on the cake he had just popped in his mouth. Ron was shaking his head furiously, definitely not wanting to hear details. The look on Hermione's face told Harry that she would be seeking further

information on that later, and they could all avoid Ron's apoplectic fit.

Harry had indeed chosen the sex of their daughter during their lovemaking. The random Parseltongue that Harry whispered into Draco's ear whilst they made love under the influence of the potion had resulted in his daughter's conception. Harry could not remember the exact words of the chant, but recalled that small Parseltongue book he had plucked from the library, and the sex magic that was explained in thorough detail in the back of it. He recalled that certain words could indeed help determine the sex of a child, and in combination with the potion, it had done its work. Draco had at least been pleased that something from that night had been left up to them, and not the potion. He didn't think he could cope with any more side effects from the potion cropping up as his daughter grew.

"What I want to know Granger," Draco asked, "is how you managed to work out that Harry and I had been sneaking around together. From what I hear, Ron thought Harry was with Snape." Draco could barely contain his mirth at the thought, despite missing his former professor. "There's no way you would have guessed it straight up. How'd you find out? I thought we had been extremely discreet."

Now it was Hermione's turn to blush. "Let's just say the walls between the boys and girls toilets on the Hogwarts Express are a lot thinner than you could possibly imagine."

Draco's mouth hung open in surprise, as a blush crept up Harry's face. "All that time?" he murmured in surprise.

Ron suddenly caught on to their conversation. "You mean... On the train Harry?" The shock was evident on the red-head's face, but Harry had turned back to Hermione.

"But you never said anything..."

Hermione stopped him. "It wasn't my place to say Harry. You would have told us when you were ready. I suspected you might have been trying to protect him from the Death Eaters. When we first heard about Draco's defection, I thought it was just that which had caused your heartbreak. But when Ron overheard Crabbe and Goyle, well, that's when the sickle dropped for me."

Harry and Draco were both surprised at Hermione's admission, but Ron was the one to voice his opinions.

"You knew! All those months, and you never told me!" he yelled loud enough for the other patrons in the Teashop to hear. He quickly ducked his head in apology. "Why didn't you say anything to me 'Mione?" Ron sounded disappointed.

"Because, Ron, half of Gryffindor would have known in the first five minutes, and the rest of the school within the hour." Hermione gave Ron a look to say that they would finish this discussion without Harry and Draco, for which the two men were both grateful.

"Faith is such a lovely name. Who came up with it?" Hermione touched the little girl's cheek as Harry held her after her feed. Her green eyes were struggling to stay open, but she could not fight the nasty sleep demon that claimed her peaceful face.

"Neither of us picked it. She chose it herself." Draco smiled at the vision of Harry with Faith. Hermione and Ron looked at them quizzically.

"We were having a fight." Harry began.

"A discussion really." Draco interrupted.

"Whatever, but I think I mentioned that even though we had been through months of hell, and that we would no doubt have plenty of issues to discuss, that my faith had been restored by what happened when we all destroyed Voldemort." They all nodded, but Ron seemed a little confused.

"How'd you know she liked the name?"

"Because our magic is linked, Weasley." Draco huffed in exasperation at Harry's friend. He was really trying to make an effort, for Harry's sake, but Ron Weasley was so trying. He elaborated further, just to avoid any more stupid looks on the red-head's face. "When we said the word 'faith', she made this noise, and we could both feel a rather nice tingle of magic coming from her."

"Yeah," Harry continued. "I said the word a couple more times, and she giggled. We finally asked her if that was her name, and she seemed to say yes, in her own way."

What neither man mentioned was the tingle of Faith's magic that still passed through them every time someone spoke their daughter's name. It reminded them of all the trials and tribulations they had to go through to get to this point. Neither thought it was going to be an easy journey, but they knew that amongst the three of them, it was going to be a hell of a ride. One that they would all relish.

They just had to have Faith of the Heart.

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Chapter: 11

(Crying Over) Spilt Potions

by Azhure

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Chapter 10 - Epilogue

Harry's hands slid slowly down the sides of the naked body before him. The lines and curves were as he remembered. A year can usually make a difference, but for Harry, the desire - the need - the primal forces that lead him to this point - he remembered them as clearly as if he had been able to access them every day.

As for Draco, his body sung at the long forgotten touch. A touch he had craved, yet never dared to imagine he'd feel ever again. At first, things had proceeded slowly yet tentatively between the reunited lovers. They still had to work through the months of mistrust and self doubt, but they worked through it together. The joy of watching their daughter was an experience they shared daily, with anyone and everyone. She had both her fathers wrapped around her little finger, and she was only three months old.

Their joy was evident to anyone who watched them. Still, a number of friends were still getting over the shock of their now very public relationship. Harry hovered over Draco and his daughter, and Draco rarely ventured far from the little girl's side.

The Wizarding World had heralded Faith's role in helping her father destroy Voldemort. It was at Harry's constant insistence that it was a family effort - with Draco's dire situation being the impetus behind Harry's spectacular magic that destroyed Voldemort. If it wasn't for the true love Harry had for Draco and their daughter, he may not have been able to destroy the former Dark Lord.

