Title: A Life More (or less) Ordinary
Author: tari_sue
Pairing: Harry/Draco
Rating: Hard R/NC17
Word Count: ~22000
Warning(s): Slash! Features some fairly vanilla sex between 2 consenting male adults. Mentions of MPreg. Some swearing.
Beta: the_gubette
Prompt: Writer's choice slash/het and Other Prompt No.4.
Harry finds a broken Veela and nurses her/him back to health, only to discover it is someone rather familiar... The Veela should be quite vicious if anyone except Harry tries to help it, full Veela mode, wings, beak etc, the reason for this is up to the author. Harry is, of course, completely clueless.

Summary: Harry is working at St Mungo's as a student nurse and finds himself becoming a bit too attached to one of the patients – a dying Veela who won't let anyone close.
Author's Notes: This fic was subjected to a very fast beta read at the last minute by the wonderful Samantha Hope who I really can't thank enough. I apologise for anyremaining mistakes, they are mine and mine alone. Oh, and there are probably more clichés than you can shake a magic stick at :D

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He awoke with the Hangover from Hell. He wasn't a hundred per cent sure if he was feeling sick in his head or if his headache originated from his stomach the only thing he knew for sure was that moving was a very bad idea, it made the room spin in a very unpleasant way. Or maybe ingesting anything given to him by Zabini had been the bad idea

Lying back down and closing his eyes, he became aware of another presence in the bed. He didn't know who the other person was, come to think of it, he wasn't entirely sure where the bed was or how he'd come to be in it, but that wasn't an unusual occurrence for him these days. His brain was only able to form one coherent thought, *'this has got to stop'*. He felt disgusted with himself, he knew that getting wrecked and sleeping around was not good and not really him, but he couldn't seem to stop. Every night there was a party, every night there was a pretty girl or two, or three, hanging off his arm, every night he ended up going home with one of them – or two, or three.

There was a groan from beside him as the other occupant of the bed shifted. A foot poked out from under the covers, and he was a little disturbed by the fact that it seemed a little – masculine. Come to think of it, the whole room seemed a little masculine, now that he had his eyes open. The room definitely smelt of sex. Cautiously, so as not to wake his bed mate, he reached over to pull back the covers but a *male* arm came out from under the cover and hooked itself around his

waist and a *man's* voice said, "Morning, lover." He didn't even take one glance, he wasn't even aware of moving, but somehow he'd lunged for his jeans, which were lying on the floor, grabbed his wand and apparated out of there, still naked, with his jeans still clutched in his hand and to hell with the rest of his clothes. As soon as he appeared in his living room he vomited, unsure whether it was his foolhardy apparition or the fact he seemed to have shagged a bloke that had caused the remnants of last night's potions to his system this way. He did a quick vitals check to make sure he hadn't splinched himself and made a beeline for the shower.

That was it, no more staying up all night getting ratted. No more one-night stands. He was turning over a new leaf. He'd get married, just like he was supposed to. He never, ever needed to tell anyone of this, he never, ever needed to think of this ever again, it never, ever happened! He'd never even considered sleeping with a man before, could he really have drunk enough alcohol to turn him gay? Could alcohol do that?

Maybe he should swear off booze, and women, and definitely men! Go for a life more – ordinary. Just one woman, a new leaf, new start – get a career, get married, have lots and lots of kids and never, ever acknowledge last night ever again.

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Five years later

Harry was currently running along behind Matron Thursten, the formidable Matron of St Mungo's, desperately trying to keep up and listen to all she had to say and remember it. Today was his first day as Junior Probationer Potter. Ron had been having a great time telling everyone that Harry was on probation, like he'd been in prison or something; that is when he wasn't having great fun telling everyone that Harry was going to be a big girly MediWitch and wear a dress like Madam Pomfrey's. Harry hadn't needed to argue with Ron on the subject, both Ginny and Hermione had taken great exception to Ron's remarks and told him off in no uncertain terms. That didn't work now, however, both girls were away leading their own lives, Hermione was doing a post-doctorate at Cambridge University and Ginny was in America fronting up the Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes operation. Amazingly enough, Harry and Ginny were still together, although the long-distance relationship had proven difficult. Someday, when every city in America, or possible the whole world, had its own Wheezes franchise, Ginny would return home and they'd get married and raise a family; until then, there was always long-distance floo.

Harry's unexpected decision to abandon his Auror training and go into MediWizardry came when, two-years in, he'd realised that he wanted to help people, not just chase criminals all his life. He'd started over and taken his new training far more seriously, he'd taken his exams and he'd done pretty well without Hermione's help, and now he had to get his practical experience. People, including Hermione, kept asking him why he didn't become a Healer, telling him that he could do it if he applied himself, but they never seemed to understand that he was doing exactly what he *wanted*. Healers were all high-fliers and they helped people and saved their lives, but that wasn't the way he wanted to help; he wanted to think of people as people rather than cases. He actually *wanted* to be a MediWizard, or nurse as it was called these days due to both pro-muggle relations and the fact that the job had grown to incorporate muggle nursing

techniques – meaning Harry would be a qualified nurse in both the Muggle and Wizarding worlds when finished his training. Ginny seemed to be the only person who understood this, she loved him and would be happy whatever he did so long as it made him happy.

Lost in his own thoughts, Harry narrowly missed crashing into the probationer in front of him as they all suddenly stopped. To his horror, he suddenly realised that he hadn't heard a word that Matron had said for the last ten minutes.

"Right then, any questions?" Matron looked around, daring any of the new recruits to say a word. Harry dearly hoped that she hadn't assigned wards yet or he'd be stuffed, she didn't look like the sort of woman who would understand that he hadn't been listening, she might throw him out of St Mungo's on his first day!

Matron raised an eyebrow, "Nobody? Good. Now then, your ward assignments, these will work on rotation, obviously, as you need to get experience in all areas of the hospital," and with that she rattled off a list of names and wards so fast that Harry barely caught, "Potter, Magical Beings," and tried not to groan. Of all the wards, that was the one he wanted to work on least – Magical Beings was a new category brought in by the Ministry since the war to distinguish Magical Beings such as Centaurs, Veela, Werewolves, Vampires etc from Magical Creatures, such a kneazles, crups, unicorns, flobberworms etc etc. They tended to be notoriously touchy around Wizards, who had treated them appallingly for centuries, and a lot of Magical Beings were still so weary around Wizards that they still preferred to seek help from their own communities, but the newest ward at St Mungo's still had its fair share of work, and it was often dangerous.

The probationers trailed off for lunch and Harry tagged along behind them. They were the same group he'd done his initial training with, but he was a few years older than them due to his change of direction, and the only bloke in the group. Most of them were in awe of him anyway so he'd never really fitted in. Not that he needed to now, they were all going off to their own wards.

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Sister (let's get this straight, my name is not funny) Vanyarsfeld, a no-nonsense witch from Cape Town, had been talking at Harry for a good fifteen minutes now – he wasn't to get in the way, he wasn't to interact with the patients, he wasn't to use his wand, in fact, he was to deposit his wand in the Sister's office each morning when he arrived and pick it up on his way out each night. Sister (no smirking) Vanyarsfeld had no time for lazy, freeloading celebrities, Probationer (full of himself) Potter would just have to pull his weight like everybody else and as the new boy, all the worst tasks that nobody else wanted would come to him.

Harry stood and listened dutifully, it was nothing more than he'd expected; the lecturers on his first day at college had expected him to be lazy, why should things change now? And of course he would be changing beds and emptying bedpans on his first day, they were hardly going to let him deliver triplets, were they now?

Realistic expectations aside, he found himself sighing as he found himself remaking the same bed for the fourth time. He knew how to make a bed, Aunt Petunia had made sure he knew how to make a bed before he was eight years old, they had been shown how to do it again at nursing college, yet still he didn't seem to be doing it to Sister Vanyarsfeld's exacting standards.

"Do it again, Potter," came the clipped tones as she walked past. If Harry were in a less charitable frame of mind he would think she was trying to piss him off.

By the end of the day he was fuming; he'd be judged incapable of making beds, scrubbing floors, sorting linens, running errands and making tea and a whole host of other menial tasks. As he was given his wand back, he was promised more of the same the next day until he 'got it right'. He went home to his cold empty flat and made himself beans on toast because he couldn't be bothered to make anything else. He sneaked off and had a bath so that he wouldn't have to answer to floo to his friends trying to find out how his first day had gone.

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The second and third days progressed pretty much the same as the first, although he had indeed now added bedpan emptying to his list of chores. The other nurses were eager to pile whatever unwanted jobs onto him that they could get away with and Sister Vanyarsfeld kept a strict eye on him to make sure he didn't try to shirk any of the tasks he'd been given.

After a few weeks, once he had gained confidence and (somehow) got the approval of Sister Vanyarsfeld, he started to enjoy himself. There seemed to be more male nurses on this ward than most, possibly due to the nature of the ward and the brute strength sometimes needed when dealing with super-human patients. He was soon recruited to the Monday night Quidditch team and made friends with the teams beaters, Tim and Alfie – two hulking great blokes made in the true beater mould, like Crabbe and Goyle, and to be honest he had been rather intimidated by them when he first met them. They were both senior nurses and tended to work with the more difficult patients, although they could be surprisingly gentle with them when required.

Now that he was getting more used to the ward and the patients, Harry found himself becoming more aware of his surroundings. He learnt that Vampires and Werewolves always went on opposite sides of the ward. He learnt that Succubi needed to go in a separate room away from all the other patients. He knew that a grassy room was always kept empty for Centaurs, even though no Centaur had ever graced St Mungo's with its presence. He also knew that there was another side room that no one was allowed in except for Sister Vanyarsfeld and some of the more senior nurses. Harry found himself drawn to this room, he knew there was a patient inside because he'd heard them screeching – screeching being the only word he could attach to the unearthly noise emanating from the room. He also heard various thumps and bangs and, on one occasion, he saw Alfie leave the room with a very broken nose, which was promptly fixed by the Sister before the both went back into the room and shut the door.

The other nurses on the ward had tried to guess what sort of patient was in the room; rabid Werewolf was the top guess, although it didn't seem tied to the full moon. Another favourite was some sort of Giant, which Harry supposed could be possible with the use of Wizard space. A less

common theory, prompted by the unearthly screeching, was that the room contained a rabid Veela, but nobody had any proof that there even could be such a thing.

Harry discovered that there was indeed a Veela on the Friday of his third week. A full-blooded Veela had been rushed into the ward to deliver twins, she had been sent down from Maternity when she had turned violent on them. There seemed to be very few staff at St Mungo's that the pregnant Veela would allow near her, but to his delight Harry seemed to be one of the lucky ones. After the babies were born (and Harry had actually been allowed to hold them!) the mother asked about her 'poor cousin', whose presence she could feel in the locked room.

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"… and the little babies actually had little wings when they were born!" Harry enthused to the Weasley family over dinner that night, "They are just the cutest things you have ever seen! And I got to hold them! Veela almost never let Wizards touch their newborns!"

"Harry, mate, stop! You sound like a bloody girl," grumbled Ron from beside him.

"Wait, wings? On a baby? That's just plain wrong! Fleur's kids don't have wings, do they?" slurred George.

"Wings? Is that really true? I mean, I've heard about it, obviously, but I always thought it was just one of those silly things that people say," Percy put in.

"Of course eet is true," exclaimed Fleur, clearly a little offended, "Zees babies are pure blooded Veela! Any child with enough Veela blood in eet will be born wiz wings. I am just under half Veela myself, I was not born with wings, and my babies are less than quarter Veela so they didn't have wings either. My mother did, and my cousin, zee wings retract after a day or so, eet is perfectly normal, eet is not disgusting!"

"Seriously, it's not," said Harry quickly, trying to keep the peace, "it's the most amazing thing I've ever seen!"

"Harry, I'm really starting to worry about you, are you sure that doing a girl's job isn't turning you into one?"

"Ron, wake up and join the 21st century will you? Nursing is not a girl's job," snapped Harry, who was getting heartily sick of Ron making the same old comments.

"Yeah it is," said Ron cheerfully, "you can call yourself a MediWizard or a Nurse or whatever the 'PC' name for it is this week, but at the end of the day, you're still a MediWitch, Madam Potter." Ron had never really forgiven Harry for abandoning him in Auror training, even though he seemed to be doing a lot better now than he ever had as Harry's sidekick.

"Yeah, whatever, Ron," sighed Harry.

“So, Harry,” said Molly, ever the peace keeper, “do you think you might be tempted to go in for Midwifery?”

“Yeah,” muttered Ron, “go and stare up women’s skirts all day, Ginny will love that!” Everyone ignored him, except for George who sniggered into his beer.

“I don’t really know, Molly,” replied Harry, “I mean, it really was an amazing experience today, but I think I need to try some other areas before I decide to specialise. I mean, I really enjoy working in the department I’m in now too. It’s definitely made me want children of my own though!” At this statement, Ron nearly choked on his casserole.

“Oh honestly, Ron! You’ll have children of your own soon enough too,” said his mother, “Hermione won’t be studying forever you know.”

“Not bloody likely!” Ron exclaimed, earning himself a wrap across the knuckles, although it wasn’t clear whether he was talking about having a baby or Hermione not studying.

