Dark Side of Light

In a dark time, the eye begins to see,

I meet my shadow in the deepening shade;

What's madness but nobility of soul

At odds with circumstance? The day's on fire!

I know the purity of pure despair,

My shadow pinned against a sweating wall.

That place among the rocks-is it a cave,

Or winding path? The edge is what I have

Death of the self in a long, tearless night,

All natural shapes blazing unnatural light.

Dark, dark my light, and darker my desire.

Part 1: *soft sound of a door opening*

“Well, well.”

“Shut up, Malfoy.”

“My, my. Fancy seeing you here.”

“Shut up.”

“But I get so little company these days. Absolutely none, in fact. Which brings me back to the

main point -what’s a boy like you doing in a neighbourhood like this? Is it some kind of

outreach programme?”

“Careful, Malfoy. You sound like a Muggle.”

“Do I.” *soft laughter* “Can’t be having with that, can we?”

silence

“You’re… clean. And you haven’t got a beard.”

“Oh, it’s part of the new reforms. We all get soap and water and a razor. So humane. And of course, the suicide rate went through the roof. It’s the sort of thing that makes the tax payers feel all fuzzy and warm inside.”

grimly “Hearing about Crabbe and that razor made me feel a little warm, I have to admit.”

silence

“Get out.”

“… What?”

“I mean it. This may be a prison cell, but it’s my prison cell. Get the hell out!my prison cell. Get the hell out!”

“Don’t you dare take a righteous tone with me. I saw what he did to the Browns!”

“He was obeying orders. He was too stupid to do anything else. He always had to follow

somebody. It was his nature, and he was my friend.”

“And I suppose it was your nature, too.”

“Certainly. Law of the jungle. As long as you don’t think it was my stupidity.”

“… I hate you, Malfoy. I always did.”

“And yet you’re here. Why is that, again?”

“… I saw you being arrested.”

“Funnily enough, I caught that too.”

“There were a lot of Death Eaters in there with those children. Some of them killed the

children as soon as the Aurors came in. And you -gave the order for the Death Eaters to drop

their wands.” *pause* “Why?”

shrug “We were nicked. Seemed a bit pointless, really.” *knife-bright smile* “Also, I

thought that it would weigh in my favour come sentencing time.”

“You didn’t… Oh. Of course you did.”

“God, Potter, imagining some kind of noble act in me is a bit too stupid, even for you. You never did that at school. Hit by too many Stunning Spells during the war?”

“I didn’t think -I just wondered. The others cursed and fought. You were so quiet.”

uncomfortable shift in the chair “You seemed almost relieved.”

“You’re naïve, Potter. You always were.”

“Not any more.” *small frown* “Since when do you say ‘nicked,’ anyway? You always used to strut around airing your sophisticated and extensive vocabulary.”

“Don’t take up mimicry as a career.” *pause* “It’s expected of me. I am an old lag, after all. I might as well act the part.” *another pause* “Guv’nor.”

“What?”

“D’you have a cigarette?”

“I didn’t know you smoked.”

“Oh, I don’t. But I think it would be an appropriate habit, don’t you? I could lean against a

wall, take a drag, maybe bribe the prison guard with my ciggies.”

“The prison guards are Dementors.”

“Just because they like to suck out souls doesn’t mean that they don’t like to suck in a lungful of joyfully poisonous tobacco.”

“This isn’t a game, Malfoy.”

“I know that. I ran out of spiders to torment weeks ago. I’m off my game, Potter. I’m bored. I want to cultivate a whole new vice.”

pause “You’re… not mad.”

“Well spotted.”

“Why not?”

“Well, there are fewer Dementors than before, you know. Your lot killed quite a few of them. Hence, much better conditions for the evil Death Eaters you were fighting against than in the days of yore. Irony’s ironic like that.”

“Even one Dementor… They suck out all your happy thoughts.”

“I know. Quite homey, really.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Doesn’t matter, does it? You just came here to hear talk. It doesn’t matter what I’m saying.”

“You think -I came here for company? I could get better company anywhere!”

“Maybe, maybe not. Not too many of our old schoolmates left, are there? Let me see. Longbottom, dead, Finnigan, dead, Thomas, dead, Weasley, dead… In fact, come to think of it, I don’t think many of the Weasleys are available for comment of late…”

savagely “Shut your mouth.”

“What about Granger, now? Oh, that’s sad, she isn’t doing much talking either. Comatose, isn’t she? For six months now. The mediwizards can’t do anything. Doesn’t look good at all…”

“Fucking well shut up!”

“Oh, it feels different now you’re on the receiving end, does it?”

“What’s different, Malfoy, is that we were right and you were wrong, you’re evil, and don’t you dare say their names!”

“You were right and I was wrong. I see. Those are easy words for the winners to throw around. The way I see it, you’re free and I’m not. Paying my debt. It’s all even now. And you came here to talk to me.”

pause

“It’s not even. It will never, ever be even.”

“Spare me the wounded hero routine, Potter. You’re already taking up half of my cell, I don’t need any more pain.”

“Taking up…?”

“During visiting hours, bars fall to bisect the cell of prisoners. Can’t have a repeat of the Crouch incident, can we? But nor can we deprive people of their visiting rights. That wouldn’t be quite -quite sporting, would it? There’s another of those delicious ironies.”

stonily “What is?”

“You people fought for -oh, what was it that was promised? -a better world. And you had to fight Fudge every inch of the way, and finally forcibly depose him. Now who rules over that bright, shining new world? Camden Fudge, the younger brother. Looks like Dumbledore’s promises didn’t quite work out, doesn’t it?”

“Don’t you dare say his name! Not his.”

“Still loyal, Potter? Even though every day you look around at the dead, look at the shoddy way the world is being patched up, and you think this is what you fought for, for a senile old man’s lies-”

“I fought to stop people like you! Voldemort was cutting a swathe through the world, nobody was safe, and you either had to plunge into the blood and darkness or fight against it, and what you chose was what you are, and you can never change that. Yeah. I’m still loyal, even though there doesn’t seem to be anything left to be loyal to. And you’re still a murderer.”

scrape of a chair “I’m leaving. And I won’t be back.”

“I didn’t think you would.”

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Part 2: *soft sound of a door opening*

croaking voice “Hello, Potter.”

“Er… hello, lump of talking bedclothes.”

shift of bedclothes “I do not find you amusing. I am about to perish. Have you no decency, Potter? A fallen and imprisoned enemy, bound to his bed of pain. And here you are to mock me. Shame on you.”

“I didn’t know you were sick! What do you take me for?”

“I don’t know. I depend on feminine intuition to make my character judgements. I’d better ask my girlfriend Pansy. Oh, wait just a second…”

coldly “Don’t bother trying to make me feel guilty.”

“Why should you feel guilty about her? She was only one of thousands.”

“I did what I had to do. And don’t act as if you haven’t done worse, as if you didn’t choose worse.”

“Oh, of course. You killed because you had to, you were forced into it, the cruel hand of circumstance manipulated you down that path. And I decided, very calmly and callously, to take the path that would work out best for me. And yet somehow I ended up behind bars. Don’t talk to me about choice, and don’t play the victim.”

“I wasn’t the one who brought the war up.”

“I know.” *pause* “Sometimes it feels as if the war is all there ever was. All there ever will be -for me. Now.”

sigh “For me, too.”

strained voice “Don’t be stupid, Potter. You’re not rotting in prison.”

“No. No. But everyone I love is dead -or -or dying. I’m unemployable because I’m too

famous, the government won't even let me help out because they say my image -the things I did during the war, the things that won the war -aren't compatible with their new style. You were right about that much, at least."

sound of a head falling back on a pillow "Right about what?"

"This isn't the world I fought for. It isn't what I dreamed of -it's nowhere I want to build a new life."

"Potter."

"What?"

"I know I can trust you to believe I'm not saying this out of any kind of altruistic concern."

"What, Malfoy?"

"Sod the world and its multiple imperfections. It annoys me to see anyone being so

irrationally and stupidly unhappy. Go pick a cutie out from among your screaming fans and

have a few revolting little brats."

"Marry someone who'll only like me because I'm famous. That's -disgusting. That's -so like you, Malfoy."

“Why, thank you.”

“I’ve had real affection. I’m not planning to settle.”

“Ah. Then you have another exciting option.”

“What is it?”

“Live all alone forever, become the slightly crazy old man who tells the kiddies war stories

and has dried spit on his chin, and then die and have your owls peck out your eyes.”

pause

“Has anyone ever told you that your words are like cheering sunshine?”

“Not in those precise words, no.”

“I cannot imagine why not.”

conversationally “I have been told that my voice is like sex poured onto hot waffles,

though.”

“I don’t think what you tell the mirror counts.”

“Push off, Potter. I’m sick.”

“What do you have?”

“The flu. I caught it. Don’t ask me how. There’s an ogre in the cell to my left and a troll to

the cell on my right, I have no method of human communication, and somehow I managed to

catch the flu. I presume this is Life."

"I'm sorry if I gave it to you."

"Not half as sorry as you're going to be." *pleasantly* "If you gave this to me, I do not care how long it takes, somehow I will work out an intricate plan and bring about your downfall. Then I will paint obscene graffiti on my cell wall with your blood."

"I'm terrified."

pause

"Why are you here, Potter?"

"Why? Do you mind?"

exaggerated sigh "Yes, Potter. I mind desperately. All my adoring followers are forming an obstreperous queue outside my cell. You are sending their whole schedule to hell in a

hobgoblin’s handcart. Begone, it’s not like you’re the only human company I’ve seen in three

months and I can’t afford to be choosy about my companions.”

"… Then why are you asking?Then why are you asking?"

"I'm a nosy person."

"Oh, hell, Malfoy, I don't know."

"Can I guess?"

"If you like."

"You're obviously all bitter and twisted about the war, and it gives you a perverted little kick

to see one of your enemies crushed even lower than you are."

"How dare you!"

"Oh, come on, Potter." *softly* "Tell me you don't like it."

"I… That wasn't what I was thinking!"

"So you do. All right, I'll guess again. I'm the only person your age who's still alive."

"Don't be stupid. If I wanted, I could talk to -Justin Finch-Fletchley. Or the Creeveys. Or

Hannah Abbott. Or -Padma and Parvati Patil. Anyone."

"Who's Hannah Abbott?"

"She was in our year."

"Doesn't ring a bell."

"She had blonde hair. Pigtails. She was in Hufflepuff."

"Ah. I see. I had better things to do in school than learn Hufflepuffs' names."

"You're unbelievable."

"So I'm told. Usually in slightly more breathless tones." *pause* "Let me see. Justin Finch-

Fletchley, the only man in the world to be more interesting while he was Petrified? And the Creevey brothers, who had a shrine dedicated to your worship. What a tempting selection."

"There were the Patil twins."

"I admit, a matched pair of nubile Indians sounds like a good idea to me."

"They're also very nice people. And interesting."

yawn "How fascinating." *pause* "So it's not that, then. All right. You felt the need to purge your soul by confession, and decided to start small by admitting to me that you, while in your Invisibility Cloak-"

“How did you know I had an Invisibility Cloak?” k?”

“I suffer from intelligence. I’m being given medication for it, I assure you. Now, while you

were in your Invisibility Cloak, did you or did you not deliberately get an enormous trifle-”

“I cannot believe you still remember this.”

“An enormous and I might add enchanted trifle-”

“You incredibly small and petty and obsessive person.”

“A trifle which you then threw on me, while I was kissing Lisa Turpin, widely admitted to be

the hottest ticket in our year, which turned my hair red and blue-”

“It was patriotic.”

“And which gave me, and I remember this part extremely clearly, breasts.”

“That was a side effect and I had no idea it would happen. I was as shocked as you.”

“Believe me, nobody could possibly have been as shocked as me.”

“Cheer up. For a week there, you were the hottest ticket in our year.”

offended tones “I was always the hottest ticket in our year. In a very, very masculine way.”

pause “Shut up.”

“I didn’t say anything.”

“And I’ve had quite enough of that amused silence.” *sneeze* “Do you have a handkerchief?”

“Sure. Here.”

“Thanks. So I take it that it wasn’t guilt over the breastful trifle then.”

“Why should I feel guilty?”

“Oh, for God’s sake, Potter-”

“As I recall, you got me back. Since you fed me a Love Potion and I spent a week trying to get Professor Trelawney to marry me.”

small snort “Admit it, Potter. I was unleashing your forbidden desires.”

“She accepted! At the end of the week I had to fake my own death!”

“Talk about self-fulfilling prophecies, eh?”

“Sod off, Malfoy.”

pause “All right, then. I can’t guess why you came to see me.ll right, then. I can’t guess why you came to see me.”

“No?”

“Well, I mean, it’s my personal opinion that I happen to be extremely easy on the eyes, but

even I have to concede that that probably isn’t your motivation.”

dryly “Thanks.”

“So, are you going to tell me?”

“I said I didn’t know! I -You mentioned the Creevey brothers just now. And screaming

fans."