It was Harry's complete refusal to take the credit alone that showed Draco they there was a good chance that they could now begin to live their lives - together. Harry was totally devoted to both blondes, their solidarity as they faced the world with a united front would eventually become the stuff of true romantic fairy tales.

Upon their reunion, their tentative minds wanted to take it slowly, but once their bodies met again, the passion ignited with an intensity not felt before by either man. Draco attributed their amazing passion to Harry's increased magical powers. Harry just plain thought that the idea of Draco's post pregnancy body was sexier than all hell, and his body responded accordingly.

Tonight was the first time that Draco wanted Harry to make love to him. It was three months

since Faith was born, and he felt he could handle it. But don't think they were celibate in all that time. The pair explored each other's bodies thoroughly, and tried everything else that was physically capable of being done between two lust starved wizards. Madame Pomfrey had said Draco's body had healed perfectly from the birth, and he could resume 'normal' activities. The look on her face as she said this was priceless; neither Harry nor Draco would ever forget it. Perhaps their cheesy grins told her more than she cared to know.

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Harry's tongue laved a path down the blonde's chest, being extra careful to avoid overstimulating Draco's thoroughly sensitive nipples. Despite not being able to breastfeed, the post pregnancy hormones were still running rampant through his body, and his nipples had never felt the same since Faith's birth.

"Harry..." Draco gasped in wanton pleasure. "I just wanted to make sure..."

"Draco, Faith is fine." Harry mumbled back in between kissing and nibbling Draco's belly button. His fingers traced paths over the now firm lines of Draco's stomach. "She's sleeping through the night now, and she will certainly tell us if she wakes." Harry knew Draco loved to talk as Harry caressed his body, and Harry hoped he could get the blonde to be too aroused to even make coherent words.

"But no, I just..." His voice sounded a little desperate, not with desire, but concern.

"...And I've closed off the floo for the night as well. I promise you won't find any stray Weasleys wandering into our lounge as we are in flagrante delicto." Harry hissed the last words and outstretched his arm as he summoned the salve. His wandless magic came without conscious thought now. He had not needed to replace his broken wand, but he had found that the occasional use of Draco's wand restricted his burgeoning powers. Draco rarely needed his wand either, his own wandless magic was also growing daily.

The salve flew swiftly into his opened hand. It was the same recipe that he had brewed a year ago - the last time he had made love to Draco. Draco had suggested some improvements to the mixture that increased the numbing properties of the salve, without affecting its effectiveness as a lubricant.

As Harry began unscrewing the lid of the jar, he moved and kissed his way down Draco's abdomen, reaching the blonde's own leaking hardness. He teased it ever so gently, licking it lightly, then blowing cold air on it, before taking the tip ever so lightly in his mouth, and running his tongue under the foreskin and tickling the slit.

"No... Harry... just... Oh Merlin..." Draco was practically incoherent from this treatment. It often worked wonders on his lover, but he still persisted in talking. Harry was so close to his own orgasm, he didn't want to have to prolong the agony and the ecstasy for much longer. He hadn't

even prepared Draco yet, and he was ready to explode.

"Draco," Harry looked up into the blonde's face. "you watched me make this salve - hell - you even took over at one point... and," Harry put a finger on the blonde's protesting lips, "before you ask again, yes, I've practiced the Prophylaxis charm countless times. Everyone from Arthur Weasley right up to Professor Flitwick have double checked my ability to do it properly without a wand. Although to be honest, I was happier with Flitwick's confirmation. Somehow I didn't really trust Arthur's judgement."

With another wave of his hand, Harry quickly performed the charm, along with the other charms to protect his lover during their encounter. As Harry's lips and tongue worked their way back up to Draco's neck, nuzzling and licking and biting at the inviting flesh. He could sense that Draco was still concerned about something.

Harry stopped as he reached the full lips. They weren't heavy with desire, but firmly held together in barely concealed worry. "Draco? What's wrong?" Harry was anxious that perhaps he had misread the signals from Draco's body. They were screaming with desire, and Harry had sensed that is what he wanted. The blonde's face told a different story.

Realising Harry had stopped his teasing ministrations, Draco looked up into the deep green eyes. Harry had not misread the lust in his lover's reflected gaze, but there was a touch of fear and concern tinging their corners.

It was in moments like this that Draco knew Harry loved him without reservation, and he tried to say the same thing in his return gaze. The fact that Harry would deny himself his own pleasure if Draco asked, was testament to that love.

A merry twinkle fashioned itself in his smoky gaze.

"No it's nothing like that you wool headed Gryffindor. I know Faith is fine. I know the salve is going to help blow my mind away, and yes, I know that you can perform the Prophylaxis charm with your eyes shut and no wand. I just wanted to ask..."

"... have you washed your hands?"

The End

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And in a total non-sequitur a line from one of my favourite episodes of Blackadder, series 2:

Nursie: *You almost were a boy, my little cherrypit.*
Queenie (Queen Elizabeth I): *What?*
Nursie: *Yeah. Out you popped, out of your mummies pumpkin and everybody shouting: "It's a boy, it's a boy!". And somebody said "but it hasn't got a winkle!". And then I said "A boy without*

a winkle? God be praised, it is a miracle. A boy without a winkle!" And then Sir Thomas Moore pointed out that a boy without a winkle is a girl. Anyway, I was really disappointed.