“Actually, Fleur,” said Harry, trying to change the conversation again, “do you know why there might be a Veela kept in a room by herself? I mean, she seems violent, so I suppose that could explain the isolation, but not even the staff are allowed in.”

“Harry, I am part Veela, this does not mean I automatically understand the problems of every Veela on zee planet! How should I know what is wrong wiz her?”

“I don’t know, I just don’t know much about Veela, you’re the only one I know.”

“Well, a lot of Veela don’t trust Wizards and they don’t like to be touched by anyone ozer zan zeir mate – ah, I do ’ope zee poor thing has not lost her True Mate!”

“What does that mean?”

“Well, Veela mate for life, but pure Veela have a predestined True Mate. Most Veela do not actually bond wiz zeir True Mate because if one of zem dies zen so does zee ozer, so for zee sake of zee Veela population most Veela have had arranged marriages ever since zee Veela wars of zee fifth century. Zis makes it unlikely zat your Veela has zee Veela sickness.”

“Bet you wish you hadn’t slept through seven years of History of Magic now, don’t you?” sniggered Ron.

“Yeah, ‘cause ikle Ronnie here was an Outstanding history student!” laughed George.

“And ikle Georgie here left school without getting any NEWTs at all!” said Percy, earning himself a glare from at least half the table.

“Yeah, and yet I’m still doing better than any of you sorry lot!” George hit back sullenly.

“It’s like this, Harry,” interrupted Bill, glaring at his brothers, “Wizards have always been attracted to Veela, but at that time Veela wouldn’t even look at anyone who wasn’t their mate. Wizards don’t usually like to be told ‘no’, and we usually like to get what we want, so some of the more unscrupulous among us tried to force Veela to bond with them. Of course, Veela aren’t so delicate as they look and so the result was many deaths, both Veela and Wizard. The trouble with that is that for every Veela who died, their mate died too so Veela numbers swooped drastically low.

“There were some Veela who hadn’t yet bonded but their intended mates had been killed. In an effort to increase numbers these Veela were mated together – an unforeseen advantage being that now if one of them was killed, the other didn’t follow. After this Veela started deliberately stopping their offspring from mating with their True Mate, and Veela numbers increased dramatically. Veela are supremely faithful to their partners and would never take another as a lover, even if the other were their true mate.

“Sometime later, in a bid to end the fighting with Wizards, some Veela were mated with Wizards, hence the present situation where most old Pureblood families have some Veela blood in them.”

“Yeah,” piped up Ron, “like that little slapper, Malfoy! Typical blimin’ Veela, slept his way around half the school and probably all the Death Eaters!”

“RONALD WEASLEY! How dare you say such a thing!” But the wrath of Molly Weasley was cut short by her daughter-in-law.

“Zat is an outrageous lie! ’ow dare you! Veela do not sleep around! Were you not listening to Bill? Veela are undyingly loyal to their mates! This Malfoy can not ‘ave been Veela, ’e must have been an incubus or sumzing.” Fleur’s eyes were blazing and Harry was sure that if she were more than half Veela she would have sprouted wings by now.

“Actually, we have no proof that Malfoy slept around or that he was Veela. He was just skinny and very blond and we didn’t like him and the rumours started from there,” Harry said quickly.

“You called ’im Veela because you didn’t like ’im?!” Fleur didn’t seem any happier.

“No, uh, well, we didn’t actually start the rumour,” Harry tried to backtrack.

“’e is unlikely to be Veela,” sniffed Fleur, “Zeez days male Veela are very rare, Zis is why a lot of old pureblood names ’ave died out, if zay have too many Veela bloods zen zay have no male heirs. I ’ave ’ad enough, Bill, we should be going ’ome,” commanded Fleur, rising from her seat.

“No, wait, please, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to offend you, Fleur!” Harry rose too.

“And what about ‘im?” Fleur nodded at Ron who coloured and did an impression of a goldfish.

“Ronald, if you don’t apologise to Fleur this instant, you will be the one to leave,” said Molly irritably.

“But, Mum! I live here!” Ron looked aghast.

“Yes, well, you’d better say you’re sorry then!”

Ron mumbled something at Fleur that would probably pass for an apology and everyone went back to their dinner. Harry couldn’t help thinking about the strange Veela locked away on her own back in the hospital though.

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Smooth, perfect, ivory skin. Elegant lines, beautifully proportioned – perfection.

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Harry finally got his wish to see the Veela just over a week later. Sister Vanyarsfeld had been called away to a departmental meeting and Harry had been left with strict instructions to do a detailed stock take of the potions cupboard, which was conveniently located next to the Veela’s room. He was halfway through counting bottles of emergency Wolfsbane when Tim came racing out of the room looking highly agitated.

“Where’s Fanny? Vanyarsfeld? Quickly!”

“She had to go to a meeting.” Harry replied, jumping up. Tim gave him a quick appraising look before replying.

“Never mind, you’ll do! Come with me, hurry up.” And with that he ran back into the room, clearly expecting Harry to follow him. Harry, never on to pass up an opportunity, did just that.

It took a moment for his eyes to adjust to the gloom inside the Veela’s room, but soon enough he made out the prone form of Alfie on the floor. Back beside the wall he could just make out another figure huddled in on itself with what could only be a pair of wings held out in front like a protective shield. Tim already had his wand drawn and was holding it in a defensive pose between Harry and the Veela.

“Ok Harry, I need you to get Alfie out of here,” Tim whispered, presumably trying not to incur the Veela’s wrath. “Take him back into the main ward and get someone, anyone to see to him, and get someone to get hold of Fanny, then I need you to come back in here and help me with *him*,” Tim gestured at the Veela. Harry nodded, processing on some level that, despite what Fleur had said, the Veela was in fact male. Harry had no time to ponder on this new bit of knowledge though, maybe he could ask Tim about it later.

He went quickly and quietly over to Alfie and attempted to hoist him up. Harry was no weakling, but Alfie had to be at least six stone heavier and about a foot taller than he was, he found himself struggling and nearly dropped his colleague straight away.

“What the hell are you doing?” Tim hissed in disbelief, “for Christ’s sake, use your wand and levitate him the hell out of here!”

“I’m still on probation,” Harry whispered back, “Sister Vanyarsfeld has my wand. Shall I get someone else?”

“No! I’ll get in enough trouble for letting you in here let alone anyone else. Use Alfie’s, I’m sure he won’t mind on this occasion, and don’t worry about Fanny, I’ll tell her it was me!”

Harry shrugged and picked up the fallen wand; it felt strange in his hand, but not too unfriendly. He clumsily levitated the fallen MediWizard out of the room, rattling off Tim’s instructions to the first nurse he saw, and then he ran back in.

The Veela was no longer huddled in the corner, instead he had moved away from the wall, his wings beating furiously behind him and his hands clutching at his head – vicious talons at the end of his fingers were tearing at the skin of his face. A pained scream coming from the Veela’s beak; now that he was actually seeing the poor creature, Harry realised that ‘scream’ actually defined the sound much better than ‘screech’. It seemed to be working itself up into a full-blown panic and Tim was doing his best to calm him down both with spells and words, although neither seemed to be doing much good.

Still clutching Alfie’s wand, Harry ran through possible spell in his head that might impede the Veela without actually hurting it. Making a snap decision, he quickly cast a lumos spell, issuing a sudden bright light from the end of his wand. The patient dropped to the floor, covering his eyes, with another cry of pain. As the light flared away, Harry stepped forward without thinking.

“Shit! I’m so sorry! It’s ok, mate, we’re not here to hurt you, I promise. I’m really sorry about the light there, it wasn’t supposed to be quite that bright, this isn’t my wand and I’m not used to it.” Harry was surprised to suddenly find himself looking into a beautiful pair of slate-grey eyes that seemed so full of sadness and pain that it actually took his breath away. The Veela offered him a plaintive little cry in response and Harry found himself reaching out to the patient, seeing him now as more of a frightened, injured bird than the threat he had seemed mere minutes ago. He put out his hand to touch the Veela’s arm and let him know that he was not alone, but at that moment everything went wrong again. The door burst open and both Harry and the Veela jumped.

“What the bloody hell is going on in here?” the clipped vowels of Sister Vanyarsfeld rang through the room.

Harry twisted round to face his boss at the same time as the Veela brought his wings back up in a defensive stance. Harry heard rather than felt his forearm snap as the powerful wing knocked it out of the way. He cried out and pulled his arm towards his chest causing a sharp to shoot up his arm. The bird-like creature before him pulled in on itself again, huddling down in a ball on the floor and covering itself with its wings, rocking back and forth and making a terrible moaning sound.

“Probationer Potter, go and get that arm seen to, I’ll deal with you later. Nurse Byrne, help me get the patient back on the bed.” Sister Vanyarsfeld took control and ushered Harry out of the room.

Back out on the ward he found Alfie, pretty much where he had left him, looking groggy but awake whilst Matilda, a junior nurse, finished healing the bruise on his temple. Harry went over to them and handed Alfie his wand back.

“Here, hope you don’t mind me using this, Tim thought it would be ok.”

“Hmm, do I mind someone using my wand to get my unconscious carcass out of a room with an insane Veela? Owwww,” Alfie groaned as Matilda trod on his toe in her eagerness to listen in. “I reckon I’ll forgive you mate.”

“An insane Veela? Is that what’s in the room? Is that safe?” Matilda questioned eagerly.

“Um, no, actually, not insane. I’m just being unfair because it got the better of me. I’m really not allowed to talk about this, Nurse Butterworth. Thanks for fixing me up, but I’m sure there are patients who need your attention, particularly with so many of the nursing staff out of action at the moment.” Alfie did his best to put Matilda off but she wasn’t going that easily.

“Oh, Harry! What have you done to your poor arm! Here, let me heal it for you.” Matilda moved towards him with her wand at the ready, but Harry’s bad experiences of letting incompetents fix broken arms made him nervous about letting her near it.

Fortunately, he was saved at that moment from having to endure Matilda’s ministrations by the re-emergence of Sister Vanyarsfeld and Tim. The Sister soon put Matilda back to work on the ward and had Harry’s broken arm mended before he could so much as blink. By the look on her face though, Harry thought he might have rejoiced at her arrival too soon. At her command he followed her to her office with a sinking feeling in his stomach. Surely she wasn’t going to fire him? Surely he wasn’t going to be a giant failure at this too, after all the effort he’d put into getting this far?

“Wait here,” she told him curtly before disappearing into her office with Tim.

Harry sat down and awaited his fate with his head in his hands. He glanced up when a large body dropped into the chair beside him.

“Fanny’s bark is far worse than her bite you know,” Alfie commented.

“Huh? Oh, Sister Vanyarsfeld?”

“That’s right, old Fanny Arse Felt.” Alfie laughed at Harry’s bemused expression, “Surely you didn’t miss that one? Honestly, student nurses just aren’t what they used to be in my day.”

“I just thought her name was actually Fanny.” Harry could feel himself blushing.

“Just as well you never called her that to her face then, she’d have had your guts for garters. She’s not a bad old stick though.”

“Hmm, I wonder if it’s too late to get back into the Auror programme?”

“You aren’t going to give up after one little setback? I certainly never took ‘The Boy Who Lived’ for a quitter!”

“Don’t call me that! And I may not have any choice if Sister Vanyarsfeld kicks me out.”

“Why would she go and do a thing like that?”

“She hates me,” Harry said gloomily.

“Whatever gave you that impression? You’re her blue-eyed boy! I’ve never seen her be as nice to a Probationer as she is to you.”

“But she’s about twenty million times harder on me than she is on anyone else, even Matilda!”

“She’s just trying to push you. Matilda is content to just be a MediWitch. *You* could be an exceptional nurse, if you apply yourself.”

Harry had never been particularly good at taking compliments, so he decided to change the subject.

“Does he do that often? The Veela I mean.”

“What, knock me out? Nah, not so much. I don’t know what was up with him today, he’s usually one of my favourites. Doesn’t like being touched much and reacts badly to strangers, but otherwise he’s fine.”

“I’ve heard him screaming before. And I saw you with a broken nose last week.”

“He’s just scared, and in pain. He lashes out sometimes, but he doesn’t mean to hurt anyone.”

“I thought you didn’t get male Veela? What’s wrong with him any way?”

“Of course you get male Veela, how else do you think you get purebloods? They are quite rare though. And as for what’s wrong with him, it’s not really my place to say.” Alfie looked so sad for a moment that Harry felt bad about questioning him and they fell into silence. Harry was lost in thought and he had almost forgotten why he was sitting there when the door opened and Tim came out, signalling for Harry to go in.

Sister Vanyarsfeld was sitting behind her desk filling out paper work. He stood in front of her and waited for her to finish. Harry was nervous again now, despite what Alfie had said to him in

the corridor. What if he did get thrown out on his ear? He really didn't want to start Auror training again, he wanted to be a Nurse; he'd put so much effort into this, and taken so much stick for pursuing it, how could he possibly let it go now?

She finished writing and looked up at him.

"Well, Probationer Potter. Tell me, do you think that being the Hero of the Wizarding World means you can disobey my express instructions?"

"No, Sister."