“If you’re planning to choose one of the Creeveys out of your group of fans and set up house,

I implore you not to tell me. I don’t need that picture.”

“It’s just that the whole world’s like that now. Screaming fans -or people who are afraid of

me. After -after-”

“Yeah. I remember.”

“Well. You’re neither of those things.”

brightly “I went to a meeting of your fan club once.”

“I had a fan-? And you went-?”

“Oh, yes. It was set up in fourth year. Lasted about a week.”

“What did you do?”

“… nothing. Who, me? Nothing.”

“Did you make anyone cry?”

“Only the girls and the Creeveys.”

“That wasn’t very nice.”

“No, but it was entertaining. Many nasty things are. So you came to talk to me because I

wouldn’t, for any reason besides debilitating illness, swoon at your feet.”

“And…”

“Yes?”

“The nightmares.”

“Oh. Oh, I see.”

“When you’re back there, and there’s the blood because people had to be tortured for information on the battlefield as quickly as possible, and you’re slipping in it and you’re running, or the Muggles are hunting you again, or you sent a spell blasting into nowhere and maybe it hit someone-”

information on the battlefield as quickly as possible, and you’re slipping in it and you’re running, or the Muggles are hunting you again, or you sent a spell blasting into nowhere and maybe it hit someone-”

“Yes, I know.”

“-someone on your side. Someone you loved. And you wake up in the quiet night, and that’s

worse because the blood and the screaming was at least familiar and peace is -is this completely alien territory. Like a place without air. A place you don’t know how to live in.”

“All right, Potter! Stop! I know.”

silence

“I thought you did. That’s another reason.” *pause* “It’s not… good, to wake up after one of

those nightmares and think nobody else would understand.”

“Try waking up and seeing the Dementors outside your cell.”

“I don’t think I will. If it’s all the same to you.” *pause* “Besides, in the truce-”

“If you can call two sides calling a halt to war so they could go to war with Muggles a truce.”

“You know what I mean. In the truce, we -oh, you remember.”

“Refresh my memory. As I grow ill and feeble, my mind becomes so clouded. It’s really very

tragic."

"There were those couple of weeks we were in camp together. We were both squad leaders. There was a certain amount of enforced interaction."

"Quite."

"We… talked a bit, back then. It wasn't so bad."

"You came here to talk battle tactics and food rationing?"

"You talked about other things, sometimes."

"Did I?"

"You once told me your greatest fear was that neither side would win. That we'd end up destroying the wizarding world until we were a few miserable remnants, chasing each other down in one last miserable scrap in the mud and blood. You said 'This is the way the world ends. Not with a bang but a whimper.' You said you didn't want to die like that."

"I don't remember."

"Come on, Malfoy!"

soft laughter “No, I’m sorry, I really don’t. I was on an insane amount of drugs by then. Most people were. You kept a clear head throughout battle, so you could live, and then the rest of the time… It ends up so all you remember is the battles. As if that’s been your whole life.”

laughter* “No, I’m sorry, I really don’t. I was on an insane amount of drugs by then. Most people were. You kept a clear head throughout battle, so you could live, and then the rest of the time… It ends up so all you remember is the battles. As if that’s been your whole life.”

quietly “I remember.”

“I remember… something about a lamp and moths. It was you, wasn’t it. I kept thinking that

it couldn’t be, but it was. I wanted to put the lamp out, and you said if the moths were stupid enough to fly around it they deserved what they got.”

“Yes. And you didn’t listen. You put the lamp out. You were laughing.”

“One tends to laugh a lot, when one has happy little hallucinogens.”

“I don’t remember anybody laughing. Not for five years. Only you.”

“So -the case stands thus. We were able to hold some kind of communication in wartime

once, we both have nightmares, I’m not afraid of nor am I fond of you, and you like seeing me get what I deserve.”

“Something like that.”

“You’re a twisted little person, Potter. And there’s one more reason, of course.”

warily “What is it?”

“Felicitations on this anniversary of your illustrious birth.”

“You know…?”

“It’s a national holiday, Potter. My nanny used to give me sweets on Harry Potter’s birthday. Recognising your birthday is a Pavlovian response by now. So -twenty-one. Now you’re legally allowed to do everything legal. Even in America, that barbarian wilderness.”

“Your mindset got stuck in 1782, didn’t it, Malfoy?”

“Push off, Potter. I hope I gave you flu for your birthday. It would make up in some small way for the breasts.”

“Let it go, Malfoy.”

soft tap at the door

“I. Um. Well, I guess it’s the end of visiting hours.” *pause* “I might see you. Next week.”

“No you won’t.”

“…Fine.”

dolefully “I shall be dead by next week. By next week, all that will remain is my piteousBy next week, all that will remain is my piteous,

drawn and yet touchingly attractive corpse.”

“All right then. Next week, I might see your piteous, drawn and yet touchingly attractive

corpse.”

“Get yourself a life, Potter. But if you do happen to stop by, I wish to be buried by the old

mill.”

“What old mill?”

“Oh, any old mill. It sounds so charming and rustic.”

“On that charming and rustic note, I’ll go.”

“Then go!”

soft noise of a door closing

grumpily “Nobody asked you to come.”

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Part 3: *soft sound of a door opening*

“Oh. It’s you again. Have you ever thought about the general lack of style incorporated into

the traditional prison robes?”

“Malfoy. I see you’re feeling better.”

“Yes. I -expect it was you who got them to give me handkerchiefs and medicine.”

warily “Yes.”

“Very like you, Potter. Very -boy scout. Fair treatment for the helpless prisoners.”

mirthless laugh “Oh, yes? You haven’t heard the stories, then? You disappoint me, Malfoy.

I would’ve thought that you’d be well up on the campfire gossip.”

“What are you talking…”

“About what the Boy Who Lived had turned into.”

snapped “I never believed that rubbish.”

softly “You should have.”

pause

calmly, conversationally “Millicent Bulstrode. She was taken prisoner in the seventh

month, second year of the war. When we found her someone else had the unlocking words for our spelled perimeters, and she looked-”

“I did it.”

“As if she’d been ripped apart by wild animals.”

“That was me. By myself. Hermione and I were sent out on a reconnoitring mission. We

picked her up and we needed those spells quickly. Things weren’t going well. So I sent Hermione outside, and I did what I had to do.”

“The right thing.”

“It seemed like the right thing at the time.”

“How about now?”

“Eventually right and wrong no longer matter.”

“How very charming. How about good and evil?”

“They matter… You begin to wonder if one exists.”

“What a fabulously cheery state of mind. I wonder which one you could possibly doubt. No, hang on, I don’t. Nobody could see Camden Fudge’s moustache and doubt the existence of evil.”

“His what?”

“His moustache. I clocked it at my trial. My God, it was horrible. He waxes it, Potter, have you noticed that? He curls up the ends into pointy tips and waxes it.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“It’s true. He looks like a sea lion.”

“I meant-”

patiently “I know, Potter. So why’d you send in the stuff, then?”

“It’s what I would have done -once.”

“Spare me the maudlin oh-the-lost-days-of-my-youth, oh innocence, alas if I had but known bit, would you? You would not have. You would have enchanted the handkerchiefs to turn my nose red and blue.”

“I would not have.”

“You would so.”

“I would not. I would have felt sorry for you. You were such a pathetic object. You would have done something awful once. I was a nice boy.”

“It was all a front.”

“It was not a front.”

“It was a Machiavellian plot.”

“I was eleven when I first met you.”

“All right, so you didn’t know it was a front.”

“How could I not know that?”

“How could you grow up into a decent, moral and well-adjusted lad with your upbringing?

You were locked up in a cupboard, beaten around, starved and neglected. You were made to climb up chimneys and get soot in your lungs and then they used rat poison to flush it out.”

“That didn’t-”

“Let me have my dream.”

“You’re weird.”

“So are you. You didn’t want to be like them, did you? You didn’t want to be anything like them. You wanted to be just like all the new friends you made, and you wanted to protect them as well. And then you danced with death every year until you were fourteen, and after that you breathed death just like the rest of us. You never got the slightest chance of a normal

childhood, and you bottled it all up, you walked on the edge until there was no choice but to fall and nobody to catch you anymore."

"And you?"

smugly "I was an aggressive and randomly cruel child, and so I grew up-"

"Perfectly normal?"

"Into an aggressive and randomly cruel man. But at least I know who I am. I've always

known that."

"Have you been thinking about my psyche a lot?"

"Off and on."

"Really."

"I'm stuck in here, I've been thinking about almost everything. Have you ever wondered if alligator or elephant meat would be tastier?"

absently “Elephant. Meat eating animals taste bad.”

“You’re a fund of scary trivia, Potter. Who’d have thought it. I shall make a note in my diary.”

“You keep a diary.”

“Certainly. Very much approved of. Very therapeutic.”

“I’d… like to see it.”

“Well, it’s riveting, I can assure you. ‘Dear Diary, today I a) traced patterns onto the stone of my cell walls and imagined I was living in a herd of giraffes, b) obsessed over my collection of bad memories, c) obsessed about what prison food is doing to my waistline, d) thought the giraffes were giving me suspicious looks, e) decided that the giraffes were in a conspiracy against me and f) realised I was slipping slowly into madness.’”

“Your cell is too small for giraffes.”

“I think you miss my point.”

“Giraffes are extremely tall animals.”

“All right. Fine. I will read you an extract of my diary. I hope this will make you happy.”

“I hadn’t realised you cared.”

“I am interested to see if you can manage a different facial expression. It’s so tedious to try and differentiate between bloody miserable, brooding and morose.” *rustle of papers*

“Ahem. This is an extract from last week. ‘Dear Diary. Potter came to visit today. Not really sure why, and do not particularly care. However, I vow this. If he comes again, and he wears that revolting shade of brown, I will kill myself.’”

“You didn’t-”

“Kill myself? No, but I’m not sure that mouldy green is a good enough reason for me to live. Honestly, Potter, your dress sense is a weapon in the hands of the Dementors.”

“Shut up.”

“Aha. It’s intentional, isn’t it? You’re all in league to drive me to despair. I’m on to you.”

“You’re insane.”

“So you simply hired a Dementor as your personal shop assistant? Bad mistake, Potter. Evil leeches on despair. Also, blind.”

“You’re insane. I remember this.”

“You remember hiring the Dementor?”

“I remember this! This is how you were with the men. In our camp. There’d be a military strategy meeting, and we’d all realise how hopeless it was, or the kind of thing we’d have to do… and you wouldn’t ever shut up.”

member this! This is how you were with the men. In our camp. There’d be a military strategy meeting, and we’d all realise how hopeless it was, or the kind of thing we’d have to do… and you wouldn’t ever shut up.”

“Sounds like me.”

“You made a cocked hat out of a plan for storage facilities once. You did imitations of

people. You did an imitation of me. I wanted to kill you. But… you made the men laugh. I wished I could do that, after… the truce ended. You were -a good leader.”

“I was on a lethal cocktail of drugs.”

“It’s a shame you didn’t know who to follow. It’s a shame you weren’t -a good man.”

“Good was always more your bag than mine, Potter. As for following -I never blindly

followed anyone. I made my own choices. And I don’t need your judgement of them. I’ve heard enough judgements.”

“… Okay.”

“Thank you. In return, I do not plan to bring up Millicent again. After this time. You sent Granger out?”

“Yes?”

mildly curious “Did you love her?”

“Yes.”

“In love with her?”

“No.”

cheerfully “Shame. That was my bet in the stakes on ‘Why Potter the War Hero is Oh, So

Alone.’”

“What money would you pay the bet with? Who’d demand payment?”

“It’s the principle of the thing.”

“I don’t believe you people laid bets about that kind of thing.”

“Potter. We didn’t talk battle plans and the slaughter of innocents all day long. That was

usually concluded well before lunch. Then we talked about sex until the cows came home and once the cows were home, we looked speculatively at them. That’s what wartime’s all about.”

“What, bestiality?”

“Aren’t you funny. People mused on sex an awful lot. And your name is hardly the first that comes to mind when one thinks of sex, but eventually we got around to you. There was a bit of conjecture on why your name had never been linked up with anyone’s. I thought being moony about your best friend’s girl but too desperately heroic to take her afterwards would be just your style.”

“Sorry to disappoint you. There was a war on for five years. I didn’t have time to think about

romance.”

“Very weird and stunted of you, Potter. Oh, well. It was just a bit of discussion around lunch one day. By dinner we were on to polling the camp about which one of the other side everyone’d want to do if they were kidnapped by the enemy and had to sleep their way out.”

“We never had any discussions like that!”

“I bet they had them behind your back. Actually, Granger’s name came up quite often in

those replies. She and some leather outfit and a whip featured largely in several of my officers’ fantasies.”

“Is that so.”

“I chose the Patil twins.”

“Naturally.”

“If I’d had to go through such a terrible ordeal. And of course, I would have simply lain back

and thought of my country.”

“Of course.”

“It would have been dreadful, but I would have borne it bravely.”

“I have no doubt.”