"No? And did I or did I not tell you to do an inventory of the Potions cupboard?"

"You did, Sister."

"And did I or did I not tell you that under no circumstances were you to enter that private room?"

"You did, Sister."

"So, please tell me, Probationer, why exactly did you see fit to leave the Potions cupboard, unlocked I might add, and enter the private room? And, furthermore, why did you think you were now entitled to use a wand?"

"I was trying to help, Sister."

"Go on."

"Senior Staff Nurse Byrne requested my assistance. You were not on the ward and he is the next in charge. It seemed urgent so I ran in to help him. When I got there Staff Nurse Jenkins was lying unconscious on the floor. I tried to move him, but he is a big man and I couldn't do it on my own. Tim, I mean, Staff Nurse Byrne, told me to use Alfie's wand and get him out quickly so I did. I then got Matilda to see to Alfie and send word to you while I went back to try and help Tim."

"I see. Rules are there for a reason, Mr Potter. I don't let junior staff deal with dangerous patients for a very good reason, as I hope your broken arm has proved. Running into a situation that you don't understand is dangerous, you are very lucky that it wasn't worse."

"I'm sorry, Sister."

"Very well, apology accepted. Against all the odds, you actually did very well today, Potter. I can't let your flagrant display of insubordination go unpunished however. Once you have finished your inventory of the Potions, which you will have to start again to make sure that nothing went missing while the cupboard was left unlocked, I want you to start helping out with the Veela. You will apologise for nearly blinding him, and you will help me to feed him and change his sheets. From now on you will be one of his regular carers. He doesn't usually take

kindly to new faces, but as you have already barged your way in there it is too late to stop it."

She signed her name to the bottom of the parchment she had been working on and looked back up at him.

"Well, what are you still doing here? Those potions won't sort themselves. Oh, and Potter, could you tell Healer Adamson that I want him to take a look at the Veela please."

Harry left the office feeling relieved and unsure whether he had just been punished or rewarded.

***

Sorting out the Potions cupboard took a long time – Sister Vanyarsfeld kept finding other little jobs for him to do, always making sure he remembered to lock the cupboard when he left it. When he finally finished he still had to go and help with his new patient.

Harry was quite unprepared for the sight that met him when he entered the room again. The pitifully thin figure on the bed looked almost like a rag doll that had been thrown down by spoilt child. The Veela's wings were hunched up over it, as though to protect it from passing eyes, but they were so ragged themselves that they did the job poorly. As though the sight of this weren't bad enough, Harry then caught sight of a shackle, chaining each skeletal arm to the bed frame.

"Why has he been chained?" Harry asked, unable to stop himself.

"I'd have thought that you of all people wouldn't need to ask that question, Potter. The patient is unpredictable; sometimes he has to be restrained. In this case it is not just for our benefit, he became somewhat distressed after the incident earlier; if he had not been restrained he would have done himself an injury." Sister Vanyarsfeld replied as she levitated the patient slightly so that she could change the sheet beneath him. Harry couldn't help but notice the scratches up the Veela's arms and legs, no doubt caused by the talons.

They worked in silence then and the Veela did not acknowledge their presence in any way, nevertheless, Harry was sure he could feel those grey eyes on him from somewhere behind the wings. As he stepped out to retrieve the patient's supper, Sister Vanyarsfeld released the Veela's hands from the bed and admonished him not to try and harm himself if he didn't want to be restrained again.

"Come on, Potter, we must leave him to it now. He'll not eat whilst we're here."

They left the room and Harry decided that he might as well ask the question he'd been itching to ask all afternoon.

"Sister? What's wrong with him? The Veela, I mean." She gave him a long, hard look before signalling him into her office once more.

"Now, Potter, what I'm going to tell you is information personal to the patient and his family. It

is not for public entertainment and you shall not repeat a word of it, do I make myself clear? As you will be one of his carers, I think it would indeed be prudent to let you know a little of his story. Our Veela is suffering from what is known as the Veela Sickness. Have you heard of it?"

"Where Veela sicken and die if their mates die? Yes, I've heard of it, but I thought it was meant to happen quickly?"

"In the scenario you have just given, yes. If a Pureblood Veela is mated to their true mate and said mate dies then they will usually follow in a matter of days, unless there are young, in which case the remaining parent will usually linger on until the child is old enough to fend for itself.

"However, it only takes a very small number of Veela genes for a Wizard to be destined as a Veela's true mate. It is a one-way bond, though; the Wizard will likely feel only the slightest pull to their mate whereas the Veela will feel it just as strongly as if the mate were pure Veela.

"It has been known for Wizards to abandon their Veela mates after bonding with them; this also brings on the Veela sickness, only far worse. Because the mate hasn't died the Veela will hang onto life for as long as possible. They are unable to understand the concept of their mate willingly leaving them, so they hang on, waiting for them to come back. Every time something happens to make the Veela realise that their mate will not come back it is like a physical pain. In the end their harpy form, which is physically stronger, is the only way of coping with the pain."

"So, our Veela has been abandoned by his mate? And he is dying slowly and painfully of a broken heart?"

"Put bluntly, yes, I am afraid so, Potter."

"What sort of a heartless cow was he married to? Does she even know what she's done to him? Surely nobody would do a thing like that if they knew! What's his name, anyway?"

"I'm afraid that is confidential, Potter. His family is very influential, they don't want this getting out."

"Oh really? And what about his family? Don't they care? How could they leave him here like this?"

"It is not our place to meddle in the affairs of families, Harry. I'm sure they would have done everything in their power to make their son happy, he's only here because they were worried he was becoming a danger to their other son, who is only four years old. They visit as often as they can. Our job is to make this as painless as possible for all involved."

The hot tears pricked his eyes and he felt like an idiot. Here he was, standing in the office of a Nurse he very much wanted to impress, and he was crying over a person he had only just met. He felt so useless.

"I think you should go home, Potter. No, no arguments. It's been a long, traumatic day and you

should have finished over two hours ago. You'll be no good to me if you are too tired to function tomorrow. Go home and get some rest."

***

Harry's day was not quite over yet. He finally got home, wanting nothing more than something hot to eat, a bath, and bed, but before he had even taken his coat off he heard his floo whoosh into life.

Standing out in the hallway he could hear his fiancée's voice calling his name. He'd been supposed to call her tonight and he had completely and utterly forgotten about it.

He felt guilty. New York was a long way away; he should be missing Ginny and wanting to talk to her, not skulking around in his own home hoping she couldn't detect his presence. He crept up the stairs, deciding to skip dinner. He would call Ginny tomorrow, claiming that he'd been at work late and missed her call; it was very nearly true after all. She would probably shout at him a bit but hopefully forgive him.

***

Lips hard and demanding, tongues battling for dominance. The kisses are rushed, frantic, needy, intense.

***

A few weeks after the Veela incident, Harry had been helping with the patients' breakfast at the end of a night shift when he suddenly realised that his watch had dropped off. It was an old watch belonging to Sirius that Harry had found at Grimmauld Place with an engraving on the back reading:

Dogbreath, happy birthday, stop making me late. Prongs.

The watch's strap was mostly broken but Harry had been unwilling to get a new one, and now he had lost it. He searched the ward, he attempted to *accio* it, he checked everywhere he'd been that shift – nothing. Finally, in an act of desperation, he decided to sneak in and check the Veela's room.

Although the Veela had shown no more signs of violence after that first day, there still had to be two members of staff present if anyone went into his room. Harry usually made sure he was one of them.

He cracked open the door and saw the Veela lying facedown on the bed as usual. Harry crept forward and proceeded to look under the bed for the watch, without success. Straightening, he nearly jumped out of his skin and gave a very unmanly squeal as he saw a pair of grey eyes

watching him. The patient looked more like a bird than ever with his head cocked to one side. Harry quickly collected himself and decided it would be rude not to speak.

"Um, hi. Sorry, uh, you startled me. I mean, I don't normally go around sounding like a girl like that…" he trailed off, embarrassed. The Veela looked for all the world like it was laughing at him, although he didn't see how that was possible for a person with a beak instead of a mouth.

"I don't suppose you've seen a watch lying around? I've lost one, it belonged to my Godfather, a present from my Father, it's sort of important to me – they're both dead you see, it's one of the few things I have left to remind me of them. My own fault really, I should have got the strap mended." Harry knew he was babbling, but he didn't seem able to stop himself. The Veela didn't say anything, Harry assumed that talking would be nearly as impossible as smiling if one happened to have a beak for a mouth.

Slowly, as though he didn't really want to be doing this, the Veela held out one taloned hand. Harry hesitated before reaching out to the patient, remembering what had happened last time, but when he did he discovered he was being handed his watch. He couldn't contain the massive grin that broke across his face as he offered his thanks.

Having got what he came in for, Harry thought he'd better leave – he couldn't think of a good excuse for staying in his patient's private room where he was definitely not supposed to be. As he made to leave, he was stopped by a plaintive sound emerging from the Veela and a hand on his arm. Having finished his shift he decided he could stay for a bit – after all, he reasoned to himself, this must be a very lonely existence, so he pulled up a chair and chattered away inanely for over an hour. Finally he remembered that it was his turn to floo Ginny this morning and made his excuses, promising to come back and visit again.

It became a regular thing; Harry sneaking into the Veela's room at the end of his shift. He would chatter away about goings on in the hospital, or in the Wizarding World in general, sometimes he would read items from *The Daily Prophet*, he would even read out the Quidditch scores because, after all, who didn't like Quidditch?

The Veela didn't seem to object to Harry's presence, so he kept coming, sometimes popping in on his break or even before his shift if he had time. He knew it was silly of him to consider the Veela as a friend, he was a patient, but Harry couldn't help it – it was probably all in his imagination but he just felt that they clicked somehow. Harry, for want of anything better to call him, not knowing his real name, had started calling him 'Bird'. As far as he could tell, the Veela didn't object to that either. In fact, the only time the Veela ever did object was every time Harry tried to leave.

***

Two bodies, coming together in heat and sweat and perfection.

***

Christmas came far too quickly that year. Harry should have felt more excited – Ginny was coming home for the holidays and he hadn't seen his fiancée for nearly eighteen months, but all he could think was that it had all arrived too soon. He'd hardly done any shopping, he'd not put any decorations up and he just didn't have time in his busy schedule for Christmas. To make matters worse, the whole hospital would be running on a skeleton staff as most people wanted Christmas off, and as one of the most junior members of staff, Harry would be working.

The party was in full swing by the time Harry got to the Burrow, but it wasn't very long before his arms were full of shrieking redhead.

"HARRY! OH MY GOD, HARRY'S HERE! It's just so amazing to see you," George shrieked in an unconvincing American accent before planting a big sloppy kiss right on Harry's mouth and collapsing into a fit of giggles on the sofa with Ron.

"Hilarious, guys, missed you too. Where's Gin?"

"With tonic!" George slurred, rattling his drink.

"Er, George, mate, that's firewhisky, and you are funnier when you're sober. So, where's Ginny?"

"Oh, she's around somewhere. Christ, anyone would think you hadn't seen her for a year and a half or something! Anyway, we never get to see you these days either!"

"Sorry, George, got to work, you know how it is," Harry replied easily. George worked harder than anyone he knew. He also partied harder than anyone he knew, like he was trying to fill every hour of his day with work and alcohol so that he didn't have time to think about Fred. Harry resolved once more to try and help his friend. He was pulled out of his musings about George by the arrival of Ginny.

"HARRY!" she shrieked, flinging herself into his arms in a manner so like George that Harry had to fight the urge to laugh out loud along with her brothers. "What? What did I say? Why are you all laughing at me? Harry?" Ginny was sounding cross now. Harry thought that growing up with six older brothers, two of them being Fred and George, should have meant that Ginny was used to being teased and laughed at, but she wasn't, she hated it. He took her by the arm and led her away from George and Ron, who were now drunkenly trying to high-five and missing.

"It's really good to see you, Gin, how're you doing?" Harry hugged her.

"Jeez, Harry, you know how I'm doing, we floo most nights," laughed Ginny in her new American accent.

"Mmm, but it's not the same, I miss you."

"I sure hope so! Now stop talking and kiss me."

“Ugh, will you two stop making me want to throw up!” Ron was back, apparently having left George to create mischief somewhere else.

“Aww, come on Ronniekins, let me say hello to my fiancée. I haven’t seen him in *ages*. Anyway, where’s Hermione, I thought she was coming tonight?”

“Some sort of last minute Uni thing, had to give a talk, couldn’t get away,” replied Ron, bitterly.

“Oh, I’m sorry, mate. It would have been nice to see her,” Harry said honestly.

“Hey! There’s only one girl you are gonna to want to see tonight.” Ginny swatted his arm playfully. “Hermione’s promised to come over at Christmas, so I’ll still get to see her before I go back.”

“Hey! You only just got here, no talk of going back yet.” Harry hugged her to him again.

“Hmm, but you’re not the only *bird* in Harry’s life, is she Harry?” Ron asked with a smirk.

“What?” Ginny didn’t look amused.

“Oh did Harry not tell you? There’s this bird at work…” Ron trailed off as he dodged Harry trying to smack him around the head.

“Harry? What’s he talking about?”