“‘My body you may have, but my immortal soul you cannot hold!’ I would have said.

‘Though you may try to make me submit with your evil wiles, Indian flexibility, serpentine dances and large variety of sherbet sex play, it belongs to my cause.’”

“I can see you thought this out at length.”

“Best to be prepared, I thought.”

“Oh, absolutely.”

“Did the, um, Patil twins ever show any interest in belly dancing or any sort of lewd sherbet consumption?”

“Not that I can recall.”

“Pity.”

“Parvati came to see me, a few weeks ago.me, a few weeks ago.”

“Why do you get a Patil twin, and all I get is you?”

“Clearly she was drawn to me by my boyish good looks. Seems she wasn’t drawn here.”

“I’m sorry, I was so busy howling with derisive laughter after ‘boyish good looks’ that I

couldn’t hear the rest of what you were saying. Go ahead, you were about to tell me about Parvati Patil. Let me guess. She popped over to say she was your new neighbour, and wanted to know if she could borrow a cup of sherbet.”

“Leave the sherbet, Malfoy. Don’t do this to yourself.”

“She wanted to borrow a cup of quick shag?”

“She didn’t want to borrow anything! They come around, every now and then, members of

the squad. To check if it’s true, and I really am cracking up.”

“You could just leave a note outside the door. ‘To whom it may concern: This day being

Tuesday, I am feeling wistful, confused, slightly overweight and oddly ambivalent about dairy products.’”

“I don’t think she’ll be coming back.”

“Did you use harsh words to that delectable little houri, Potter? Shame on you.”

“I drew my wand on her.”

“Privacy is all well and good, but really-”

“I was having… one of those dreams. When you’re back there. I was crawling through the…

God, the mud when it was slick and red with blood, and -my hand fell on tattered flesh, and then I looked up and then-”

“Stop.”

“There she was. She looked so frightened.”

quick breath “Ah. You were still in your pyjamas. I see. Poor girl.”

“Even if I try to reach out to someone, I end up hurting them. It’s like -all the way through the war I tried to make myself a weapon, and now it’s over. And when I touch someone I cut them.”

“You’re not cutting anyone.”

“I slept with someone once.”

“Um. Are you sure you want to tell m-”

“I don’t know who she was. I don’t even remember her face. It was last year, when it finally began to look as if I was going to win this war, when it looked as if one day there was going to be hope. There was a victory party, and she was there, and she danced and smiled and seemed alive. So I took her home. And I wanted to be normal, and I wanted to be happy like everyone else.” *strained breathing* “I woke up after one of those dreams. I thought there was a skull pressed against my cheek, I thought there was cold bone under my hands. I screamed the place down, I went for my wand and she went running and I knew… I knew…”

ce. It was last year, when it finally

began to look as if I was going to win this war, when it looked as if one day there was going to be hope. There was a victory party, and she was there, and she danced and smiled and seemed alive. So I took her home. And I wanted to be normal, and I wanted to be happy like everyone else.” *strained breathing* “I woke up after one of those dreams. I thought there was a skull pressed against my cheek, I thought there was cold bone under my hands. I screamed the place down, I went for my wand and she went running and I knew… I knew…”

“Potter! Are you all right?”

“I -yeah. No. It was just like that with Parvati.”

suddenly airy “Without the sex.”

wearily “Yes, Malfoy. Without the sex.”

“Such a shame.”

“If she ever comes around again, I am so telling her about the sherbet.”

“Do. It may intrigue and tantalise her. Give me your hand, Potter.”

“Why?”

“Because I want to marry you. Idiot. Put your hand through the bars.”

…

“Now what?”

“The alarm didn’t go off. They have to give me my handkerchiefs one by one, you know, so I

wouldn’t knot them into a noose. And give me my medication in a spoon, in case I broke the bottle against the bars and slashed my wrists with it.”

“Stop it!”

“You’re allowed a razor, that’s regulation, but nothing dangerous and not provided by our good and merciful government goes through these bars without an alarm going off. You’re not a weapon, Potter.”

“Were you always this literal?”

creak of unburdened bedsprings “I find it saves time.” *brush of skin* “You see, Potter? I’m not cut.”

“Oh, well. You. That’s different.”

“I have just the same skin as anyone else. Overlooking the pearlescent lustre.”

“That’s true. You can be cut, of course. If we’d caught you before the war was over, I would have made you bleed. Don’t think you would have been any different from the others.”

“Don’t think I wouldn’t have been happy to kill the Boy Who Lived.”

“Don’t call me that!” *quick standing, pained gasp* “Does this hurt?”

“No! Why don’t you like that name, hmm? Are we all grown up?”

“How about this?” *small sound*

quick standing, low snarl “Still no. Like what you’ve grown up into?”

“Some days it’s fun.” *another small sound, another pained gasp* “You’re too stubborn, Malfoy. That was always your problem.”

two steps backward, voice still pained “One among many. We’re even for the medicine now, Potter.”

“You never considered anything as other than a commercial transaction, did you.”

“I’m more honest with myself than most. That’s all.”

“… I didn’t mean to hurt you. Let me look.”

“You’ve got to be joking.”

“I -proved you wrong, didn’t I.”

savagely “You would think that. You’re too stubborn, Potter. That was always your problem. Fine. Look. The skin’s not broken. You didn’t cut me.”

tiredly “Good. Why are those bars set to alarm?”

“All the bars are set that way.”

“So you’re not up for the broken bottle, or the noose, or the razor.”

“Maybe I should be the one asking that question. Let’s face it, if we were playing sane

wizard, wacky thinks-he’s-a-pineapple wizard…”

“I-”

“Nobody’s alarmed your bars, Potter. What have you got between the dreams and your wand,

your razor, a knife? Don’t worry about me.”

“I wasn-”

“I’ll still be here next week.”

“I’ll see you then.”

“Perhaps.”

quick steps to the door

*

Part 4: *soft sound of a door opening*

snarl “Well, if it isn’t Potter. How perfect! The perfect end to a perfect day, and it isn’t

even noon!”

“… Malfoy. Why are you all wet?”

“Don’t ask me questions! Don’t expect me to be rational! I’m spitting here!”

“What, all over yourself? Quite a talent.”

“Oooh.”

“What?”

“I am quietly boiling from my insides out with sheer rage.”

“It’s not all that quiet.”

“Oooh.”

“It can’t be that bad.”

“Can’t it? Oh, but I think it can. I have two words for you, Potter. Two vile, disgusting words.

Communal showers.”

helpless laughter

“Stop it! This isn’t amusing! Larry the troll and Confucius the ogre. I have to shower with

them. Do you know what happens when you drop the soap? Sometimes you have to open your eyes!”

helpless laughter

“I wish I was dead.”

“That’s constructive.”

“I wish they were dead.they were dead.”

“What a happy thought.”

“I wish you were dead.”

“Saw that one coming. If it bothers you so much, skip some showers.”

“Skip some -Potter, you filthy, unwashed peasant. I don’t want to hear another heretical

unhygienic word out of you.”

“Malfoy, I’ve seen you crawl on your stomach in the mud.”

“That was quite different. Mud gives the skin a fresh and youthful glow. We’re talking grime

here. Grime, Potter.”

“A fate worse than death, I’m sure.”

“You’re bloody chipper today, Potter. I think I liked you better the other way.”

“You never liked me at all.”

“That’s not true. I liked you before I met you. I was under the grossly mistaken impression

that you were going to be cool. And I didn’t mind you for the first ten minutes I knew you.

And I recall being atrociously drunk in the truce camp and not minding you, but then that was

alcohol-induced universal goodwill."

"I remember that."

"No you don't. Shut up."

"I remember quite clearly telling you that drugs and drink do not mix, and not to make a fool

of yourself and undermine the authority of both of us as officers."

"Well, after that, what'd you expect me to do?"

"I didn't expect you to do a little dance."

"Oh, fuck off."

"In front of everyone. There was a routine. And a shimmy."

"Shut up a lot."

"And then you hung all over everyone. You were very affectionate. And vocal. You brushed

people's hair. You brushed everyone's hair."

"I hate you. And I can't hear. I'm not listening."

"Then you sang a little song."

“I hate you, I hate you, I hate you!”

“It was very touching. Colin took a lot of pictures.”

“Oh, my God. I bet you still have them. To laugh and scorn and mock and scorn. I hate you.”

“I burned them.”

“Thank Christ.”

“After the truce was over. I burned them all.”

“You… sound almost sad about it. You liked it, didn’t you. You liked that war.”

“It was -simpler. Simpler when I wasn’t facing people I knew, people who I’d gone to school

with. When it was us against them. It’s -so much easier to kill strangers.”

“I know.”

“It wasn’t about secrecy and evil and politics. It was us against them, and it was survival. It

was -you said it yourself.”

“I don’t remember.”

“I didn’t want to be put in a camp with your side. I didn’t care about co-operation and

necessity, it already felt as if I had fought a thousand wars and I didn’t want to do it. But everyone had to obey orders. My squad -we’d been all round the world, and I was always bone tired and everything was bitter. And I was sitting on a bench in a tent, and you came in and sat down so casually, as if it was Potions class, and you said ‘I suppose we’re in this together.’”

“Marvellous things, drugs. I don’t really recall.”

“I remember. There were no conflicted loyalties or spies or -or anything. Things were easier, everyone had a common enemy and we were fighting for our lives and there wasn’t a doubt.

And there was you. I didn’t have to be as good at war then. I -like I said, you were a good leader.”

“I did what I had to. But you. You loved it. The pure clean edge of desperation.”

“I… You can’t be kind, can you. Not unless someone is desperate.”

“I’m never kind. Sometimes desperation makes people delusional. And you always liked your

delusions, didn’t you? You’ve been fighting something since you were born. You never even knew what peace was, you didn’t know how to want it. The lack of dilemmas, the pure instinct to hunt and the blood on your hands -that was the closest you ever came.”

“And what about you?”

“Why was I good at it? You were born for it: I was brought up for it. I could taste the coming war my whole life. It was all I ever expected my future to be. And now it’s over, but in the end you forget how to live any other way. Even still, I can’t remember.”

I was brought up for it. I could taste the coming
war my whole life. It was all I ever expected my future to be. And now it’s over, but in the end you forget how to live any other way. Even still, I can’t remember.”

“… Yes. It wasn’t that I liked it. Any more than I like air. It’s just that now, I can’t be anything else.”

“And what a pair we make. Enough to make a devil weep.” *pause* “Do you think Dumbledore would weep?”

“Don’t say his name.”

“I think he would, for you. He had such faith in you, didn’t he? And it was just an extension, an intensification, of that beautiful naïve faith that he had in almost the whole world. That people could be trusted to do the decent thing. You had that too. Must have been painful when it burned away.”

snarl “What about you?”

“Never had it. I would never have thrown the wizarding world to the wolves because of some stupid collection of beliefs.”

“It was because of your side-”

“No! I don’t care what we did. It was your leader who made the decision, who did the deed. He went to the government, went through every rank, and gave them proof of all our secrets and our existence. He convinced them, he had some ideal of wizards and Muggles living together in perfect harmony after they’d vanquished Voldemort forever.”

“I voted against it.”

“But you let him do it. I would have killed him before he could.”

“Go to hell. I could never have done that.”

“Couldn’t you, if you’d known the price? If you’d known about the reaction, the pronouncement that we were all dangerous and had to be exterminated, the mobs with all this new knowledge, the time when all anyone could do was panic and hide the evidence, disguise the deaths, and hope that they wouldn’t decide to tell the whole world? If you’d known that the Finnigans would all be slaughtered and that Dumbledore would be shot when he was walking into a conference in good faith?”

“I couldn’t have done it!”

“The terror made even the war stop; made us all band together like rats cowering in a single hole. So many memory modifications, we came so close to utter extermination -and it was his decision-”

“He had to do something! We didn’t begin the war!”

“Nobody began the war. It was always going to happen. It all started with sex.”

“… It’s so like you to say something like that.”

“I’m more observant than most. Haven’t you heard the stories, or was that dirty Death Eating propaganda? We started out different races, wizards and Muggles. Mudbloods and Squibs didn’t happen. And then we began to breed, and aberrations started occurring. How can a magical child be properly accepted into a Muggle family, or vice versa? They were changelings, and they bred hatred. Maybe people can accept a wizard in a tower, but nobody can accept one of their own flesh and blood being given something they can never match or understand-”

“Petunia.”

“What?”

“Nothing.”

“What you people never understood was that it wasn’t like racism. Racism is the hatred that comes from unfair division of their world, more land, more rights, something that can be solved. Ours is another world, and they can’t touch it, we can’t ever give it to them and they can’t do anything but resent it and covet it and hate us, and we can’t do anything but fear them because they are so many. We were hunted once, and we had to hide until we became myths, and then well-meaning fools broke a hole in our cover and took in children who could betray us, and tried to make us believe that wizards never burned!”

“Hermione would never have betrayed us. She deserved to be in our world. She was a witch.”