“He’s just trying to be funny, Gin. There is a ‘bird’ at work, but *he* is a patient; a Veela”

“Um, yeah, I think I remember something about that. Why is Ron bringing it up though?”

“Because he’s drunk, and a little odd, probably. Come on, lets go and find Charlie, he’s home too, right?”

It turned out to be a pleasant enough evening, although he found he couldn’t relax in Ginny’s company in the same way he used to He couldn’t help feeling that she had changed somewhat, but he knew he was being ridiculous. In the end he put it down to the fact that he was tired and he’d probably been looking forward to her coming home a bit too much, if such a thing were possible.

***

The creature of light sits astride him, impaling himself over and over, wings outstretched either side.

***

As Christmas drew nearer, Harry found his workload getting heavier. The holiday season didn’t

mean that people didn't get sick; if anything there were more sickness bugs flying around than ever, but at the same time everyone wanted time off. There seemed to be a particularly nasty case of muggle flu that was somehow affecting werewolves quite badly. The Magical beings department was inundated with cases, and being the new boy, Harry was member of staff least likely to get time off.

The week before and the week of Christmas, Harry found himself working the night shift, which had Ginny understandably upset.

"But Harry," she protested, "I've come all the way from America to see you! It's not like you didn't know I was coming home, couldn't you have gotten some vacation before now?"

"It's not that easy, Ginny. It's Christmas, I'd have had to have booked any holiday at least a year ago, and I've only been working at St Mungo's for just over three months." Harry was trying to be reasonable, but this wasn't the first time they'd had this conversation over the last few days and he was tired of having to make excuses for something he had no control over.

"Can't you take unpaid leave? It's not like you really need the money."

"No, Ginny, we've been over this! I'm part of a team, we all need to pull our weight or it's not fair on everyone else. If I suddenly pull out of working now then someone else, someone who also probably has plans for Christmas and who did book in advance, will have to cover for me. I can't do that, it wouldn't be fair." "Well, what about being fair to me?"

"Gin, come on! Now you're the one who's not being fair," Harry sighed, rubbing his forehead where he could feel a headache coming. "I just spent the whole weekend with you and all of today, tonight I have to go to work, why don't you catch up with some of your friends or go and spend some time with Molly or something."

"It's true! Jeez, Harry, I've been away for nearly two years; am I not allowed to spend time with my fiancée? Maybe it's time you stopped thinking about everyone else in the world and took a little time for yourself, Harry!"

"You've been away for just under eighteen months, not two years so stop exaggerating! And while we're at it, drop the phoney accent. And furthermore, it was your choice to move away, Gin, so you can hardly blame me for the fact that we've not seen each other in all that time. And lastly, this is my career we're talking about. You don't actually want me to think about myself, you want me to think about you."

"You're only a MediWizard, Harry. It's not like the world will fall apart if you take some time off work!"

"Only a MediWizard? What happened to 'I'll stand by you whatever job you want to do'? What happened to 'I think nursing is a very noble profession'? And by the way, in the modern world we call it 'nursing'."

“Ok, fine, *nurse* then. But really, Harry, it’s not even like you’re fully qualified. I’m sure they wouldn’t miss you if you took a few days off. They’d understand; you’re Harry Potter, after all.”

“I’m going to work, I’ll see you later.”

“Don’t you walk away from me, Harry Potter! You know what, I’m beginning to think that you just don’t want to spend any time with me! I’m beginning to think you don’t care about anything except for that god-damn hospital!”

“I’ll be late. Bye.”

***

Harry was indeed late for work thanks to his argument with Ginny and he missed his usual pre-shift visit with the Veela. He didn’t get to see the patient at all until about halfway through his shift when he and Tim went to pick up the dinner tray. When they entered the room there was no sign of its inhabitant, which was unusual as the Veela rarely moved from the bed.

“Bird? You in here?” Harry called out softly.

“He’s down here!” Tim said, crouching down beside the bed.

“Hey, mate, what’s wrong? What are you doing down there?”

“What’s wrong, Bird? Are you hurt?” Harry put a hand out and lightly stroked a wing, ignoring the startled gasp from Tim. The Veela looked up at him for a moment before putting a clawed hand out to touch Harry’s face as though trying to make sure he was real.

“Are you hurt?” Harry asked again. The Veela shook his head. “Tell you what, why don’t I give these sheets a quick change whilst I’m here and the bed is free?” Tim moved away from the other two. “No, you stay there, Harry, I can manage this on my own.” The look in Tim’s eyes said he would talk to Harry later.

“I wish you could tell me what’s wrong, Bird,” Harry sighed, “Has something happened over the weekend? I’m sorry I didn’t come and see you, life was conspiring against me.” The Veela just looked at him. Harry chatted away inanely till Tim was finished.

“Come on then, let’s get you back into bed, I’m supposed to be working here. I’ll come and see you later, ok?” Harry helped manoeuvre his patient back into the freshly made bed and followed Tim out of the room.

As soon as they were outside, Tim pulled Harry to one side. “Harry, are you mental? He could have had your arm off for touching him like that, and you’d have been the one in the wrong!”

“Yeah, but he didn’t, did he?”

“No, no, he didn’t. In fact, he seemed happy about it, which is even weirder. Most Veela don’t like to be touched by anyone except their mates, especially when said mate is not around. Is there something you’re not telling me?”

“Yeah, I’m mated to a Veela, didn’t you know?” Harry said sarcastically.

“Well, it would be one explanation,” Tim replied seriously. “It’s obviously escaped your notice, but we’re both male.”

“I don’t think that matters where Veela are concerned. Before they started mating with Wizards they were all hermaphrodites anyway. They don’t have the same concept of gender as we do.”

“Yeah? Well I’m a Wizard, and I do.”

“Two blokes being together isn’t exactly unheard of in Wizarding culture either though, is it?”

“I’m not gay, Tim. I have a fiancée, who just so happens to be a woman. I like women, as the *Daily Prophet* is so fond of pointing out. I think I’d know if I’d somehow managed to get myself mated to a male Veela!”

“So you’ve never – experimented?”

“What, with a different species?” A guilty pang shot through Harry, but he pushed it away.

“With the same sex. Don’t forget that he doesn’t normally look like that. As a man he was probably very good looking.”

“Oh, and maybe I just didn’t notice that he wasn’t a woman? His wife left him, Tim, you know that as well as I do.”

“So, what explanation can you give me for his behaviour just now?”

“Well, I might have been sneaking in to see him sometimes, after work and so on. I guess we’ve sort of become friends.”

“Friends? With a psychotic Veela? You really are mental.”

“I’m not! And he’s not psychotic. He’s just scared and lonely – I’ve been keeping him company sometimes. He trusts me.”

“If it’s all so fine, you won’t mind me telling Fanny about this?”

“No! Please, Tim, she’ll stop me seeing him. I’m not hurting anyone, honestly.”

“Ok, fine. But I’ll be keeping my eye on you! And when Fanny does find out, and believe me she will, I knew nothing about this, ok?”

“Ok. Thanks, Tim”

***

Harry spent a good couple of hours chatting to ‘Bird’ after his shift. He was in no rush to get home and have another argument with Ginny and, for some reason he couldn’t explain, he liked spending time in the Veela’s company.

There was something different about their meeting now. The encounter earlier in the night felt as though it had somehow brought them closer together. Harry had tried to explain it to Tim as the Veela trusting him, but in truth he trusted the Veela too. He found himself telling Bird things that he didn’t tell anyone, not even Ron or Hermione.

He told him about the war, about dying, about his parents, about his godfather. He told about the expectations that had been piled on him since he was eleven years old, and about how they just increased after his victory. He explained why he had gone into Auror training, and why he had dropped out; why he had taken up nursing, much to everyone’s disgust. It was easy to talk to the Veela, he couldn’t answer back or judge him. It was more than that though; Harry was sure that the understanding in those beautiful eyes wasn’t imagined any more than the fact that the Veela had taken hold of his hand and not let go.

“I wish you could talk to me, Bird. I wish you could tell me how you came to be here. I wish I could listen to you like you listen to me.”

The only thing Harry didn’t talk about that Tuesday morning was the thing playing most on his mind. He didn’t talk about Ginny. He didn’t talk about his reservations about his up and coming marriage, his fears that she’d changed, or his even greater fears that she hadn’t. He couldn’t talk about that, not yet, not here. He’d been looking forward to her coming home too much to let it go yet.

***

They move together as one. One an angel, the other a mere mortal, a man. Wild magic crackles around the room like electricity.

***

Christmas day went well enough, at least to begin with. Ginny had spent the past few days acting as though everything was fine, and Harry was happy to go along with that. Harry finished his shift at 8 o’clock and went to wish his Bird a merry Christmas before going home for some much-needed sleep before lunch.

Christmas dinner was excellent, as Molly’s dinners always were, and the company was good,

Harry could honestly say that he enjoyed himself. Afterwards, when Molly had banished all men from her kitchen and most people had gone visiting or to the pub, Harry found himself sitting with Arthur in the Weasleys' comfortable sitting room, both men pretending they weren't trying not to fall asleep.

"So, Harry," said Arthur in his best 'making friendly conversation' voice, "When are you thinking of joining our little Ginny out in the Americas?"

"Uh, I don't really know, Arthur – it depends when I can get time off work."

"Ah yes, work. You certainly do work hard, Harry. When do you become a full-fledged MediWizard then?"

"Nurse. I've got a while to go yet, but I think I'm getting along alright."

"And then will you be able to work anywhere, or will you need to do more training?"

"Well, I'll be on rotation around each ward until I qualify, but if I want to specialise then I would need to do more training, yes."

"Yes, but will you be able to work in America, or would you need to retrain over there?"

"I don't know, actually, I've never looked into it."

"Oh. Right." They sat in silence for a bit. Harry was just starting to doze off when Arthur spoke again.

"So, er, are you not planning on sticking with the nursing thing then?"

Harry opened one eye and looked at him. "Why would I not stick with it?"

"Well, when you go and join Ginny in New York."

"Oh, yes, well, I'll probably have to see about getting some holiday when I finish this rotation, but I'm sure I'll be able to pick up where I left off when I get back."

"What about later on though, when the two of you are living over there?"

"When we're what!?"

“Ah, have I said something I shouldn’t have? Oh dear.”

“Arthur,” Harry sighed, “would you please tell me what Ginny’s been saying.”

“Um, I don’t really think it’s my place to, Harry.”

“No, no, it’s Ginny’s place to tell me, but then Ginny should really have told me this before she told you, so you’d better tell me, hadn’t you.”

“I really think I’ve said too much already.”

“I really think you’ve not said enough.”

“Oh dear, I really didn’t mean to cause trouble.”

“Arthur!”

Arthur sighed. “Very well then. Ginny told us that the business in the Americas was doing so well that it would be easiest to run operations from there rather than here and that the two of you would be moving over there permanently.”

Harry was quiet for a moment as he processed this information.

“Thank you for telling me, Arthur. This is the first I’ve heard of it. I wonder when Ginny was planning on letting me know that I was moving to the States.”

“I dare say I’ve just got the wrong end of the stick, Harry. I think she just misses you.”

“Yes, maybe you’re right. Look, I need to get some fresh air Arthur, I might see you later, ok?” Harry jumped up without waiting for a response and left the room.

Part Two

Title: A Life More (or less) Ordinary
Author: tari_sue
Pairing: Harry/Draco
Rating: Hard R/NC17
Word Count: ~22000

Warning(s): Slash! Features some fairly vanilla sex between 2 consenting male adults. Mentions of MPreg. Some swearing.
Beta: the_gubette
Prompt: Writer's choice slash/het and Other Prompt No.4.
Harry finds a broken Veela and nurses her/him back to health, only to discover it is someone rather familiar... The Veela should be quite vicious if anyone except Harry tries to help it, full Veela mode, wings, beak etc, the reason for this is up to the author. Harry is, of course, completely clueless.

Summary: Harry is working at St Mungo's as a student nurse and finds himself becoming a bit too attached to one of the patients – a dying Veela who won't let anyone close.
Author's Notes: This fic was subjected to a very fast beta read at the last minute by the wonderful Samantha Hope who I really can't thank enough. I apologise for anyremaining mistakes, they are mine and mine alone. Oh, and there are probably more clichés than you can shake a magic stick at :D

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The hospital was big enough that he managed to walk off quite a bit of his irritation by the time he reached the ward. It was practically deserted as most patients had been sent home if possible and the rest were most likely sleeping off their Christmas dinner.

"Hiya Harry!" rang out the voice of Matilda as he rounded the corner.

"Hey Mat, how's it going?"

"Oh, you know, it's Christmas day, we're stuck here, just peachy! What are you doing back here so early? I thought you were spending Christmas with the fiancée?"

"Uh, I left something in my locker, you know how it is when you come off night shift."

"Duh! Staff room's that way dummy!"

"Yeah, I just thought I'd check in with my favourite patient whilst I'm here."

"Oh, well, rather you than me! Call me if he rips your head off, won't you?" Matilda laughed as she left him standing there.

Harry opened the door and peered in to check that the Veela was awake before going in. To his surprise he found him sitting by the window, which had always had a heavy blind pulled over it when he'd been in there before.

“Hi, Bird, um, I thought I’d inflict my company on you again for a bit, if that’s ok.”

The Veela beckoned him in.

“Tell me, Bird, why does everything have to be so damned complicated? I don’t want to go to bloody America! I mean, I’m sure it’s a perfectly nice place, but it’s just not home, is it? I like living in England, I’m English!”

The Veela seemed to grow a little agitated but Harry was too wrapped up in his own problems to notice.

“Ginny, my fiancée, wants me to move to America with her because that’s where her job is. To hell with my job and my life and my friends, eh? And I know her family aren’t really my family, but they always have been really, ever since I started Hogwarts. I don’t want to leave everyone and everything I know and start all over – again. I just want… I want what every one else has, a home and a family and a job, a wife and kids. That isn’t really so much to ask for is it? She didn’t even discuss it with me, just assumed it would all go ahead because she wants it.”

The Veela sat down on the bed and looked at the floor.

“I’m sorry, Bird. I really must stop dumping all my troubles on you, they’re nothing compared with yours. I just don’t know what to do. Do I give up everything to follow Ginny around the world? Give up my nursing training, which I love, give up my friends? Am I being selfish by not wanting to? Or should we just call it a day? I mean, how many people really end up with their high school sweethearts? I guess I should be saying all this to Ginny really. I suppose I’m just scared that the perfect life I had envisioned is slipping away from me.”

Harry sat and stared out of the window for a few moments, collecting his thoughts. He rose suddenly and turned to face the Veela. “I’m doing it again, aren’t I? I’m sorry, Bird, I really am. I have a Christmas present for you, actually. It’s in my locker, I’ll just go and get it. Back in a mo’!”

Harry left the room quickly and went to the staff room. The present wasn’t much, just a pair of fingerless gloves he had bought on impulse, because he noticed how cold the Veela got and he couldn’t wear normal gloves with those talons. On his way back to the ward he heard a familiar voice.

“Hiya! Tilly, isn’t it? I remember you from Hogwarts, you were a Hufflepuff prefect when I was head girl?”

“Oh, hullo Ginny! Are you here with Harry? He’s just popped into the Veela’s room, he’ll be out in a minute I should think.”

Harry turned the corner just in time to see Ginny cross over to Bird’s room. His feet just wouldn’t move fast enough as he tried to run across the room, his cry of “Ginny! No!” went in vain, lost in the deafening screech that rang out across the ward. Harry reached Ginny and

grabbed her arm just in time to see his favourite patient launch himself at Ginny. He quickly dragged her backwards and slammed the door shut; it was with a certain feeling of guilt that he heard the Veela smack against the door, but then the thuds kept coming, as though the creature was just hurling himself against the door.

“Ginny, what the hell are you playing at? You nearly got yourself killed!” Harry had to hold the door shut against the ever more frenzied attacks of the Veela.”

“Harry, get off, you’re hurting me! I just wanted to see you, Dad said…” There was a furious cry from inside the room and the thudding stopped.

“I’d better go and check on my patient.” Something heavy thumped against the wall.

“No, wait, Harry, I need to talk to you.” A ripping sound followed.

“Later, Gin, I have to go.” Breaking glass – the window!

Shaking Ginny’s hand off his arm, Harry opened the door and ran inside, ducking to narrowly avoid the debris sailing towards his head.

“Bird? Bird, it’s ok, it’s me, Harry. Come on now, mate, what’s all this fuss about, eh?” Inside the room was chaos. The bed was upturned against one wall. Something, probably the chair, had gone through the window and there were feathers from the pillows and bits of shredded sheet everywhere. The Veela stopped halfway through hurling a vase of flowers at Harry, it was too late, it hit Harry squarely on the side of the head.

“Fucking ow! Jeesus, Bird, you’ve got a damn good throwing arm!” Harry rubbed his head and glared at the Veela. To his surprise, the Veela came over and gently took hold of him, examining the forming bruise. A creature that powerful shouldn’t have been able to be that gentle with him, especially not with those cruel-looking talons, but Harry found himself soothed by its touch.

It was almost inevitable that the door would open at that point. The Veela immediately came back on the defensive, rising up with his wings spread out and making a strange hissing noise.

“Harry? You ok?”

“Ginny, get out.”

“Oh my god, Harry! You’re hurt! What has it done to you?”

“I’m alright, Ginny, get out.”

“But…”

“GET OUT! NOW!” The Veela gave a shriek as though to back him up. Ginny took one look and fled.

Harry got to his feet and put an arm out to calm the Veela down.

“Come on, Bird, it’s alright. Ginny’s not that bad, honestly; just a little annoying sometimes. I’m sure she wasn’t worth all of this destruction! Look at the state of this room – Fanny will go mental at you! And me. In fact, if I don’t come and see you any more, it’s probably because I’ve been kicked out.”

To Harry’s amazement, tears started to form in the Veela’s eyes.

“Hey! No need for that! It’s not your fault, Bird, she should never have been in here. It’s my fault, all my fault – well, and maybe a bit Ginny’s. I’m so sorry. I didn’t bring her here – she came looking for me.”

The Veela looked so pitiful standing there that Harry found himself gathering the other man into his arms before he even realised what he was doing. He felt his shirt growing wet as the Veela continued to sob onto his shoulder.

“Please don’t cry, Bird, I hate to see you cry.” He stroked the soft blond hair, unsure of what else to do.

“What, exactly, is going on here, Probationer Potter?” Harry hadn’t heard the door open that time. Sister Vanyarsfeld was standing in the doorway looking rather like someone had just ruined her Christmas.

“Um, this patient got a little upset, Sister.” “And how might that have happened?” “Uh, well, uh, that is to say, uh – someone came in who shouldn’t have, he didn’t take it too well.”

“And how did this ‘someone’ come to be on my wing, let alone in this room?”

“Well… she might have come looking for me.”

“I see. You seem to have everything under control here, Probationer, as it is Christmas day I shall return to my family. I expect this room to be immaculate by the time my shift starts tomorrow morning, I will see you in my office at nine.”

Harry sighed. Why did everything have to go wrong for him all the time?

“Come on then, Bird. I suppose I’d better get this place sorted out, huh? How did you manage to do this much damage when you usually can’t find the strength to drag yourself off that bed?”

***

“Right then, Potter, let’s hear it.”

Harry stood in Sister Vanyarsfeld’s office, unsure of what to say despite having had the whole

night to think about it.

“Come on Potter, I haven’t got all day. There must be some reason why you decided to bring your girlfriend onto my ward on Christmas day and take her into that room. So let’s hear it. Do you think my ward is some kind of a freak show that you can bring your friends along to? Well?”

“I didn’t bring her! I wouldn’t do that!”

“So what then, Potter? Explain to me why I shouldn’t sack you on the spot.”

“I just left a present in my locker, I came to retrieve it.” Harry decided to stick with the version of the truth he had told Matilda yesterday.

“And that led to a patient getting distressed how?”

“Ginny came looking for me, she must have gone in there by mistake. I tried to stop her.”

“Why would she have thought you were in there?”

“I don’t know, Sister.”

“Could it have anything to do with the fact that you yourself went in there, alone, not five minutes earlier?”

“Possibly.”

“Why did you do that, Potter? *You* know you are not supposed to go in that room alone, that patient is highly aggressive, as was proved yesterday.”

“He’s usually fine with me, Sister.”

“The bruise on your cheek says otherwise. It is not for you to decide which patients are safe, Potter. It is for you to listen to your superiors and do as you are told. Now, how long have you been going into that room on your own?”

Harry mumbled a response.

“I’m telling you this for your own good, Potter. You have a great empathy with the patients, but you are in danger of taking that too far. You can’t afford to become too close, especially not with patients like this. Distance yourself, Potter, before it’s too late.”

***

When she was through with him, Sister Vanyarsfeld sent Harry home with strict instructions to get some sleep and to take the next few nights off. He left St Mungo’s in a daze and made to apparate home, before changing his mind at the last minute. He just couldn’t face another

argument with Ginny at the moment. Focusing on a different location, Harry went to see a couple of friends who he knew wouldn't judge him, no matter what.

"Hey, Nev. I sort of need a place to kip." He didn't need to elaborate. They wouldn't ask questions, they knew he'd tell them when he was ready.

"No problem, Harry. I'll make up the spare room, you look like death warmed over."

"Harry!" Luna came out and hugged him as best she could with her huge baby bump. "Come into the kitchen, Harry, I'll make you some breakfast – or dinner, whichever you prefer."

Harry sat and watched Luna rustle him up something hot and greasy, because she always knew what he needed. She chattered away in that style that was pure Luna, one hand caressing the bump and a contented look on her face. 'This is what I want from life', Harry thought to himself, 'I want Nev's life, with his un-perfect wife and his un-perfect house and his wonderful air of normality – well, Neville and Luna normality anyway'. He didn't feel guilty about calling Luna imperfect, her lack of perfection and her refusal to conform were what made her special. She'd have probably been far more insulted to be thought perfect than imperfect.

He went to sleep in Neville's spare room, the bed was located somewhere between the plant cuttings and the strange artifacts, and he slept like he hadn't slept since before Ginny came home. When he awoke Neville had gone to work, but he spoke to Luna and told him all his problems and she put them in perspective for him, just like she always did. When Neville returned he offered advice of his own and when Harry flooed home that night to confront Ginny, he knew exactly what he wanted to say.

***

"Harry? Harry, is that you? Oh my god, where have you been? I've been so worried about you!"

A stab of guilt shot through Harry, it hadn't even occurred to him to let Ginny know he was at Neville and Luna's. "I'm fine, Gin. Sorry, I should have let you know."

"Why aren't you at work? I thought you were on the night shift all week?"

"I got sent home and ordered not to come back till Monday because of all that trouble with the Veela."

"They're blaming you for that? Surely they should blame whoever let that creature in a public place!"

"No, they're blaming the person they hold responsible for letting some idiot barge into the room of a very distressed patient – and that would be me."

"Yet I get the impression *you* blame *me*. Are you really saying it was *my* fault that I got attacked by some crazy Veela?"

“You should never have been there, Ginny, what the hell were you thinking?”

“Fine, it’s all my fault, as usual! Therefore you are completely justified in speaking to me the way you did and then disappearing like that and not letting me know where you were. That’s fine, Harry, just you blame everyone else, the bloody saviour can’t possibly ever be in the wrong, can he?”

“I didn’t say I was blameless, Gin, but neither are you! What on earth possessed you to go in there like that?”

“Oh, let’s see, could it have been my fiancée walking out in a strop on Christmas day and upsetting my dad? I was looking for you, numbskull.”

He couldn’t help noticing that her accent returned to normal when she was angry. “Oh, yes, well let’s talk about that for a minute, shall we? What’s this I hear about us moving to America? When exactly were you planning on telling me about it? Or discussing it even?”

“Oh, I don’t know, maybe when you actually had five minutes away from that bloody hospital to talk to me! You’re never here, Harry – when are we supposed to discuss anything?”

“You never even said you had anything to discuss! You could at least have waited to talk to me before discussing it with the rest of the Wizarding World!”

“I’d hardly call my parents ‘the rest of the Wizarding World’! I might be moving to America permanently, don’t you think my mum and dad have a right to know?”

“Of course they do, but Arthur seemed to think it was a forgone conclusion and yet I didn’t know the first thing about it. Why the hell would you want to move to America anyway?”

“It’s my job, Harry, me being in America will be better for the business – I can run everything far more effectively from there!”

“Bullshit.”

“Come on, think about it! A new start, no hero-worshipping, we can just be Ginny and Harry – have some fun!”

“I’ve done the whole ‘have some fun’ thing, Gin, if I’d had any more fun after the war I’d be dead. I just want to settle down, have a career, a family, a home – you know, the usual. What’s so wrong with that?”

“We could still do that, when we’re a bit older.”

“In another country? And what about my job? Am I supposed to just walk out part way through my training? Again?”

“You could come and work with me.”

“Really? Is there much call for a nurse at Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes?”

“Very funny, Harry. You know what I mean, I could get you a decent job.”

“I’ve got a decent job.”

“So have I. You won’t consider giving up your work, but you’d be quite happy for me to give up mine and come back here and have babies! You’re not even willing to consider this, are you?”

“Honestly, Gin? No. I’m sorry, I’m so sorry, but I’m not.”

“What are you saying, Harry?”

“I’m saying that maybe we just don’t want the same things from life. Maybe we are trying too hard to make this work.”

“No, Harry, don’t be like this, please. We can work it out, you know we can.”

“Can we? It seems to me that one of us will have to give in and be unhappy. One of us will end up resenting the other. Perhaps we would be better off just parting now, as friends. I love you, Ginny, I will always love you, never doubt that, but I don’t want to end up hating you.”

“I love you and you love me, and yet you seem to be saying that we should split up! Come to America with me, Harry. You can still be a nurse over there you know. And if we still want kids in a few years’ time, we can talk about it then. America’s not so far away you know.”

“We were so young when we got together, we aren’t those same sixteen-year-olds any more, maybe we need to discover who we are. You go to America, start your own business empire, become a massive success. I’ll stay here and finish my training and live my quiet life. If we still want to be together in a few years, we’ll discuss *that* then.”