“She shouldn’t have been! There shouldn’t ever have been a mingling. It wasn’t safe. You people always despised us for the importance we put on pure blood -it meant being safe. You want to know why I’m not being driven mad by the Dementors? I was born in a place that was bleak and waiting for war. The enemy was always within the gates for us, the magics used to protect us for generations had to be hidden under the dining room floor as our own kind turned against us and finally your merciful leader laid us all bare!”

“What are you saying?”

“I know all about grimness. I know all about fear. My father taught me we were in mortal danger before Voldemort ever rose again. Those Dementors can barely touch me. My memory is as tainted as our whole world.”

“We’re not in mortal danger.”

“Oh yes we are. Every moment of our lives. And you know it, you’ve always known it. That’s why it was good, because the endless hiding was over and we could fight. It’s always been us against them, and that was why it was simple, and that’s why it was clean.”

“I said it was better. I didn’t say it was right.”

“Nothing’s ever right. There’s no way to make any of it right.”

“And nobody’s to blame, is that it?”

“Oh, everyone is to blame. Always.”

“Dumbledore made a mistake. But he paid.”

“We all pay. We all bleed. And everything stays wrong, every mistake everyone ever made

stays with us, we fought a war against them and we fought with each other and we all keep bleeding.”

“Malfoy? Did you… did you like the war against them more?”

“Certainly I did. If you’ll recall, it was the only one I won.”

“… Of course.” *quietly* “I was -looking forward to coming here. I wanted to.”

“And now you wish you hadn’t.”

“No. No. I prefer hearing you say it to thinking it. At least you’re able to bring it out in the light.”

“I have more time to think. You have to build bars for yourself. I have mine provided for me. And you’re not resigned. You still have to live.”

“Do I?”

pragmatically “Not that it can be much of a life, if you look forward to coming here. Well. At least it means you make the effort to dress somewhat decently.”

“Couldn’t drive a man to suicide, could I? Didn’t want that on my conscience too.”

“Indeed. And the cut is irreproachable. Just steer clear of olive in future, that’s all I’m saying.”

“I’ll keep it in mind.”

“Have you talked to Parvati yet?”

“I -no.”

“You should. Go to her, explain. Take a walk in a park with her. You can, why don’t you fucking well enjoy it?”

“Is this you being kind?”

“Is this you being desperate?”

soft knock on the door

“Give me a minute.”

“Get lost, Potter. You can’t bargain with Dementors.”

*

Part 5: *soft sound of a door opening*

“Jesus, Potter. What happened?”

dully “Hello, Malfoy.”

“Sit down and tell me what happened.”

“… It was Angelina.”

softly “Who’s Angelina?”

“Angelina Johnson. She was on my Quidditch team at school. She married -she married Fred

Weasley a few weeks before-”

“One of those war weddings. Little exercises in futile hope and masochism.”

“She loved him.”

“So?”

“She loved him! And he died. And she kept fighting and we won and I thought she was -I

thought she was all right. I never went to see her, I didn’t want to think about any of it… And

she killed herself. She did it two days ago, and they only just found her. I don’t want to

understand why she did it. The war is over and things are supposed to be right and we're all

supposed to be so grateful-"

"You do understand it, though. That's almost the worst part."

"… Yes."

"It never works the way it's supposed to. It's never like anybody dreamed or promised. It's

terrible for you, isn't it? You like things to be so simple. Like a children's story. You want

the happy ever after."

"Didn't you? Is all you've ever thought of complicated?"

"All I've ever known or expected."

pause

quietly "I should have gone to see her."

“But you didn’t. And now it’s too late. Is that how you want to see it? There it is; that’s simple.” simple.”

“I try to stay away from them. All of them. It’s too hard to be around them. Nobody ever talks about it, any of it, and there’s nothing but empty spaces where people should be and empty spaces when the dead should be talking and empty beds where people have to lie alone and empty eyes which make you think…”

“Yes?”

“What if it’s us who died, and we don’t know it? And that’s where all the old vitality went, and we can’t touch the living and all we do is linger around in grey silence and pretend, and never speak of how we died. The dead seem so much more alive sometimes. Some nights -I could reach out and touch them. Fred. Ginny. But I couldn’t… I couldn’t reach out to Angelina.”

“It’s a quaint thought. Very pretty and melancholic. But it’s just battle fatigue, survivors’ guilt, destroyed nerves and a lack of -strength. To carry on. To rebuild.”

“It’s that simple.”

pause, soft laugh “No.” *another pause* “Oh, I remember this.”

“What?”

“The way your mind works. You can be so endlessly thick, and I can see the truth so much more often than you, but you keep looking, and then -just now and then -you can shoot it through the heart and show it to everyone. It’s a gift.”

“Lucky me.”

“I didn’t mean for you.” *pause* “What were you going to be?”

“What d’you mean?”

“If the war hadn’t happened. Haven’t you ever played this game? If there had been no war, and there had been nothing to stop you from doing what you wanted -what would you have wanted?”

“Oh. I don’t know. Maybe I would’ve been a professional Quidditch player. Or an Auror. I was fifteen -it was half way through fifth year when the war began. I was young, I didn’t have much time to plan. But I do remember wanting… a home. I never really had one. I kind of wanted that -dream home, you know. The one in picture books. With honeysuckle on the walls and a dog and the people you love.” *pause* “Something simple. What would you have wanted?”

“Oh, I always wanted a thousand things. You know me. I had a dozen different plans when I was fifteen -doctor tailor sailor soldier sailor gentleman apothecary thief. It’s a shame only one of them worked out. The problem was to stop wanting things, to choose. Except it was never necessary, was it?”

“Would it ever have been?”

“Of course not. We don’t have many choices. You would have grown up and done what Dumbledore suggested, what Ron Weasley was doing. You would have married Ginny Weasley and never have remembered that none of it was your idea. And I would have inherited the family fortune and followed the tradition of my ancestors and married Pansy,

“Of course not. We don’t have many choices. You would have grown up and done what Dumbledore suggested, what Ron Weasley was doing. You would have married Ginny Weasley and never have remembered that none of it was your idea. And I would have inherited the family fortune and followed the tradition of my ancestors and married Pansy,

and had an heir I wouldn’t have quite known how to bring up right. People are so good at hiding the fact they’re unique.”

“Oh, but this is the game where there’s nothing to stop you doing exactly what you want.”

“Hmm. You’re right. Maybe it would have been something to do with Muggles.”

“What?”

“You know how I love to feel superior. If I’d associated with Muggles, I could have felt

superior all the time. It would have been a kick. Maybe I would have been a male model.”

“A male model. You?”

“I could have been! I’m pretty. Don’t you think I’m pretty?”

“Your face is too pointy.”

“I. Have. Fine. And. Aristocratic. Bones.”

“They’re pointy. And you’re a bit on the thin side, quite frankly.”

“You are so one to talk!”

“I’m not expressing the desire to market my beauty to the world.”

“It was just an idea! All right. I could have been an actor.”

“Can you act?”

“I expect so, I never tried. The point is, I always wanted something -oh, huge and bright and

spectacular.”

“And involving you getting a lot of attention and your picture taken.”

modestly “Well. If it had to be… I could have borne it. For my art.”

soft laughter “God. I -I like to see you. You still seem so alive.”

“Isn’t that ironic. The man whose life is over.”

“No. I mean -you’re only twenty-one. You’re so -in control.”

“I’m not in control. I’m in prison. And they’ll never let me out, not in a hundred years. I’m going to spend the rest of my life in a cell, and everyone I love is dead. There’s no way for me to be strong and rebuild my life. There’s nothing but -these walls, and the nightmares. Forever. So -stop being stupid.”
going to spend the rest of my life in a cell, and everyone I love is dead. There’s no way for me to be strong and rebuild my life. There’s nothing but -these walls, and the nightmares. Forever. So -stop being stupid.”

“I… Sorry.”

“You can still be alive, though. Have you contacted Parvati yet?”

“No.”

“It’s August. Go on a summer holiday, for God’s sake. Ask her to go with you -she will. Go take a walk on a beach by a foreign sea and drink some cocktails and eat an obscene amount of fruit.”

“Trying to get rid of me?”

“Oh yes, Potter, that’s it. I have no time for you anymore. You know we have therapy sessions together. We prisoners are assigned partners and we have to give each other hearty talks. Isn’t it a brilliant idea of Fudge Junior’s?”

“Almost as brilliant as him deciding to build an enormous marble monument rather then

trying to rebuild people's homes."

"Funny isn't it. How at the end of the war, the rats seem to be the only ones who come out victorious… and fat. But my point is, I receive all the fun I could possibly want from my weekly conversations with Confucius the ogre. Oh, you should see it, Potter. It's a feast of reason and a flow of souls."

"I see I'm now entirely unnecessary."

"It brings tears to my eyes sometimes. 'How's it going?' I say brightly. And he grunts. 'You're looking a bit peaky lately. You're half the ungodly monster you were,' I continue blithely. He grunts. 'Had any news of the wife and spawn?' I ask. He grunts. 'Isn't this intellectually stimulating?' I query. He grunts and gives me this horrifyingly blank stare. I stare back at him in quiet horror and squeak, 'Please don't hurt me.' He grunts."

"I'm sure you two are kindred spirits beneath the surface. Still, two conversations a week doesn't sound all that taxing."

"Two conversations? What are you talking about? I talk to myself all day long. I keep myself amused with my witty repartee and sparkling rejoinders. I amaze myself with my own viciousness in gossip. I never seem to stop talking, I require almost twenty-four-hour entertainment."

"Still, I don't see how your advice is helping you. Unless you're not quite as selfish as you like to believe."

“Oh, I’m more selfish than the devil himself. At least he cares what people do with their souls.”

“So what’s in it for you?”

“It annoys me, to see people wasting their lives. Not doing what I’d do if I had mine. And…”

“What?”

silence

“Malfoy.”

snarl “You can’t imagine what it means, Potter. To simply hear another human voice. To

have some company, to articulate what you feel until you can feel it properly again. I told you everyone I love is dead, you know I’m cut off here from anything like humanity. I knew what would happen when I went in here. I knew I was dead. If I start feeling alive again -if I start needing-”

“Malfoy…”

savagely “I don’t want it! I can’t be connected again, I won’t let myself. It’s too much like living and I can’t do that, I don’t want to try and then end up -do you hear me, Potter? I don’t

want to be attached to anything. I can’t bear it. I’m here, I’m dead, and that’s the way it has to be, so why can’t you let me rot here in peace!”

“And if your life is so completely over, why don’t you do what Angelina did!”

“I’m too fucking stubborn!”

pause “That’s always been your problem.”

“Please, Potter. This is so futile. Please, please go away. Don’t ever come back.”

“It’s been… a long time since I wanted something I could have. Last night I had one of those

dreams and I woke up screaming and I -I wished you were there."

"In your bedroom? Without a chaperon? You shock me, Potter. I am not that kind of girl."

"Fuck off, Malfoy, this isn't funny. I want to see you."

"Well, I can't stop you, can I? I'm a prisoner here. I can't go to a foreign beach or buy my

own socks or be out when you drop by. That's why I seem in control, because I have to seem in control, because I'm utterly helpless in here and I can't turn you out and I can't leave the room and I can't do anything except ask you to please, for God's sake, leave me alone."

"I -damn it, I can't say no and you know it. If that's what you really want."

"It's what I have to have."

"I'll go. I'm -sorry."

"Call Parvati."

“Malfoy, will you-” -”

“Please. Go.”

*

Part 6: *soft sound of a door opening*

“Potter, I told you-”

sound of a body hitting bars

“Oh my God. Get up, Potter.” *pause, then steps* “Hey. Hey, what’s the matter?”

pause

“You can’t sit here like this forever, you know. They’ll kick you out. So -ow!”

“I did what you said.”

“Ow ow ow.”

“I did what you said. I went to Parvati and I apologised for scaring her and I tried to explain I tried to explain why I had. I tried to tell her -about some of it, tried to let any of it out and she kissed me.”

“You lucky bastard. Ow.”

trembling voice “She kissed me just to stop me talking. Do you know what that feels like, to see that in someone’s eyes -she can’t bear to remember the names of the dead, can’t stand to let me speak them, she would rather offer up her body to smother the truth and hide away all we suffered and all we were and just have some cheap comfort and -God, the silence. It’s worse than the silence of people who died, the silence of people who should be able to speak of them -with love.”

“Sometimes people aren’t strong enough.”

“Well they should be! That kind of weakness is too horrible. And then when I was leaving she told me to go see my family. My -family. And I did, and it’s sick what kind of things you do for some comfort, and you’d told me never to come back. I went back to the Dursleys. I’d sworn never to do that, to revisit the fucking indignity of childhood. I swore. And there I was looking through the windows of Privet Drive and watching them. My cousin Dudley is my age, and he had his wife with him, and she’s pregnant, and ugly, and he’s disgustingly fat, and they and my aunt and uncle -they’re lolling around in comfortable, undisturbed complacency, they’re happy and they’ve been happy for six years while I was in hell, and I know them. They’re miserable people, petty, grinding, malicious little people who revel in

tiny contemptible acts of cruelty. And they're happy. And I looked in, and I thought about living there, and I thought about what they are, and what the Muggles did to all of us, and -I came so close to killing them. It seemed so right. God, I wanted to do it!"

iny contemptible acts of cruelty. And they're happy. And I looked in, and I thought about living there, and I thought about what they are, and what the Muggles did to all of us, and -I came so close to killing them. It seemed so right. God, I wanted to do it!"