“A few years! You might as well just say you want to break up with me now, Harry. In a few years you’ll likely have forgotten all about me.” Ginny was crying now, Harry wasn’t far off joining her.

“I’ll never forget about you. Never. But this isn’t some kids’ book, most people don’t end up marrying their high school sweetheart.”

“Tell you what. If neither of us is married by forty, we’ll get married then.” Ginny tried to smile through the tears trickling freely down her face. Harry moved forward and took her in his arms, holding her as tight as he possibly could.

“You’re destined for far greater things than me, Ginny. You’ll go on and be brilliant and I’ll just

be a footnote in your autobiography. I might have defeated a Dark Lord, but I'm just an ordinary bloke really."

Despite his tears, Harry couldn't help but feel a certain sense of relief that a weight had been lifted from his shoulders, and he had a feeling that Ginny probably felt it too.

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Wings, white and beautiful, beating in time to their own rhythm.

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"Probationer Potter, could you step into my office for a moment, please?"

Great, the morning was getting off to a good start. Being called into Matron's office before he'd even taken his coat off could only mean one thing – it obviously wasn't worth taking his coat off! He knew he'd got off too lightly with Sister Vanyarsfeld on Boxing Day. As they approached the office Harry could hear people talking inside.

"… I'm really not happy about this; he's not ready. I have plenty of other, qualified, staff who would be able to meet your needs far better."

"Nevertheless, Sister, I… Mr Potter, how pleasant to see you again."

He was glad to see Sister Vanyarsfeld was present in the office too, he liked to think she might be on his side, but he certainly wasn't expecting to see the other woman who was sitting there.

"Mrs Malfoy. Uh, good morning. Sister Vanyarsfeld." He greeted them both, looking to Sister Vanyarsfeld for any hint of what might be going on. The Sister didn't look too happy and Harry got the distinct impression that they had all been talking about him for the last few days.

"Right, let's get down to business," said Matron, sitting down behind her huge desk. "Potter, sit down. Sister Vanyarsfeld has given me to understand that you have been a frequent visitor to our Veela patient, is this correct?"

"Yes, Matron – but I was only trying to help, I didn't mean…"

"What you did or didn't mean is irrelevant, Potter," Matron cut in firmly, "Sister runs her ward as she sees fit, whatever rules may have been breached will be dealt with by her."

"Yes, Matron."

"Now then let's cut straight to the chase. Mrs Malfoy would like to hire you."

"You're sacking me?"

“No, Potter, and you really must learn not to interrupt. I’m sure you are aware that a work placement outside of the hospital is a standard requirement for final year students.”

“But I’m not in my final year, I haven’t even completed my first rotation yet.”

“Yes, thank you, Potter. I am well aware of that. However, I think an exception may be made in this case. You will be able to return to St Mungo’s to finish your training once this… assignment is… complete.”

“I’m not going to Malfoy Manor. The last time I was in Malfoy Manor I was held prisoner by Death Eaters. My best friend was tortured and another friend was killed. You can’t seriously expect me to go back there!”

“I can and I do. The war is over, it is time to put it behind us and move on.”

“I have moved on. The question is, have they? Lucius Malfoy has tried to kill me on more than one occasion and I’m fairly sure Draco Malfoy wouldn’t object to seeing me dead either!”

“I assure you, Mr Potter,” Narcissa Malfoy said, raising a well-plucked eyebrow, “no *deliberate* harm shall come to you when you are in my house, you have my word. You may as well know that my son is gravely ill – in fact, he is dying. I need someone to take care of him, and I believe that you are the best person for that job.”

“As much as I hate to disagree with you, Mrs Malfoy, I really don’t see that I am the best person for the job. Draco hates me; he’s hated me from the moment we met when we were eleven. Having me there to witness his illness would most likely only distress him. You’d be far better off with an experienced nurse.”

“On the contrary, Mr Potter. I have reason to believe that my son does not hate you. You are the one person who has always managed to draw a response from him, even in his current condition. It has to be you.”

“What do you mean, ‘even in his current condition’? What’s wrong with Malfoy?”

“He is suffering from the Veela Sickness.”

“What, like Bird?” Harry looked at Sister Vanyarsfeld in confusion.

“Yes, Harry,” she responded, “exactly like ‘Bird’.”

“You mean…” she nodded.

Harry felt the bottom suddenly drop out of his world. He really couldn’t put his finger on why he felt so strongly affected by the realisation that his Bird, his friend, and Draco Malfoy, his long-time antagonist, were one and the same. He felt betrayed; betrayed by Sister Vanyarsfeld, betrayed by the Malfoys, and worst of all, betrayed by Bird. He knew he was being silly, it

wasn't like Bird was able to speak, able to tell him who he was, but he had spent so many years being tormented by Draco Malfoy that he felt like he was back at school, and the Slytherin had just got one over on him – again.

"I'm sorry, Mrs Malfoy, I hope you find someone who will be able to help you with your son, but that person will not be me. Now, if I still have a job to go to, I would like to get back to my ward."

"No, Mr Potter, it is I who am sorry. I had hoped not to have to do this, but you leave me with little alternative. I would like to remind you that you owe me a life debt. I am now calling that debt in. You will come to my house and look after my son. You will, to the best of your abilities, attempt to restore him to health, and failing that, you will make it possible for him to die with as much peace and dignity as possible in the comfort of his own home. Do we have an understanding?"

"Mrs Malfoy, I really must protest!" cut in Sister Vanyarsfeld.

"Yes, thank you, Sister. Your concerns have been noted. Several times."

"As I see it, *you* leave *me* with little choice," said Harry, bitterly.

"Very well. I expect to see you this afternoon, I shall arrange transport to take you and my son to Wiltshire. You had best bring any luggage you will need with you."

Sensing he was being dismissed, Harry rose to leave. Sister Vanyarsfeld left with him and imparted as much advice as possible on the way back to the ward.

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The Veela cut a rather pathetic figure as Harry entered the room. He was huddled up in the chair by the window, his wings hanging limply around him like a tattered old cloak as he gazed despondently at the dismal grey sky and the rain drizzling down. Not even the muggle Christmas lights could make London look cheerful on this grey December day. He looked up as Harry shut the door, his eyes seeming to light up as he straightened in his chair. Harry tried desperately to harden his heart towards him, telling himself over and over not to forget that this was Draco Malfoy, but Voldemort himself would have taken pity at the hopeful look on the Veela's face.

"Hi, Bird," he smiled, then remembering, "Draco."

Draco visibly twitched at the sound of his name on Harry's lips. The light seemed to die in his eyes as he studied Harry's face. Harry looked away.

"Has anyone told you that you are going home today? We need to get your stuff together." Harry

started to collect together everything that belonged to Draco. It didn't take him long. When he was done he placed it all in a carrier bag and finally he looked back at the Veela.

"Is that everything?" he asked. Draco nodded.

As Harry helped Draco to rise from the chair and put a cloak on, he noticed the new fingerless gloves the other man was wearing and couldn't help but smile. "Come on then, Bird, let's get you home. It's been a while since I saw Malfoy Manor, I hope I get a rather more friendly welcome this time." Draco stopped so suddenly that Harry stumbled. He looked at his charge and grinned.

"Did your mother not tell you that I was coming too? She seems to think I'm a good influence on you or something – must be my Gryffindor nature bringing out the best in you."

Part Three

Title: A Life More (or less) Ordinary
Author: tari_sue
Pairing: Harry/Draco
Rating: Hard R/NC17
Word Count: ~22000
Warning(s): Slash! Features some fairly vanilla sex between 2 consenting male adults. Mentions of MPreg. Some swearing.
Beta: the_gubette
Prompt: Writer's choice slash/het and Other Prompt No.4.
Harry finds a broken Veela and nurses her/him back to health, only to discover it is someone rather familiar... The Veela should be quite vicious if anyone except Harry tries to help it, full Veela mode, wings, beak etc, the reason for this is up to the author. Harry is, of course, completely clueless.

Summary: Harry is working at St Mungo's as a student nurse and finds himself becoming a bit too attached to one of the patients – a dying Veela who won't let anyone close.
Author's Notes: This fic was subjected to a very fast beta read at the last minute by the wonderful Samantha Hope who I really can't thank enough. I apologise for anyremaining mistakes, they are mine and mine alone. Oh, and there are probably more clichés than you can shake a magic stick at :D

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characters depicted in sexual situations are above the age of consent.

Harry kept one arm securely around the Veela's waist as they made their way out of the ward and through the hospital. Draco wasn't strong enough to walk far on his own. All eyes were on them; a man turned fully Veela was quite a sight to see, and the majority of the hospital's staff, patients and visitors couldn't look enough. Draco kept his head down and his face burrowed into Harry, trusting the other man to get him to their destination.

Outside there was a car waiting for them as Draco was too weak for travelling by floo or apparating. The car was a large black Bentley, and if Harry was surprised at the Malfoys owning a muggle vehicle, it was nothing to his surprise at the driver, who jumped out to open the door, his chauffeur's hat balanced precariously between his green, bat-like ears.

"Blinky is getting the door for you, Master Malfoy. We is pleased to have you coming home!" the house elf squeaked before being silenced by a look from Narcissa.

"Remember, Harry, you can always floo me if you need any help and you need to check in with the hospital at least once a week anyway." Sister Vanyarsfeld was still rattling off instructions at him like he was a child going off to Hogwarts for the first time. "Good luck!"

Harry was familiar enough with Wizards by now not to be surprised at the Tardis-like effect of the car, which was far bigger inside than out. He settled back into his seat and allowed Draco to rest against him.

The car journey seemed to go on forever, although in actual fact it only took about an hour and a half. Draco had fallen asleep somewhere on the M4, which was probably for the best. Harry and Narcissa did not speak for the entire journey.

When the house loomed into sight, he suddenly found himself wishing that the journey was much longer as memories assailed him of his last visit there. Narcissa spoke for the first time since Matron's office that morning as she gently shook Draco awake.

"We're nearly home, darling, I know how you like to see the drive up to the house when you've been away."

Draco sleepily lifted his head and gazed out of the window as his home loomed into view. Harry found it strange that a sight which filled him with so much dread should make the Veela so happy. He looked up to see Narcissa watching Draco with a soft smile on her face, she looked up when she felt Harry's eyes on her and shrugged.

"We never thought we'd be able to have him home again," she said softly, "we never thought he'd see this again."

Harry made no reply, not knowing what to say When the car finally pulled up at the house and

everyone got out, Harry had to keep telling himself that Bellatrix LeStrange was not going to appear from nowhere and Luna was not locked in the dungeon – probably. The problem was that he then had to tell himself that he was perfectly fine with the fact that he would be living in a house with a dungeon. A dungeon where he had once been held hostage. A squeeze to his hand made him look at Draco and he could swear he could see understanding in those grey eyes, but he quickly dismissed that thought – he was putting his own wishes onto a man who probably never felt empathy in his life.

They had barely got a few steps into the house before an old face came into view on the stairs.

“Draco? Is that my son?”

Lucius Malfoy seemed to have aged twenty years in six. He was gaunt; his clothes hung off him and his hair was limp around his face, which now showed signs of wrinkles. Lucius had spent the bare minimum amount of time in Azkaban after the war, but that couldn’t account for this sudden aging.

Lucius hobbled down the stairs, his cane actually being used as a walking stick these days. He threw his arms around his son, and Harry was surprised to see Draco embrace his father in return. Lucius barely acknowledged Harry’s existence, and Harry was perfectly happy to keep it that way – let the Malfoys treat him as the hired help, he only had to put up with it for a short while until… yeah, well, until, probably best not to dwell on that. Or on the way his chest tightened at the thought of Draco dying.

***

The house elves had helped him to run Draco a bath and get him bathed and now the Veela was installed back in his own bed in his own room. Harry left Draco with his dinner, knowing that he didn’t like to eat in front of other people, and went looking for something to eat for himself. Both of the senior Malfoys seemed to have already eaten by the time Harry found his way down stairs. That was fine with Harry, he’d really rather not eat with them anyway; he ate in the kitchen with the house elves and enjoyed every mouthful all the more for their absence.

After he had checked on Draco, Harry realised that he had no idea where his own room was, so he trudged back down to the kitchen to ask one of the house elves.

“Mistress is not telling us to make up a room for Master Potter,” squeaked the elf, wringing her hands, “we has not got a room ready.”

“I only need a bed,” replied Harry, who was so tired he didn’t even care if the bed had sheets on it.

“But, if we is letting you sleep in one of the beds without the mistress’s permission then she will be very cross. Mistress is telling Dappy that Master Potter is to stay with Master Malfoy!”

“Oh, right. I didn’t realise that I’d have to be on constant duty. Oh well, can I at least have some

blankets and pillows then if I'm to sleep on the sofa?"

"Yes, Master Harry Potter, Dappy is getting you some bedding at once. Dappy is sorry for not thinking of it earlier and will iron her ears at the earliest possible opportunity."

"No!"

"You is not wanting bedding?"

"No, I is not wan—, I mean, I am not – I don't want you to iron your ears, or any other part of yourself or hurt yourself in any other way. The bedding would still be nice though, please."

"Right away, Master Potter." And with that the house elf disappeared.

The blankets were already waiting for him when he arrived back in Draco's room. The sofa was hard and too short even for him and his feet dangled off the end, but it also seemed to have some sort of anti-transfiguration charm on it, probably because it was some sort of expensive heirloom. Sighing, Harry hunkered down and made the best of it

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Blond. The hair is the palest, silkiest blond imaginable. Like spun moonlight as he throws his head back in joy.

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Draco was awake before Harry the next morning. Harry knew that, because when he awoke with a crick in his neck and a sore back there was a pair of intense grey eyes watching him.

"Morning," he yawned, attempting to stretch out his back and groaning in pain. He rolled onto his side and sat up, massaging his lower back with one hand and his neck with the other. Draco cocked his head to one side and studied him intensely.

"Sorry for invading your space like this, the house elves wouldn't give me my own room. I don't suppose I could use that massive bath of yours could I?" Harry suddenly realised that he was only wearing his pants and pulled the blanket around himself. Draco shrugged and nodded, so Harry made his way to the bathroom.

At breakfast that morning, which Draco took in his room and Harry spent with the family, he was introduced to the Malfoys' youngest son. Scorpius was four and looked exactly like Harry imagined Draco would have looked at that age. He was a very polite little boy and seemed to take an instant shine to Harry.

With the exception of meals, which he spent in the dining room with the Malfoys, Harry spent his days with Draco. It was strange. In the hospital Harry's favourite part of the day had been the time he had spent talking to the Veela. Now that he had all day to spend in Draco's company he

could barely think of a single thing to say to him. He supposed it made a big difference just knowing that it was Draco Malfoy he was talking to.

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Everyone was asleep when Harry fell out of bed a few nights later, or rather, fell off the sofa. All he had tried to do was turn over, forgetting where he was sleeping, and before he knew it he was lying on the floor. Deciding that the floor was at least as comfortable as the sofa he decided to stay there.

When Harry awoke next morning, he was somewhat disorientated. He was lying in a bed, a proper, big soft, luxurious bed with some sort of strange feather blanket over him. And there was an arm around his waist. And a head on his shoulder.

Had he got laid last night? Surely not? He hadn't gone out and done that sort of thing for years. In fact, he hadn't had a one-off since that morning he found himself in bed with a— yes, well, probably best not to dwell on that!

Gingerly, he opened his eyes. The head resting on his shoulder had very pale blond hair. Harry actually found himself hoping he was somehow in Draco's bed, because the alternatives didn't bear thinking about – there were far too many blondes in this house!

Yes, yes, of course it was Draco, that wasn't a feather blanket was it? Who the hell had feather blankets? Mind you, Draco wasn't the only Veela in the family, was he? Both of his parents had to be, at least mostly. Lucius definitely had a touch of the Veelas about him. Please, Merlin, don't let it be Lucius. He was sure he could feel a beak…

Harry hadn't been drinking; he knew that. And he hadn't taken anything… no, wait, he had taken some muggle pain killers for his back because casting healing charms on one's own back was a near impossibility. Surely painkillers wouldn't make him go mad, sleep with a someone and then forget all about it? In his experience it took an unhealthy cocktail of drugs *and* drink to make that happen – or some pretty good potions, courtesy of Blaise Zabini.

Harry began to realise that whether he was in bed with his patient or his employer, he really ought to move. The trouble was that he didn't want to. The bed was comfortable against his tortured back and the Veela was warm snuggled up against him. Harry closed his eyes and let himself pretend, just for a moment, that this was normal, that he had every right to lie here with this warm body in his arms. Sighing, he made a move to rise, but the arm around his waist tightened and he suddenly found himself looking into the sleepy eyes of Draco Malfoy.

"Um, morning, Draco." Harry really didn't know what else to say. A vague little memory said 'morning, lover' in a husky voice from the dark recesses of his brain.

Draco let go uncertainly, never looking away. Harry sat up and his eyes fell on the sofa and the pile of blankets on the floor.

“I fell out of bed,” he said, stupidly. The Veela nodded in agreement. “How did I get up here?” Draco barely had the strength to move himself, let alone Harry. The Veela pointed to the bedside table where a familiar wand lay. “Oh, right. Er, thanks.” Draco nodded again. Harry got up and padded into the bathroom.

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Harry’s back protested when he so much as looked at the sofa that night. He couldn’t help wondering if Draco would object to sharing his bed again. Glancing over at the bed, he realised that his thoughts must have been obvious, because the Veela pulled back the covers next to him. Well aware that he was seriously overstepping the patient/nurse boundaries, Harry climbed into the bed.

“Thanks,” he felt he really should say something after all.

***

They come together, mixed cries of love and desire, unspoken promises of eternity.

***

The biggest shock came on the fifth morning he awoke in Draco’s bed. They had been lying facing each other, Draco’s wing curled over both of them, and the first thing Harry saw when he opened his eyes was the face of Draco Malfoy. Not the face of Bird, which he had become used to, but the angelic, perfect, *human* face of Draco Malfoy. He couldn’t even consider the face pointy now, not after the beak.

He wasn’t sure how long he lay there studying that face, the face that had laughed with malice all those times as its owner got Harry and his friends into trouble, the face that had cried in Myrtle’s bathroom, the face that had looked so scared in Voldemort’s presence. He realised that he didn’t really know Draco at all. He sort of knew Bird and he knew *about* the spoilt bully he had gone to school with, but he didn’t actually know Draco.

Eventually the grey eyes fluttered open.

“Morning, Draco,” Harry smiled at him. There was no reply. “Aren’t you going to answer me?” A confused frown creased Draco’s brow and he opened his mouth but no sound came out. He put his hands, his normal, talon-free hands, to his face, feeling it like it wasn’t his own. He suddenly jumped up and ran to the mirror. The most enormous grin broke out on his face as he caught sight of his reflection and then he suddenly ran back to Harry and flung his arms round him laughing. Harry couldn’t help but laugh back. The wings were still there, but without the beak and the talons Draco looked rather like a fallen angel instead of a broken bird.

Draco managed to dress himself that morning, intent on going down for breakfast. He had long since been wearing clothes designed to accommodate the wings, but the talons had made it

impossible for him to put them on without help and often left his clothing in tatters.

As Harry opened the door to the breakfast room, the snide voice of Lucius greeted him.

“Ah, Mr Potter, up at last. Glad to know we are paying you to laze about in bed all day. Breakfast is nearly fini—” he trailed off as he saw his son follow Harry into the room. “Draco?”

There was a slight crash as Narcissa dropped her fork and moved to go to her son, but Scorpius was faster.

“Papa!” squealed the little boy, flinging his arms around Draco’s legs and holding on for all he was worth. Harry threw a confused look at Narcissa.

“I’ll explain later, Mr Potter,” she murmured as she swept past him and planted a kiss on Draco’s cheek. “It’s good to see you looking more like your old self, darling,” she said to Draco quietly, and Harry suddenly realised that that cold display of affection was probably the most emotion he’d seen her display since the Battle of Hogwarts.

Harry and Narcissa managed to get Scorpius untangled from Draco long enough to get him seated, at which point the little boy scrambled into Draco’s lap and refused to get down.

“I think he’d afraid that if he lets go, you will disappear again,” Lucius observed. “I won’t ask what has brought about this remarkable transformation, I have a strong feeling that I won’t like the answer. It’s good to have you back.”

Draco nodded in reply.

“Do you have nothing to say to us, Draco?” Narcissa inquired. “It’s been so long since I heard your voice…”

Draco opened his mouth but no sound came out.

“He hasn’t said a word so far,” Harry said, retreating into his nurse’s role, “I’m hoping that it’s just lack of practice, but I think we should get Healer Adamson over to for a check up.” Draco shook his head at this suggestion. “It’s for the best, Draco. I’m not even a qualified nurse, let alone a healer. I’d be happier if someone who knew what they were doing checked on you.”

Draco looked a little sulky for a few seconds, but the joy of being with his family and able to eat properly soon put the smile back on his face.

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Healer Adamson wasted no time at all in coming over to Malfoy Manor and Draco promised to behave and let the healer examine him.

Harry waited outside and was surprised to find Narcissa keeping him company.

“I don’t know how to thank you, Mr Potter. I believe it is your influence that has brought this about.”

“I think being at home helped. I hope you don’t mind me asking, but how did Draco end up at St Mungo’s in the first place? I mean, you obviously wanted him home with you, and it’s not like we could do much to help him there.”

“We hoped they might be able to. We couldn’t do anything. He couldn’t bear to be touched, we couldn’t feed him or anything. And then there was Scorpius.”

“Surely Draco wouldn’t have hurt Scorpius?”

“No, of course not. But Scorpius didn’t recognise ‘the monster upstairs’ as his father, I think he’d convinced himself that the monster had eaten Draco or something. It got so he wouldn’t eat or sleep, neither of them would, so we thought it might be best if Draco went somewhere where he could be looked after.”

“Oh, I see. So, why did you bring him back?”

“Draco is my son, Mr Potter. I love him more than life itself – I thought you might have realised that by now. I couldn’t bear to seem him in that place, so lost and forlorn. When I was told that he was responding to one of the nurses, I just wanted to have him home. I hoped that… well, perhaps that is for a later date.”

“I don’t understand how Draco’s mate could have abandoned him like that. Who could do something so cruel?” Harry said.

“Who indeed, Mr Potter,” answered Narcissa, giving Harry a funny look.

“As a matter of fact,” she continued after a few minutes, “my father did it to my mother.”

Harry was a bit stunned. Why would the previously uncommunicative Narcissa Malfoy suddenly start telling him her family secrets?

“It was quite a scandal at the time, of course; he left his wife and two small children to run off with a Veela. I believe it was probably my grandfather who bullied him into coming back, but of course, when he did he had another daughter. Mama raised me as one of her own; I never found out about my real mother until I got married. Now that I have to watch my son go this, I realise how she must have died.”

Harry couldn’t think of a single thing to say that didn’t sound trite, so they lapsed back into their former familiar silence until the Healer emerged.

“Ah! Mrs Malfoy, Nurse Potter, excellent! Well, this certainly is a turn up for the books, what? I’m assuming the wife has put in a appearance? Has old Lucius got her chained up in the

dungeon now?"

"Healer Adamson, you and Lucius may be old school friends, but I really recommend that you don't let him hear you saying such things," said Narcissa, coolly.

"Sorry old girl, no offence meant. So, I take it she hasn't shown up then? Well, how extraordinary! I have never heard of anyone recovering from Veela sickness before if the spouse didn't return!"

"So he is definitely recovering then?" Harry asked.

"Well of course he is, Potter! That much should be obvious even to a nurse!"

Healer Adamson was a pompous arse.

"But you don't know why?"

"No. I would have thought you might have been able to shed some light on that one, young Potter."

"What about his voice? Why can't he speak? And what about the wings, will they go too?"

"One step at a time, honestly, young people today, you give them one miracle and they want ten more, what? I should imagine the voice will come back with time. He hasn't exactly been able to use it for over a year. The wings should hopefully go in time too, providing the recovery keeps on this course."

"Well, thank you very much for your time, Healer Adamson. Can I persuade you to stay for coffee? I'm sure Lucius would be delighted to see you."

"That would be most enjoyable – lead the way! Nurse Potter, do you think you could see about getting your patient some fresh clothing? Good man!" Healer Adamson gave Harry a hearty thump on the back before trotting off down the corridor after Narcissa. Harry was quite glad not to be expected to sit through coffee with the man. He went in to check on Draco instead.

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Harry felt awkward when he went to bed that night. It was bad enough that he had been sharing a bed with a patient when said patient looked like a giant bird, let alone when he looked like a really rather attractive man. Harry stopped his thoughts there – he did not just think of Draco Malfoy as attractive! Draco Malfoy was Draco Malfoy, how could he possibly be attractive? He was a man! Harry wasn't attracted to men! Well there was that one time that… no, best not to dwell on that.

Deciding that he should just carry on as normal, mainly because that sofa was just so damn uncomfortable, Harry climbed into bed beside Draco. What he really hadn't been expecting was

for Draco to lean over and kiss him before turning out the light and snuggling up beside him. Nope, he definitely hadn't been expecting that one at all!

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Maybe he was just trying to show his gratitude? That one rang rather hollow in Harry's ears. Maybe he thought that Harry expected some kind of return… no, surely not. Maybe it was just a gesture of friendship – an act of making peace between them? Or maybe, maybe Draco was just making the most of having lips again? No, that one sounded ludicrous even to Harry's sleep-deprived mind. He rolled over and Draco curled up behind him.

Hell's teeth! It was three in the morning and he couldn't go to sleep because he'd been kissed by a man who was sharing a bed with him! This was ridiculous – it wasn't exactly like he'd never been kissed before! He'd been quite the playboy after the war, he'd done a damn sight more than kiss quite a lot of women! Quite a lot of women and one m… no, don't go there.