"But you didn't do it."

harshly "But I still want to do it! And I can't go to some foreign beach and join them, all those smug people glorying in how comfortable they are, turning their faces away from everyone who was ever in pain and who ever disturbed their smooth, heartless, horrible lives! I don't -is that the price, for any sort of peace? To forget them all like Parvati has, to never speak their names, not to care any more about -about those ideas that died with them? I just… I can't do it. But I don't want to live like this, I don't want to keep waking up screaming at the shadows, I don't want to hate everyone. I just want to feel -not so alone. I

want to talk with somebody who understands. It's the only company that I can bear and I can't bear being like this, and-"

"All right. Hush."

"I want to be with you. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand!"

"Then don't send me away again!"

"It didn't work very well this time, did it? I won't. All right? I won't."

"You're such a bastard, Malfoy."

"You're crushing my hand, Potter."

deep breath “Sorry.”

“Well, it’s all right. I understand that my company and conversation hold irresistible charms.

Mind, I take none of this as an excuse for not sleeping with Parvati Patil. I despair of you.”

“Sod off, Malfoy.”

“Murderous impulses, okay. Turning down a saucy, sherbet-bearing Patil -that’s just sick.”

“I don’t even like sherbet.”

“Everybody likes sherbet. You’re shivering, did you know that? And you’re even thinner

than you were. I look better than you, and I am a wretched prisoner and I refuse food most days because the stuff is pigswill.”

“They wouldn’t let me in before visiting hours.”

“How long were you -no, don’t tell me, I don’t even want to know. Sometimes I think your stupidity knows no bounds.”

“At least I don’t have some kind of weird and perverted fixation on sherbet.”

“Don’t knock it till you’ve tried it, Potter. My entire life would have been brightened if you

could have come here with a report of a Patil twin and sherbet.” *exaggerated sigh* “Well. Since you’re here, you can tell me something else.”

“What?”

“How’re the Cannons doing in the League?”

startled laugh “I don’t know. I haven’t been following Quidditch.”

“Really. How… unlike you. All right, are there any good new songs? I’m very fond of the

Wyrd Sisters. Weren’t they supposed to be doing some new ones?”

“I don’t know that either.”

“You useless prat, Potter. I can just imagine what you’ve been up to most of the time. ‘Dear

Diary-’”

“I don’t keep a diary.”

“‘Dear Diary, which I am too boring to actually keep -Today I lay on my bed, stared at the

wall, obsessed over my bad memories, felt random depression, skipped breakfast, lunch and dinner, was driven by utter tedium to lurid fantasies of Sybil Trelawney. Am angst-ridden. Woe!’”

“I could never be bored enough to fantasise about Professor Trelawney. And I did more than that. Once I bought socks.”

“I am silenced. Your life is a frenzied social whirl.”
“I remembered what you said about not being able to. I tried to appreciate that.” *pause* “It didn’t work, but then I was starting off really, incredibly small. Next I think I’ll try cocktails.”

“You bought socks because I can’t.”
“Yes. Envy my wild, sock-purchasing good times.”
“You are a deeply strange person, Potter. My mother warned me about sock purchasers.

‘Steer clear of them, Draco,’ she said. ‘They can’t be trusted. They think they can control the socks, but in the end, the socks control them. The socks always win.’”
“I can quit any time I like.”

“Keep telling yourself that. And go to a Cannons game. I want to know how they’re doing.”
“I went to one once. When the team had just been set back up. I just kept thinking about how happy Ron would have been and I couldn’t stay because he wasn’t there, I couldn’t-”

“Go to another one. You might not want to forget the dead. There’s no reason to let the deamight not want to forget the dead. There’s no reason to let the dead

consume you. And -God. This is another reason why you shouldn’t have come.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’m talking about you, Potter. I’m talking about who you are. I’m talking about what you were like -when we were both kids. I could see it, everyone could see it, the way you’d obviously been lonely all your life and the way you clung like a limpet to things now you were offered them. You were eleven years old and you were willing to die for it, because you were so starry-eyed and in love with this new kind world and your friends and your mentor figure and your thousand ideals of decency and goodness. But you can’t keep doing it.”

“Doing what?” *bitterly* “I don’t have much belief left.”

“I know that! That’s what I’m saying. You had all that faith, and it was so necessary to you, and it was burned away inch by inch. That’s why some days you want to die. Because you don’t know how to live without it, all that shining devotion, and… I’m saying you don’t have enough of that belief left to waste. You’re too close to the edge, and if you -if you believe in me, I’ll break you.”

soft laughter “And this is Draco Malfoy, more selfish than the devil.”

“Shut up, Potter. I’m serious. I’m dead, dead to all intents and purposes, and you have to stop living with the dead. Everybody bleeds, but this is draining yourself dry. You set yourself up for one more betrayal and -God -it’ll shatter you. I’ll shatter you. Is that what you want?”

“You’re not so bad.”

“You’re an utterly delusional fool. Don’t do this. Let go of my hand. Why should you, what could I possibly be to you? I was a Death Eater, I killed, I was the evil-minded brat you hated in school. There’s no reason to put yourself on the line for me.”

“Malfoy-“

“I’m nothing to you. And if you’re fucking stupid and you get attached for nothing -I’m telling you there’s no way to stop getting ripped to shreds. I’ll owe you for your life, and that’s not a debt I want to have!”

“Malfoy-”

“You’re going to be destroyed-”

“Malfoy! Stop ranting and listen to me.”

“I’m not ranting-”

“You’re always ranting. Listen. You know how, when those enchanted bombs came…”

“Yes.”

“The ones with the Boggarts in them, the spells that could make you think you were crawling through your own mother’s entrails…”

“Yes, damn you! Your side threw them too. Stop.”

“All anyone could do was close their eyes and think of something else, some image to hold against it. Ride through the nightmare and try to reach the other side. And everyone said the same thing. That there was always just one image in the end. One thing. A scene of childhood or a beautiful view or -or something.”

“Yes.”

“You.”

“What?”

“You. That night with the moths. In the officers’ -in the officers’ tent. Everyone was filthy and cold and afraid for their lives. I felt grim as if I’d seen the whole world die. And you still cared about the moths-”

-in the officers’ tent. Everyone was filthy

and cold and afraid for their lives. I felt grim as if I’d seen the whole world die. And you still cared about the moths-”

“It was a whim-”

“You just -you just leaned your forehead against the glass of the lamp, and laughed. You laughed and sounded almost kind when I said, ‘Who cares about the moths?’ You said ‘I care,’ and you laughed again, and it was very soft, and the light was so pale. And your hair

looked silver and your eyes looked gold, and the world seemed all turned upside down. And then you blew the lamp out.”

beat

“That’s what else you were. That image. You don’t -you don’t owe me a thing.”

“I see.”

“It’s time. I’d better go.”

quick steps, soft thud of the door shutting

deep breath “Christ.”

*

Part 7: *soft sound of a door opening*

“Potter-”

slam of a door closed “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Snape’s estate. I’ve been helping with it. He left behind so many papers -McGonagall

needed my help, and what else did I have to do? And besides -I remembered how you liked him. I thought there might be something, a keepsake, that you’d like, and then -Malfoy, I found the letters.”

“Oh. You did.”

“How could you not tell them at your trial? How could you let yourself be buried alive in here when you’re not guilty?”

“I am guilty.”

“Don’t pull this shit with me, Malfoy. I read the letters! I know you were a spy!”

“I was a spy. And I was a Death Eater.”

“What are you talking-”

“You think I wanted to serve Voldemort? You think I’m that -I’m that stupid, to sell my soul in service of that warped, disgusting remnant of humanity. Do you think I could ever have followed that twisted hypocrite, who killed people for having the same sort of blood which ran through his veins? I’m not a sycophant, I’m not anyone’s cringing lapdog. When did you ever see me completely without pride? When did I ever go crawling after people who were stronger than me or hurt me? I lead, Potter. I always have. And was never insane enough to support him.”

softly “God, Malfoy… why didn’t you tell me…”

“I’m not done yet. You weren’t the only one who thought the war would end with Voldemort's death.”

“What has that got to do with-”

quietly “That was something, Potter. I was there. You were the hero everyone knew you were going to be. Voldemort had you both cornered, two scared helpless boys of nineteen, and then when Weasley fell… Nobody’ll ever know how you did it, will they? Maybe not even you. I don’t know what you did, I didn’t hear the spell, I could barely see you lunge

forward but we could all see it was unstoppable and you did it, you did it, and I thought -and everyone thought -that it was that simple, and that beautiful, and -and over."

muted tones "So did I."

"But it wasn't over. There was no chance of pleading the Imperius Curse now, not with the sheer bitterness and terror raised by war. The Death Eaters and everyone they loved were going to be stamped out with the utter lack of mercy showed by the righteous and enraged."

"We had a right to-"

"Children from Death Eater families were killed, you know. They threw Pansy's sister on the fire, said it was in her blood. She was five years old."

"People were insane with grief. Worse had happened on the other side-"

"Don't think that can wash you clean. Don't think anything can wash any of us clean. I'm just telling you the truth. We were scared out of our minds -and we'd been organised into an army."

"Don't say 'we.' You weren't one of-"

"Oh yes, I was! That's what I'm trying to tell you. I never followed Voldemort. No. But my father took command. He was -even more unscrupulous than I can be, and he was pragmatic enough to crawl when he had to, but… I loved him. I was loyal to him. It was my family on

the line, my friends, all the people I loved. And do you think I'd ever been crazy about any of your sanctimonious leaders, ever believed in your stupidity about the Muggleborn? You think I liked them any better after I had to fight them for my life? The answer is no. I gave up being a spy. I fought for the other side, I did unimaginable things, I wanted to win. I'm just what you always thought me. I was a Death Eater, all right. And I'd be one again."
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your sanctimonious leaders, ever believed in your stupidity about the Muggleborn? You think I liked them any better after I had to fight them for my life? The answer is no. I gave up being a spy. I fought for the other side, I did unimaginable things, I wanted to win. I'm just what you always thought me. I was a Death Eater, all right. And I'd be one again."

ragged "All of them died. It didn't make any difference, and you're rotting in prison now. Do you regret it?"

"Yes. And as I said, I'd do it again! They were the people I loved. I was fighting for their lives -and I was fighting for power, and what we all believed in. I made my choice. I'm paying the price."

"All right."

"Don't look at me like that. I'm not any kind of hero. They took Snape in, you know that. They had to have information. He was kind to me, he was -my secret leader, I -respected him. I think he loved me. I stood outside the gates and guarded them while he was being tortured. I heard him screaming and I was sick, but I still let it happen! I wanted to win. I was a Death Eater. It wasn't a pretence. Do you understand?"

shakily “Yes.”

“You don’t want to hear more? You don’t want to hear proof? I led that squad which left Granger in a coma and her companions dead. I took the plans Snape gave me when I was his spy and I used them for the other side, and we stormed the headquarters under Rosmerta’s bar and then we bolted them all in and burned it. People burned alive screaming, and it couldn’t have happened without me, and tell me, Potter, what do you want now?”

tightly “I want to kill you.”

“And what do you think I want to do to you? When I think that without you, we would have won that war. My father and mother would be alive, my friends would be alive, Pansy would be alive, I wouldn’t be trapped in here like an animal in a cage… do you think I can’t look at you, and think of it all, and want you dead?”

“I wouldn’t blame you.”

“Oh, but you do blame me. And I blame you. And we can’t ever forgive each other, there isn’t any forgiveness, and look at you, Potter, snarling and red in the face and wanting to kill me so much you can taste it, do you feel alive now?”

“Yes!”

“I thought you might. Good feeling, isn’t it? Why don’t you keep it.”

“I -God, you’re such a bastard.”

“I know.”

“It does change things. Knowing that.”

“Oh no, it doesn’t. If you’ll think about it, it doesn’t make any sense for me to have followed Voldemort. You knew me, at least a little. I can see that you did. You just never applied what you knew. You never had even an elementary grasp of logic, Potter. It’s lucky that you didn’t take Arithmancy.”

“I liked maths at school. I could have been all right at Arithmancy.”

“You could have been better at it than you were at Divination, anyway. I still say you only passed exams by using your dubious charms on Trelawney.”

“I wish you’d stop bringing up that disturbing image.”

“I’m telling you. If we’d ever taken our OWLs or NEWTs, you would’ve gotten your come uppance. Served you right for picking such pathetic subjects.”

“Oh, like you were the master of subject choices. You seemed to adore Care of Magical Creatures.”