But then, it wasn't even as though kissing a man should freak him out like this, was it? He'd been kissed by men before. He was a Quidditch player after all, teammates would often plant an exuberant kiss on their Seeker if he won them a game and nobody thought anything of it. And he was friends with Seamus; when Seamus had a few drinks inside him he was likely to kiss everyone in the vicinity, regardless of gender. Harry didn't consider himself homophobic or anything like that, he'd never had a problem with Charlie Weasley or Ernie McMillan after all. He didn't even notice when Draco sometimes got an erection when Harry was helping to bathe him; it was just a perfectly normal reaction to stimulus – wasn't it?

So why the hell did one little innocent kiss freak him out so much?

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Watching Draco with Scorpius was a revelation. The man clearly doted on his son and Harry could see nothing of the haughty schoolboy who had tried to make his life hell. He couldn't lose the feeling that *this* Draco was someone he should have been friends with.

"It does the heart good to see, doesn't it?" Harry nearly jumped out of his skin. He hadn't heard Lucius approaching.

"Uh, yes, I suppose so," he replied warily.

"It hurts, Mr Potter, to see one's child in pain. Perhaps even more so for a Veela than a human. I don't know if I could have survived his death. Thank you." Lucius obviously found the words difficult to say.

"So, why did you tell me that Scorpius was yours?"

Lucius was quiet for a moment before replying, "He is so young, we thought it might be better if

he didn't remember his father, if we brought him up as our own. We were wrong to do so, I see that now."

They watched the two playing for a while longer before Harry plucked up the courage to ask another question that had been bothering him.

"If you are mostly Veela, what was all that pureblood crap about?"

"Originally, Mr Potter, being pureblood referred to how much Veela blood you had in your veins, not how much Wizard. Of course, Veela never mated with Muggles or half bloods, and most old pureblood families have Veela ancestry because it was quite the done thing back then. Even the Potters and the Weasleys, I believe. Over the centuries the pureblood cause became about Wizards vs. Mudbloods, but some of us stayed true. Some families, such as my own, deliberately bred with other purebloods, so the Veela strain is particularly strong. I myself am far more Veela than human, and I am not in anyway ashamed of that fact."

"Right. I never knew that."

After another stretch of silence, Lucius spoke again. "My son is very fond of you, Mr Potter. I should have seen it before really. He was always obsessed with you, even from that first day in Diagon Alley when he didn't know who you were. Of course, as I mentioned just now, the Potters have Veela blood in them too, although not as much as the Malfoys. Probably enough to be a Veela's mate, though."

"What? Mr Malfoy, if you are implying what I think you are implying, then it's an impossibility. I think I would have remembered if I had bonded with a Veela, especially a male Veela. Especially Draco, we weren't exactly friends before all this, you know."

"You are now though?"

"Yes, I suppose we are."

"What do you know about Veela bonding ceremonies?"

"Nothing, I assume it is a bit like a wedding."

"Yes, it can be – for an arranged match. Most Veela matches are arranged these days of course, to stop the Veela sickness from occurring. Veela sickness only comes about with the loss of a true mate, or sometimes a child. Consummation is all that is needed for a Veela bond to take place in reality of course; the rest is formality. Have you ever had intercourse with my son?"

"What! No, of course not," Harry choked out, completely caught off guard by the bluntness of the question. "I may not be snow white, Mr Malfoy, but I don't usually tend to sleep with men."

"Only usually?"

“Yes, usually. There may have been one time… Besides, Draco’s mate is a woman – Scorpius is proof of that! I am definitely not capable of giving birth, and I would definitely have remembered that no matter how many drugs I took.”

“Of course.”

Harry assumed the conversation was done and made to leave the room – discussing his sex life with Lucius Malfoy was not his idea of fun.

“Were you aware, Mr Potter,” Lucius said just as Harry reached the door, “that originally all Veela were hermaphrodites? It was only interbreeding with Wizards that changed that.”

“Yes, I had heard that. I am Draco’s nurse, however, so I know that he is very much male. I don’t know if you are trying to trap me into bonding with your son or something, but you are barking up the wrong tree.”

“Oh yes, true hermaphrodites are very rare amongst Veela these days, most are female. Draco is male, but it is possible that he could have some female reproductive organs. *You* cannot conceive a child, Mr Potter, and most of the time for Draco it would be an impossibility too, but during the magic of a true mate bonding, anything can happen. I will leave you to think on that.” Lucius swept past Harry and out the door, leaving him feeling very confused.

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Could it be true? Could he have actually been so out of his head that he had bonded with a Veela and not even realised it?

Suppressing a sigh, Harry admitted to himself that yes, it could very easily be true. He couldn’t remember half the things he got up to in the couple of years after the war. And there was that one morning…

It would explain so much if it were true. It would explain why Draco seemed to be getting better, why Harry felt such a connection with him, why Draco had kissed him – Draco thought his mate had come back to him. Oh god, this was awful!

And then there was the child, Scorpius. Was he Harry’s son? If Harry was Draco’s mate, as Lucius had implied, then Scorpius was Harry’s son. He had a son. Possibly.

If all this was true though, then surely Draco would have told him? Demanded child support? Tried to get Harry back? Surely Harry had had a right to know? Would the other man really rather die than be mated to Harry? Or was he really that proud? Being a Malfoy, the answer was probably yes.

What should he do? What if Lucius was just playing some sort of cruel joke on him?

Draco did have a scar though. Well, he had lots of scars and as the person who helped to wash

and dress him, Harry had seen them all. There was the scar that Harry himself had caused during sixth year, but there was also the smaller, neater scar across his abdomen. The sort of scar that was could have been caused by a caesarean section.

He could save Draco's life. If there was one thing he was very sure of, the though of Draco dying pained him. He couldn't let it happen.

And there was that one morning. And the dream – a hallucination, or possibly a memory, of an angel, sitting astride him with his wings spread out and his head thrown back, riding him for all he was worth. He'd always assumed it was a substance-induced dream. God, if that were true, if he could have that again when he was sober…

It looked like he wouldn't be leading that normal life he wanted after all. At least Ginny might get a laugh out of that. If she didn't kill him first.

Taking all of his famed courage, he went in search of Draco.

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"Draco, am I your mate?" No, he couldn't just come out with it like that.

"Draco, am I the cowardly swine who went and left you to die?"

"Draco, don't laugh at me, but your father said…"

"Draco… Draco why didn't you tell me? Am I that bad that you'd rather be dead?"

"Draco, is Scorpius my son?"

"Draco, was it you? That night?"

The Veela in question was sitting in the library reading, and Harry was pacing up and down outside muttering to himself. Deciding that he was getting nowhere, he opened the door and went in. Draco looked up and smiled, putting down his book.

"Um, hi. Uh, look, Draco, I sort of need to talk to you…" Harry trailed off. This was going even worse than it had outside.

"I've been talking to your father. Look, Draco, after the war I did a lot of things that I'm not proud of." The Veela flinched and Harry hurried on quickly, "I sort of slept around a bit, well, a lot," Draco flinched again, suddenly looking very miserable, "and the thing is, I don't really remember a lot of it – your old friend Blaise did a mean line in potions and other stuff specifically designed to enable you to forget and have a good time…"

Harry stopped. He was making such a balls up of this. Draco looked mortified. Harry looked away from him and ploughed on, unsure whether he was making things better or digging a

deeper hole.

“The thing is, most of those two years are a blur. I know I got my NEWTS but that was mostly down to Hermione. I remember most of my twentieth birthday – right up to the club and seeing Blaise. The rest is hazy. I remember waking up in bed with a man, and getting freaked out and running away…” Here he took a deep breath.

“The thing is, Draco, that I’m not proud of myself. I’m not proud of myself for sleeping around, I’m not proud of myself for taking drugs, and I’m not proud of myself for running out on someone like that. But it’s in the past and there is nothing I can do to change that. I do have a say in the future though.

“I might be completely wrong here and you might be about to laugh your arse off at me, but I don’t think I am. If that was you that morning, that night, then I’m sorry. I’m so, so sorry. I should never have treated you like that. I know that we were never friends at school, in fact, that might be the understatement of the year, but I’ve grown to really like you in the past few months and if I could be your mate, then I would be honoured. If you and I created a bond that night, particularly if you and I created Scorpius that night, then at least I did something I can be proud of.”

Finally, Harry raised his eyes and looked at Draco. The Veela was just staring at him.

“Oh god, I got it all wrong didn’t I? I’m not your mate and Scorpius isn’t my son and now you think I’m a total moron.” He put his head in his hands and was surprised when he suddenly heard a hoarse whisper.

“No.”

“What?”

Draco opened his mouth, but the effort of speaking was evidently too much.

“No, I’m not your mate?” Draco shook his head, but Harry wasn’t sure if that meant he was or he wasn’t. “Am I your mate, Draco?”

It was a single nod, barely there if you weren’t looking for it, but there nevertheless.

“And Scorpius is my son?” The nod came again. “Oh god, Draco! You should have told me! I have a son! What if I had gone to America with Ginny? What if you had died? Scorpius would have been raised thinking his grandparents were his parents for Christ’s sake! And I would never have even known he existed. How could you do that?”

Harry took a deep breath to try and clam himself down. This conversation could wait, he wasn’t here to yell at Draco.

“I really didn’t know. Can you ever forgive me?” This time Draco looked at him and when the

nod came it was definite, and when Draco leaned over and kissed him, that was definite too. And Harry kissed him back.

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The angel moves forward and kisses him on the lips, gentle and slow now the coupling is over. They sleep.

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Harry and Draco didn't rush into reconfirming their bond; it was all still too new and Draco wasn't really strong enough. If the older Malfoys guessed what was going on, they didn't say anything, but then Harry thought they'd rather suspected all along, and that was why Narcissa had forced him to come here.

Telling the Weasleys had not gone particularly well, Ginny had taken it far better than her parents or Ron. George's sudden decision to check into rehab had helped take the heat off Harry though. Luna had simply given him that Luna smile and Neville was still Neville. Harry had taken a fair amount of good-natured ribbing when he had gone back to work, but he had survived worse.

It was not without some trepidation that Harry finally found himself in bed and naked with Draco Malfoy. They had not gone far past the kissing and touching stage of their relationship, but it very much seemed that Draco was finally ready to take things further. It was strange really; Harry was the sexually experienced one in the relationship – Draco was practically a virgin – and yet Draco was the one being gentle with Harry, doing his best to soothe and relax him. Harry thought he could get used to this, as the Veela kissed his way down his body. He might have died and gone to heaven when Draco actually took him in his mouth, and he couldn't help but notice that his dick didn't have any problem with being attracted to another bloke.

It had been a while since Harry had had a really good blowjob, and if he had time to think he would have been thoroughly ashamed of the noises he was making, not to mention the speed with which he came. He rolled onto his side and kissed Draco when he was finished. He was quite surprised when, after snogging him quite thoroughly, Draco snuggled up behind him with one arm thrown around his waist and his nose pressed to Harry's neck. Was this all he wanted? Harry had rather assumed there would be more.

The Veela continued to nuzzle Harry's neck, kissing him down one shoulder and back again while his finger traced circles around Harry's bellybutton and then down his hip. Harry was so relaxed that he barely noticed when that hand started tracing patterns on his backside, although he did notice when a stray finger brushed over his arsehole, but then Draco kissed him and made shushing noises and Harry let him continue.

Harry let Draco reposition him, moving one leg forward and up and continuing to trace his patterns down Harry's thigh, all the while continuing to nibble his way down Harry's back. It was a decidedly odd feeling when he felt Draco's finger enter him, and he couldn't help tensing up slightly. Somehow, when Harry had thought all this through so carefully, he hadn't seen himself as taking this role in the relationship. He'd assumed he'd be the one on top, just as he evidently had been last time. His train of thought derailed as Draco had obviously found some lube somewhere and was busy working a second finger into him.

It wasn't a completely unpleasant feeling as Draco finally pushed his way inside Harry. He felt stretched and full – it did hurt, quite a lot actually, but not nearly so much as he had always been led to believe. They were still lying on their sides, Draco moulded completely to Harry's back and fucking him so slowly and gently that they were barely two separate entities. His wandering hand found Harry's prick and coaxed it back to hardness, and his lips never once stopped kissing whatever part of Harry they could reach.

Harry couldn't quite believe what was happening. He was letting Draco Malfoy make love to him. What sort of weird alternative reality was he in that led to him lying in Draco Malfoy's bed, *their* bed, allowing a man he had once hated to bugger him? He wasn't even hating it! It felt – nice. It felt good to be so close to another person, to trust them enough to let them do, that, to feel loved. And then, when Draco moved just *so*, it felt so much more than nice; nice didn't even begin to do it justice.

He didn't really know what surprised him more, when he actually came with Draco still inside him, or when he felt the other man come at the same time. Or maybe, just maybe, it was when he finally heard Draco Malfoy's voice as he whispered into Harry's hair.

"I love you, Harry."

Or then again, maybe it was when he heard his own voice whispering back.

"I love you too, Bird."

As he rolled over and Draco took his usual position with his head resting on Harry's chest, he reflected on his new life. He may not have the nice normal life that Neville and Luna had, he may not have a wife and 2.4 children and a cottage in Godric's Hollow, but he did have a partner, even if they were both male and one of them was mostly Veela, and he did have a child.

All in all, if he couldn't have an ordinary life, he was more than happy to have a life more or less ordinary.

--Fin--