“I would have liked it just fine if it had been a proper class instead of a howling lunatic trying to feed me to his various blood-hungry familiars.”

“Hagrid was a great man.”

“He was… your first casualty, wasn’t he.”

“Yes.”

lightly “Went to the giants with his girlfriend, and when he proposed that they join

Dumbledore… when he came in peace and goodwill… they tore him to pieces. Could make you despair.”

“It could. Like you said -there’s no forgiveness.”

“So what can there be?”

pause “How about a truce?”

laughter “Oh, Potter. Oh, the way your mind works. How do you do it? I never met anyone but you who cared about things more than I did. You care so much that even when you’re in despair and you think you’ve stopped caring, you care passionately about that. I was right before. You’re a secret weapon in the hands of the Dementors, and you scare me senseless. You might make even me buy in on your delusions, and start to feel like I’m not dead.”

“If I’m so scary… do you want me to leave?”

thoughtfully “No. No, I don’t think so.”

pause

“Did you love her?”

“Who?”

“Pansy.”

“Oh. Yes I did.”

pause “In love with her?”

“I don’t… know. I knew her for years. She was -funny, easy to be with, she loved me. I would have died for her. I know that much. We were going to get married. Everybody wanted it. But -I wasn’t faithful to her. And if you mean did she make my heart race and my dreams tangle around her and keeping her seem more necessary than breathing… no.”

“... I just wondered.”

“So, Potter. A truce. You think it’s doable?”

“I think it could work.” *pause* “The Cannons are second in the league, by the way.”

knock on the door

irritably “Could you go away?”

“I’m sorry, Mr Potter, but there’s been an Owl for you. I ran all the way up from the guardhouse... It’s about Miss Granger.”

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Part 8: *soft sound of a door opening*

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…

…

“Mmf. Mrbmble. I -Potter! How long have you been here for?”

softly “A while.”

crossly “Why didn’t you wake me? I’m sure watching me sleep is not a terribly exciting

activity.”

“You looked peaceful.”

“I was bored enough to fall asleep in the middle of the day. I was peaceful as a coma victim.

Which speaking of -congratulations.”

soft, happy “Thanks. She’s -she’s doing well. Once she was out, we could help her. She’s walking again, and with her parents. I thought -I thought my heart was going to burst when I first saw her.”

-she’s doing well. Once she was out, we could help her. She’s

walking again, and with her parents. I thought -I thought my heart was going to burst when I first saw her.”

“Happy ever after, hm?”

“I -oh no, notthat way. But -I am happy, at least. I’m grateful for this. Oh. And I have something for you.”

“I get to join in the general festivities? How marvellous.”

“Well. They wouldn’t let me bring in anything but paper. But it’s the lyrics of all the Weird

Sisters’ new songs. I thought you might like it.”

“… I wish you wouldn’t do this.”

“What?”

“Come in here, with fragile hope in your eyes and -looking better, and make me hate you.

Make me think of what I’d do, if I had one of them given back to me, and make me want to kill you… and then make me not hate you. Maybe. As well.”

“I didn’t -mean to make you think of -anyone. I’m sorry.”

“It’s not your fault. Thank you for the music.” *quietly* “It was kind of you.”

“I’m not kind. I wanted to.”

pleasantly “Why are you here, Potter?”

“I… I want to be here.”

“And why is that? I understood before. You wanted a link to your old life, a link that was strong enough and wouldn’t break. I understand that -I was your best bet. But now you have Granger back, almost from the dead. She loves you and you love her and it’s a miracle, and all you should be doing is thanking God on your knees by her bedside and feeling -happy and saved and oh, so free. So what are you doing here?”

“I don’t know! Did you expect me to just forget about you?”

“Why not?”

“Well, I didn’t! Yeah, it is a miracle, and yeah, I’m happy, and I wanted -to share it with

you. I wanted to bring the music. I wanted to come!”

“But why? Damn you, it’s a simple question. Can’t you answer it?”

“What do you want from me?”

pause, low laughter “Ohhh, and that’s rather amusingly not the answer.”

“Don’t talk in fucking riddles, Malfoy. God, you are so infuriating.”

“Oh, you love it. Riddle me this, Potter… Come closer.”

“… Why?”

“To hand me the music, of course. I’d love to have a look.”

steps

smoothly “Thanks so much.” *knock of a wrist against bars*

“Malfoy, let go.”

“No, I don’t think so.”

“Malfoy, what the hell are you thinking?”

silkily “I’m thinking I’m oh, so tired of this. Hmmm. Potter, how many men have you

killed?”

“Wh -I don’t know.”

purring “Hundreds. Thousands, maybe? You ripped Millicent to shreds. Oh, there’s so

much blood on these hands. And you liked shedding it, you know you did, oh, you always liked exacting savage revenge with your own hands. And God knows what all that blood has done to the darkest, most rotten recesses of your soul. You’re even afraid of what you might be, aren’t you? You ruthless, murdering bastard.”

“You’re one to talk.”

“I didn’t glory in it like you did. I don’t wake up wanting it now. And I really am a much

more well-rounded personality."

"You're well-rounded like a spike, Malfoy. Let go of me!"

"On one hand oh, so full of black rage, capable of anything. And then…" *sing-song voice*

"There was a war on for five years. I didn't have time to think about romance. That charmingly befuddled boy, oh so sweet, oh so awkward. At home in the torture chamber, but not in the bedroom. Doesn't even know what he wants."

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Maybe so. I know why you're here. Want me to tell you?"

"Fuck off, Malfoy."

"Shhh. Language, Potter. If your mother's brain wasn't dust, what would she think? No,

shhhh, shhh. You're going to listen now, Potter. You're not as stupid as I thought you were.

You didn't come here for consolation or conversation. Oh, no. What did you think you were telling me, coming here week after week?"

"I don't know-"

calmly "Shut the fuck up, Potter, please. Draco's talking here. You think that's normal, Potter? Oh, I'd like to read your diary, oh, I want to tell you all my troubles, oh don't send me away again, oh your eyes, oh your hair… I know why you remember that camp, back when we were younger, I know why you remember the bloody moths! So… tell me, Potter… why I shouldn't point out the painfully obvious, and stop all this… tiresome… shit."

swallow "Back off, Malfoy."

deliberately "Hmmm. No." *step in*

faltering "Malfoy, what are-"

"Shhhh." *soft, wet sound*

feebly "Malfoy, you just -you just-"

throaty, amused "I just licked your upper lip, Potter. Pay attention. I would have kissed

you, but it's a bit tricky manoeuvring with these bars. I think I got my point across -with just the lightest touch of kink. Now I'm going to do the lower lip… slower."

soft, wet, prolonged sound

heavy breathing “Malfoy… I… you…”

“Potter, you look like a virgin who’s just been touched in naughty places. Try for a bit more coherence, there’s a good chap.”

soft sound of fingers trailing down cotton

rasp of breath, forehead against bars “Malfoy, what are -what are you doing?”

“I would have thought that was obvious. But if you want some kind of details… if you want some sort of game plan… I’m taking a detour in the general vicinity of your nipples. Do you like it?”

“I… I…”

“Be assured, I’m not planning to stop there.”

“God, Malfoy!”

“I doubt he was one. I’ve heard they’re all rotten to the core. And now you know that’s true, don’t you, Potter, so I think now I’ll let go of your wrist and you can run out of here with a scream and your outraged innocence.”

pause

“Potter, that was your cue to leave.”

pause

low voice “Potter, get away from the bars, or I’m going to do it again.”

strained “Don’t look at me like that. I’m trying to think.”

“What does that mean?”

snapped “I can’t think when you look at me like that!”

“Oh, no? How about when I touch you?”

pause

“Potter, are you going to move away from the bars or not!”

“… no.”

pause

knock on the door

“Go away! We’re busy in here!”

“What?! Shut up, Potter, no we’re not! That knock on the door means get lost, and I trust

when you’ve recovered your senses you’ll see the wisdom of that-”

“Oh, God. All right, I’m going. I’m going. I’ll be back next week. Draco-”

“That’s not my name!”

“… yes it is.”

“Well, yes it is, I mean, obviously, it’s my name, I hadn’t forgotten, it’s what I was

christened and all that, but in the sense of ‘that’s what you call me,’ Potter, that definitely is

not my name!”

“Anyway, what I’m saying is we need to talk. So I’ll be back-”

“Don’t be. It is not the path of wisdom. Potter, will you listen to me! Potter, I’m telling you not to-”

sound of a door closing

“Potter! Potter! Oh… God.”

*

Part 9: *soft sound of a door opening*

softly “Hi, Draco.”

“Here you are, then. I suppose it won’t be any good telling you should leave?”

“Nah.”

“Nice shirt. Should I take it that you dressed up for me?”

mutter “Yes.”

“Perfect! Just perfect. Well, now you’re here -what do you want?”

mumble

“I can’t hear you.”

pause “Can -can I touch you?”

pause

“You don’t… waste time, do you, Potter? Well. Yes, of course you can.”

steps, clink of a watch against bars

“What -what are you doing?”

“I’m sorry. Is this not right?”

“It’s not that, it’s -why are you stroking my neck?”

“I like it. It -I like looking at it. It’s soft.”

“Oh.”

whisper sound of fingers against hair “I’ve been thinking about you all week.”

relaxed, lazy “Hmm?”

“Yes.” *clink of glasses against bars* *small soft sound of a kiss*

“Oh.”

low, tender “Yeah. Oh.” *quietly* “I love you.”

jump back “Oh God. Oh God. You’ve lost your mind. Get out of my cell! Maniac.”

indulgent “Come back here.”

“Ha! Ha! Muahahaha… ha… Do I look crazy to you?”

“Well, slightly. When you’re cackling like that. Come back here, Draco.” *pause* “Please.”

pause *steps*

“I am insane.”

clink of a watch against bars “Yeah. But it looks good on you.”

“Everything looks good on me. Even this appalling prison garment. Nevertheless, I am not looking my best, nor am I at my most physically accessible, so I’d like to know what the hell you think you’re doing.”

“You were right. I’ve been thinking about it.”

“I am utterly unsurprised at the thought of my being right in any and all situations. And I absolutely refuse to believe, given current evidence, that you can think.”

“Hush up, you talk too much. I like it, of course, but I have something to say and we only have an hour a week. You were right about the camp, but I didn’t realise -I -how could I? But I do now -and I’m glad I do.”

“You’re mad mad mad… Oh, don’t.”

“Shhh. I’ve been thinking about you, about having something that feels right. I’ve been

thinking about what that would mean -to have someone -the right someone -to reach for after the nightmares. Something to make where I live seem like light and warmth and home."

"A very charming idea, I'm sure, but-"

voice sharpening "Shut up. You're very comfortable with the physical aspect of things, aren't you, Malfoy? But when it comes to emotional territory-"

"We're not in emotional territory! It takes two to territory!"

"Shut up and don't talk about things you don't understand. I didn't have nightmares last night, or the night before. I dreamed about you. And the night before that, I couldn't sleep at all, but I came to the prison and I stood on the hill outside, and I looked at your window."

"You can't see my window from the hill. I think you were looking at the window of Confucius the ogre."

"I want you to stop doing this."

“No, I want you to stop doing this! Listen to yourself, what the hell are you saying? Hearts and flowers, you’re so desperate for something sweet and light that you’ll dig yourself a grave looking for it. You come here all tremulous and honest and do you realise, this could be the last shred of honesty and dreams that you have, you can’t give it to me, do you know what I could do to you?”

this! Listen to yourself, what the hell are you saying? Hearts
and flowers, you’re so desperate for something sweet and light that you’ll dig yourself a grave looking for it. You come here all tremulous and honest and do you realise, this could be the last shred of honesty and dreams that you have, you can’t give it to me, do you know what I could do to you?”

“Yes!”

“You can’t -what?”

“Yes, I’ve thought about it. You have this image of me, Draco, and it’s so skewed, because that’s what you want to see. You want to see that boy who had all those high noble ideals, because you want to think that such things can survive after the war. Well, they can’t. I can only be like that… Sometimes. With you. And I know it wouldn’t always be like that, it’s not even always like that now! I know some days I’d look at you and see nothing but the blood you’ve shed, the blood your side shed, and your guilt and all the blackness.”

“That’s why-”

“I know sometimes it would be -we could be sharing a bed, and I would watch you sleep and

think you were beautiful, and then search under my pillow for a knife."

"You're twisted."

"So are you. Sometimes I would hate you, and there would be nothing to stop me from hurting you, I'd want it and I'd be able to do it and you'd deserve it, and the only reason I wouldn't do it would be because despite everything, I can't live without you!" *harsh breathing* "And you'd feel the same. I know that much. But it would all be right, because it wouldn't be a lie, and I wouldn't ever think you were dead in the darkness, because it would be real, flesh and bone and understanding, and it would be a life! The only life I can imagine having. And it would be hearts and flowers sometimes, and it would be blood and darkness sometimes, but it would be a life, and I have to have some kind of life. I have to have-"

shaken "You have to think-"

savagely "Don't argue with me! I want you. Do you understand that? And I don't much care what you say against it, or what I have to do. Is that unromantic enough for you? I want you. And I'm going to have you. This belongs to me, and no filthy Death Eater can take it away from me. Do you know what I've suffered, the pain and the blood and the filth… I've had a thousand nightmares. I can have this. You're mine."

"You are sick and extremely disturbed."

sound of a body being pulled hard against bars and a zipper being undone

low voice “Yes.”

gasping “Oh God. Potter, please, stop.”

still low “No. I want you there for me when I come home from work. I want to see you listening to the Weird Sisters. I want to walk out on you on Christmas Day and be so furious and upset that I slip on some ice and fall in the gutter and sit there cursing and screaming and still wanting you.”

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listening to the Weird Sisters. I want to walk out on you on Christmas Day and be so furious and upset that I slip on some ice and fall in the gutter and sit there cursing and screaming and still wanting you.”

movement, more gasping “Oh God.”

lower, and almost menacing “I admit it, is that what you wanted to hear last week? I didn’t even think about what I was doing, but I kept the image of you back in that camp, until it

became part of who I am. I’m set now, set in blood and steel, I can’t love anyone else, and I want to, I wish I could, I didn’t mean to memorise the curve of your throat…”

low moan “Please-”

tenderly, but still almost menacing “I am who I am and you are who you are. And it’s

twisted, and wrong, and I still want you. As my one pure thing and as my whore. I want you. Do you understand now?”

“Please!”

voice sinking lower than the moans “You’re beautiful.”

strained and breaking “My -my face is too pointy.”

“I know. You’re beautiful. When I was thinking about you, oh God, for years, when I was thinking about you every night…”

“… yes…”

murmuring “I didn’t know I was thinking about this. What you’d look like -right now just about to-”

“Yes…”

“I love you.”

“Yes!”

sagging against the bars, brush of the other hand over hair and skin

softly repeated “I love you.”

shakily “Your logic is compelling, Potter, but you overlook a few salient details. Such as

the fact that I’m incarcerated for life. I can’t even kiss you properly, let alone move in with you.”

“I’ll use some pull. I’ll use Snape’s letters. I’ll do anything I have to. I’ll work it out.”

“Oh, how lovely. My life will be flung into the palm of your hand just so I can be your sex toy.”

“If that was all you were, I’d kill you within the week.”

“You’ll want to.”

“Oh, yes. And you’ll want to. Almost every second of every day, I’ll see a knife in your

eyes.”

“What if you did get me out -and I did kill you?”

“Then you would.”

knock on the door

“I’ll be back next week. Don’t argue with me.”

“Even I sometimes get tired of wasting my breath.”

soft, sideways kiss “I love you.”

soft exhalation of breath, kiss back “You’re a fool.”

“Mmm.”

“Mmm.”

step back “Goodbye. Oh, and Draco?”

“Yes?”

“Clean yourself up.”

*

Part 10: *soft sound of a door opening*

“Draco -I’m so sorry.”

lazily “What? Why?”

“I… Oh God, you haven’t heard?”

“My gracious me, all the company I keep and I still can’t manage to catch all the gossip.

Shocking, isn’t it?”

“Draco, don’t. Draco -the Ministry -I showed them your letters, but they… They only took them as proof that you were a traitor. Not just an honourable enemy, but-”

“The wolf in the fold, the viper they nourished in their bosoms? Quite. Well, it was to be expected, I suppose. You know how unsettled things are, and they don’t have many scapegoats left. An officer, the son of the late leader of the notorious and noxious Death Eaters -a new scandal about him is bound to provide a distraction from the latest tax hike, isn’t it?”

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voice softening “So you don’t think -anything will happen to you?”

“A slap on the wrist, I expect. If I’m lucky, they’ll cut out my therapeutic sessions with

Confucius. Which would be a shame, since I think we had a breakthrough this week. He told me his name. I gently pointed out that it was on his door, but still.”

“I was -worried about you.”

coolly “Your concern is touching, Potter.”

“Say Harry.”

“No, I don’t think so.” *small grimace* “I think it’s time I stopped this embarrassing little

farce.”

“What?”

“It was amusing at first, but now it’s just descended into the realm of the -well, vile, and very disturbing. I really don’t want you to spout any more of the drivel you did last time.”

“You didn’t object last time!”

dryly “It’s hard to form a coherent argument when you’re being jerked off.” *pause* “Do you know how long it had been since anyone touched me, Potter? Can you blame me?”

“What have you done?”

“It wasn’t a concerted evil plot, for once. But you showed up, all wide-eyed and unbalanced and obviously, pathetically obsessed. And it had been months since someone touched me and you’re a good deal more appealing than Confucius the ogre.” *shrug* “What can I tell you?”

“You’re lying.”

“I was desperate.”

“You’re lying!”

“What reason do I have to lie? I had a reason then -not that I did. I didn’t have to. I just had to stand there and let you talk, and you couldn’t take your hands off me. You can remember, can’t you? Did I ever once echo one of your nauseating sentiments? At least I spared us that indignity.”

“Why should it have been an indignity?”

“Because it made my stomach turn to hear you! Knives in the fucking bed, what kind of mind comes up with those things? I don’t want to have this place -my last place -defiled with the rantings of a twisted pervert. Especially since it wasn’t even worth it.”

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“What -what do you mean?”

“Let me make myself painfully clear. I’ve done a much better job on myself. And with the restriction of bars, it was obvious that those amateurish fumblings were all I could expect. And… I thought it would be easier to pretend. I thought it couldn’t be too different. But the thought of returning the favour was sickening.”

“Malfoy, what the hell are you saying?”

savagely “I’m saying I like women, Potter. Girls. The ones with the breasts. I thought I’d just grab for what I could take, but the idea of rummaging around in your pants for your urgh, manly parts… while your eyes bulge and you mumble out some more disgusting fantasies… Let’s just say I don’t find it appealing.”

“You’re trying to send me away for my own good-”

“Of course I think it’d be psychologically healthier for you to stay away from me! But I’m not all that concerned with your mental health, Potter, which is a good thing since it seems

distinctly fragile to me. I just want you gone from my life. I can't take this any more."

"You're saying this because-"

hissed "I'm saying this because you make me ill, Potter! Why must you cherish this persistent delusion that I care about you? I don't. I never did. I never even said I did. I don't care what happens to you as long as you stay the hell away from me!"

"I can't!"

"I don't even want to look at you. I hate you. Which part of this do you not understand?"

heavy breathing "I can't -why would you-"

"I told you. I was desperately, painfully lonely. I would have done anything for a human touch. But for once in my life… I have to be honest. I can't do this. I don't want to."

"Malfoy, please-"

"Don't say please as if I could do something about it. I can't. I'm trapped in a cell already -I don't want to be trapped in your warped little fantasy. All I can do is remember my dead and

I don’t want to be touched by hands red with their blood. Your touch makes my skin crawl.crawl.I

don’t want it! I don’t want you.”

*half-way between a cry and a snarl * “All right!” *calming slightly* “Y ou’ve made your point.”

“Do you understand it?”

“I understand it.” *coldly* “Was it fun?”

“What?”

“Manipulating me. Watching me… letting me think -I -Was it fun? Did you enjoy it? Do you like it, that old medieval Muggle torture, tearing beating hearts out of chests and watching them slowly come to a stop and letting the victim watch too, and gasp as the blood leaks?”

“I’m not the one with the sick kicks here!”

“Could’ve fooled me.” *savagely* “I hate you.”

“Fine.”

“What?”

deliberately “I said ‘fine,’ Potter. As in ‘fine by me.’ See if I care. Your opinion means less

than nothing to me and all I want from you is your absence. Have I not made myself sufficiently clear?"

"Is being cruel your aim in life?"

"No, it's just my shiny life bonus."

"Would you stop it!" *harsh breathing* "Fine. I'll go. If that's what you want, I'll leave and I'll never come back."

steely “That’s what I want.”

“All right. I’m sorry I ever bothered with you."

“So am I.”

“I… Goodbye.” *clink of watch against bars* *pause* “It would be all right to take my hand.

It’s a -formal ceremony. A sealing of the goodbye. It isn’t that big a deal -no matter how much my touch sickens you.”

light, amused “Don’t be so touchy, Potter. I daresay it won’t kill me.”

brush of skin against skin, sudden clink of sharp metal against the bars

“I wouldn’t be so sure about that.”

attempt to pull away, shocked gasp

“Jesus, Potter, put away the knife! You’re not even supposed to have that in here!”

“Oh, I always make sure to have a weapon on me. Look -it’s even charmed not to set the alarm off. I owe you for that -you told me about it.”

“Take it away!”

“Tell me you love me.”

“… what?”

“I think you heard me.”

“Oh, I hear you, I just don’t understand you! What’s the matter with you? I don’t love you. I never did. Get that knife off me!”

“I don’t give a damn what you feel. I want to hear you say it!”

shouting “Why? What difference would it make?”

“I have to hear you say it!”

“Fuck off, you sick bastard. I’m not going to.”

“I’ll kill you.”

“Then do it! Just stop talking! I’m tired of all this talking!”

“If words are all I can have -I’m going to have them. I’m going to hear you tell me that.

Once. Now.”

“No!”

pause, small cry

softly “I can sink it in. Slowly. I can do it, I’ve done it before, until you’ll tell me

everything I want to hear. I want to do it.”

suppressed scream

softer “Tell me that you love me.”

sound of a door opening

incredulous “Fudge?”

“Now, now, Mr. Potter. I understand the news that Mr Malfoy is even more treacherous than

we supposed has hit you hard. But don’t try to get your own revenge. There’s much worse in

store for him.”

*

Part 11: *soft sound of a door opening*

sound of weighted footsteps

“Well, Potter. This is a surprise. I can only think of one meeting place less comfortable than a

jail cell, and it’s a meeting with one person in chains, in the anteroom to…”

voice taut with pain “Don’t! Don’t say it.”

“You won’t have to undergo it.”

“… I know. As soon as I heard -I did everything I could. I-”

negligently “Oh yes, yes, your efforts were tireless, I’m sure.”

“Will you stop being such a stupid bastard! You know what’s -what’s going to happen to

you in there, in that room, in -God, an hour, how can you be so-”

“I’ll be whatever way I like. It’s no concern of yours, or have you forgotten our last talk?”

cold, flat “You know that you’re going to be Kissed in an hour. You know that everything

you say -everything! -is going to haunt me for the rest of my life.”

“And yet I really couldn’t care.”

“God. I hope you rot in hell.”

“The significant difference between rotting in hell and rotting in prison is that you’re unlikely

to visit. For a while, at least."

sharp breath "How can you be so-"

"No, how dare you come here! This is my last hour of life, do you think I want to spend it

being told how to act, having you inflict your-"

"I thought you might want someone here who loves you!"

pause, then in clipped tones "Your perversions are of absolutely no interest to me. And no,

I don't want you here. Why should I?"

"I… had to come."

"And so the truth comes out."

"Why should I care about your feelings? You never cared anything about mine, you've made

that painfully clear."

“Quite so.”

“I wanted to see you again, and so I came. I don’t care if this is your last hour; I want it. I can be as selfish and as brutal as you.”

“So I see.”

quietly “But I did fight it. I would have done anything to get the sentence reversed. I did fight it.”

“Very touching.”

“Oh, Jesus!”

“You wouldn’t hit a man in handcuffs, would you, Potter?”

thump of two bodies against a wall

“Well, I suppose that answers that.” *voice sharpening* “Now get away from me.”

“Like hell I will. I don’t care if you don’t love me. I don’t care if this is your last hour. I don’t care that your malicious little mind is going to be sucked out of your mouth, I only wish that I could do it, that I had the power, so I could have your mouth and your soul at once…”

kiss

deadly cold “I said, get the hell away from me.”

intense “And I said, the hell I will. I don’t care, I don’t -I won’t even think of it. I don’t

have to. Oh God, Draco, how can they do it? How can they -I hope it hurts, you bastard. I hope it's fucking agony. Oh God, please keep looking at me, then nothing can happen-"

"Get your face out of my neck. You disgust me-"

"When I heard, I thought it serves him right, and I was so glad. Then I smashed everything in my apartment."
"Are you crying, Potter? How unbelievably pathetic. Did you cry like this about the Weasels,

about every last one of them, even little Virginia? Or do you only cry for the ones you want to-"

fist against flesh, sound of someone slammed to their knees
"Most heroic, Potter. Hitting a man who's in handcuffs. I think my lip's cut open, I do hope it doesn't discommode the Dementor-"

hissed "Stop talking like this!"
"If you don't want to hear me talk, get out. I wish you would. What did you come here to hear me say? To see the light, see your great love, leave you with some soft words? It doesn't

change anything. I'm going to -I'm going to worse than die, and I still can't love you, and I don't want to." *spits out blood, slowly tries to stand* "So go to hell. I don't want your pity, I don't want your touch and the one good thing -the one good thing is that I never have to listen to you again."

-I'm going to worse than die, and I still can't love you, and I

don't want to." *spits out blood, slowly tries to stand* "So go to hell. I don't want your pity, I don't want your touch and the one good thing -the one good thing is that I never have to listen to you again."

yanks him up by his hair

hissing "I'm so glad they're ripping out your black little soul from the filthy depths of your

being. I'm going to listen at the door, and remember your screaming, and it'll keep me warm at night forever."

cool "How precisely do you mean that?"

"Shut up!"

"No, you shut up! I don't want to leave this world with nothing but your words ringing in my

ears, not as the last thing, not for always, not your endless stupid words-"

"I don't care what you want." *press of bodies against wall* "Have I not made that clear? I can."

“Step away from me, or I’ll be sick.”

“Oh God, I hate you.” *soft sound of a sob*

“Get away!”

“… You’re so pale. Are you scared?”

“… Yes, of course I am. I’m so scared I can barely stand up straight, I don’t need this, please

stop-”

“No.” *soft, frantic whisper* “God, you’re shaking. Oh God. I can’t bear it. Don’t stop, keep talking, I want to know you still can, I can’t stop-”

“I don’t want this!”

savagely “I don’t care! Lift your face. I want to see you, I -Draco, why are you crying?”

“Because I’m scared!”

“I’m glad. I hope you are. I hope you’re so scared it’s twisting your intestines. Oh, damn you,

don’t you think I’m scared? It’s been two months and I haven’t been here and now you’re not going to be anywhere and oh God, I hate you, how can you do this to me? I can’t bear it…”

“I told you to stop this!”

hungry licking “I don’t care. I said I didn’t care. Oh, Draco, I hate you-”

wrench away *quick breathing* “No, Potter.” *coldly* “I hate you.”

door opening

“I’m sure your feelings are not particularly interesting to Mr. Potter, especially since you will

presently have none. It’s time.”

small, dreadful pause

“Draco.”

strained “I’m ready, Fudge.”

“Draco-”

“Oh, but what are suitable last words? Those who are about to die salute you? And forever,

my brother, hail and farewell?”

steps

muted “Those aren’t your words.”

softly “Well, Harry. Did you ever really want to hear what I was saying?”

sound of a door closing

“At last justice is served. We should have done this years ago.”

“I wish to God you had.”

“Are you -all right, Mr. Potter?”

“Fine. Just shut up. I want to hear -something.”

“Oh, they usually don’t get in more than one scream.”

“Oh Christ.” *thump*

“Mr. Potter… your fist is bleeding.”

savagely “That doesn’t mean I care. I like blood -surely you’ve heard that? I like pain, I

hope to God he screams…”

silence

sound of a door opening

“It’s done.”

*

Part 12: *soft sound of a door openingrt 12: *soft sound of a door opening*

“I really don’t see why we have to go look at-”

quietly “Shut up, Fudge. Just shut up. I… oh my God.”

fastidious “I know, it’s rather vile, isn’t it?”

soft “Oh God, Draco.”

“It’s the empty -Mr. Potter, what are you doing?”

brush of hand on cheek “Oh God.” *steps away, violent slam of a hand against stone* “Oh

God. I can’t bear it.” *low, violent* “I can’t, I can’t-”

“You’ve split open your hand, man. Come on, let’s get away from it.”

“What’s going to happen to him?”

“What can happen to it, now? Throw it back into the jail. Nobody’ll bother to spoon-feed it, it

might eat by itself. Usually they don’t. What does it matter? The bodies die after a while, they always do.”

pause *low sound of dry heaving*

“Mr. Potter, you’re not well, you’re going to-”

“Don’t touch me!” *pause* “I’ll take him.”

“What? Of course you won’t-”

“I will. Why shouldn’t I? He’s not a prisoner anymore, is he, he’s not a criminal, you have to be a person to be a criminal. He’s just a -worthless piece of rubbish you’re chucking into a

cell until he dies, an inconvenience, he's nothing and you want to be rid of him as soon as possible. Well -I'll take him."

"Nobody could expect you to-"

"I don't think you're understanding me. I'm going to take him." *hard voice* "He's nothing now. Isn't that right? You're done with him. All of you. It's a -kind of safety, having and

being nothing. He doesn't own himself, he doesn't even have a self, and you don't want what's left."

"It's a thing-"

"I want him. And I'm going to have him. He's mine."

"Look, Mr. Potter, I think you need to-"

whip of a knife through the air *softly* “I need you not to tell me what to do. Understand this -I’d rather like to kill you.” this -I’d rather like to kill you.”

faint scared sound

“I’m going to take him. I’m going to keep him. Don’t you dare even question me.”

gasp “Are you completely crazy?”

bright smile “Maybe.” *quick steps, helping upright* “Come on, Draco. We’re going home.”

*

soft sound of a door opening

“Here it is. This is home.”

pause

“Well. Something like home. Sirius helped me choose it. He said it was in -a good location for socialising, that it was near his house. But then -well. You know. He was killed by one of the stray Death Eaters, before we could round them up. One of your people. Six years and then after the surrender, after he thought it was safe… I wanted to have you all rounded up and shot.

It’s a mess. Sorry.”

sound of steps, one set shuffling and slow

“The kitchen and the sitting room have big windows. That’s what I liked it about it. I… used to like the light coming through the windows at sunset, when Sirius was alive and there was hope left. And then… when… I liked it again, I thought about you standing here with the red light in your hair, and how you would look, and I watched it -for your sake.”

silence

bitterly “And here you are. Oh, God!” *pause* “I -hadn’t bought any furniture except for a bed. But then I saw this couch, and I thought, I thought you might like to sit on it and read a book, and you might rest your head on my shoulder while you did it.” *longer pause* *slowly* “I… suppose I can still do that.

Sit down, then -here -like this. And I’ll put a book in your lap. It’s about -the Demen… about people who’ve had done to them what was done to you. It says things like -they still have motor functions, like babies, like animals, and they’re disturbed by loud or unpleasant

noises -I couldn't stand reading it, I couldn't stop reading it. But it's all right now. It's just a book."

-I couldn't stand reading it, I couldn't stop reading it. But it's all right now. It's just a book."

silence, sound of fingers through hair

slow, almost dreamy "It's so soft. I thought about this, too, when I could only reach to touch a few strands behind your ear. Just having all of your hair to stroke -I thought that might make me happy."

long silence, soft continuous sound of fingers through hair

rousing

"I should make dinner… I thought about that, too. About how I should feed you, because God, you're so thin. I thought that we could learn what the other liked to eat, but not wanting to seem weak enough to ask what it was and having to watch, and I thought we could take turns cooking and you'd complain and…" *vibrato of pain* "I don't even know if you can cook. I never will know now. I could have known what you liked to eat, I could have watched you at school, but I didn't and now it's all lost and…"

choked-off sob

roughly "Come on, get up. This way. You can come into the kitchen -you're going to stay

with me now, I'm not going to let you out of my sight."

hasty steps and the shuffling, the sound of a stumble and a hasty grab

"Oh, God -Draco. I'm sorry. I was angry, I wasn't paying attention. I'm sorry. I wouldn't let you fall. I never would."

careful steps towards the kitchen

"Stand here… That's right. I'm going to make -something. I don't know. Something. I could chop some vegetables or -Jesus. This is all so stupid." *sudden fury* "You don't care what I make. You don't care about anything -you never cared about anything. Or maybe you did, I don't know, it doesn't make a difference, you never cared about me and that's enough. I couldn't ever make you feel anything, and now you can't ever feel anything again, for anyone. So it's the same as it's always been. It doesn't matter."

pause

musing "I could make you feel again, though. Of course I could. You still have nerve endings, you can still scream. I could put this knife-" *slide of metal out of a sheath* "against that beautiful throat and I could draw it across, I know how to do it, I've done it a thousand times before. And then you'd be nothing more than all the others. You do deserve it. You deserve anything you get -even this.

You said once that you never loved pain like I did, but you were lying, weren't you? Because

you have to love pain, to be so good at causing it, you have to love it enough to have made it bloody art… You lied, and what can you say now?

voice raised “People have screamed and burned because of you before this, haven’t they, you fucking Death Eater, you who liked to crawl in filth and blood. I should do it and nobody would blame me, nobody would even care -but I won’t do it, because you belong to me, and you’re not getting away!”

you fucking Death Eater, you who liked to crawl in filth and blood. I should do it and nobody would blame me, nobody would even care -but I won’t do it, because you belong to me, and you’re not getting away!”

pause, then soothingly

“Shhh. There. I’m sorry. Don’t flinch, I’m sorry, I forgot about the noise upsetting you. I’m just going to cook now, and we’ll just -we’ll just be quiet.”

prolonged silence, filled with the sound of cooking

“I think chicken and rice should be safe. Everyone likes chicken and rice, and besides… you should eat something. Anything. You’re terribly thin. I’ll -okay. Here. I’ll feed you a spoonful and then I’ll eat a spoonful and we’ll be eating together. That’s right. Hmm. Careful.”

sounds of eating

“There, that wasn’t so bad. I thought about our first meal, too, and -and that wasn’t so bad. I -I’m sorry, I’ll come back, I-”

running into another room, the sound of vomiting *sound of running water*

steps back

voice trembling “You’re still here. I was only gone for a second and -it doesn’t make any sense, but I thought you’d be gone. I -God, I didn’t ever mean to be afraid or to panic again. You make other people lie too, don’t you. You devil. You make me…

voice softening “I could tell you all the times I thought about you, all the ways I thought about you here. You were supposed to sit on that couch with your head on my shoulder and you were supposed to eat in my kitchen and it was supposed to be our kitchen. I wanted you to be here in any kind of way -in every way. You were supposed to have your clothes in the wardrobe and your coat on the rack and this was supposed to be home, home at last, because there was you, and…

raw, muffled “I hate you.”

pause

“… You’re filthy. You smell of sweat and your clothes are dirty. No wonder you’re not that’s not right. Okay. Come on then. I’ll run you a bath.”

careful steps

“Sit here… That’s right. Now…”

taps being turned, water running steadily

“Good. Now -let me just get your shirt off -right, that’s it…” *rustle of fabric* “And… I-let me just get your shirt off -right, that’s it…” *rustle of fabric* “And… I…

Oh.”

pause, hesitant touch

“I’ve never… I… Oh God, Draco.” *husky* “I thought about you so often.”

slow sucking kiss into a collarbone

pause

“Oh my God, what am I…? Oh God. Oh Christ. I’ve got to -I’ve got to get out of here, I

can’t-”

sound of running steps

slow, constant flow of water

dull sound of a door being slammed shut

*

soft sound of a door opening

staggering, slight stumble

slightly slurred “I -Draco?”

splash

“I… oh, I left you here, and the water was running, and you could have… tipped forward or

drowned or, oh…” *slam of a body against a wall* “How could you be so stupid? Can’t you even put your shirt back on, how can there be -be nothing left, how could it be so easy to lose you…”

rapid breathing

slowly “No, not lose. I never had you, did I, my darling? Oh, my darling. I never could have called you that… you would have laughed…”

slow, lingering kiss

“You made me afraid and you made me suffer, and you… Oh, you did deserve this. You

deserve anything anyone could do to you, you’re so cruel and you -you bastard, how could you? Look what you’ve done… look what you’ve done to me…”

desperate kissing

panting “You evil bastard. You deserve everything you get. Oh God, Draco…”

steps, the creak of a door opening

creak of bedsprings

more kissing, soft slide of skin on skin

heavy breathing, soft cries

a moan

“Oh God, I love you.”

soft click of a door swinging gently shut

*

Part 13: *soft sound of a door opening*

“Hello? Harry? I found this key in the bottom of my dresser, can you believe-? Oh, there you are. Come here and give me a hug.”

steps from the kitchen

“Hermione. It’s good to see you.”

“I was worried about you. You’ve been so -and anyway, I knew you’d visited Draco Malfoy now and then, and when he was Kissed yesterday -I thought you might need a friend.”

“I’m all right… Do you know if porridge is nourishing?”

“Sorry? Oh, Harry, you’re cooking! That’s good, you’re so thin… You look even thinner than

you did a week ago. You’ve got dark circles under your eyes and -oh, Harry, have you been sick…? You look -terrible.”

“Thanks.”

“No, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean it. It’s good to see you smiling and -hey, with that dishtowel over your arm, you look awfully domestic. I’m really hap -Oh Jesus Christ!”

jump back against the door

“Hermione. I’m sorry he startled you, I know you weren’t expecting-”

“God, what is it doing here?”

“He’s sitting on a chair. We’re about to have breakfast. Well, Hermione, he had nowhere else to go after… He’s staying here.”

“It’s grotesque!”

“Hermione! He doesn’t… he doesn’t look all that different.”

“Harry, you can’t keep it in here. That’s morbid, Harry, it will give you nightmares. Give it back to the authorities, I know you must feel -you’re so decent -obliged to it or something-”

snarled “He’s not going anywhere.”

“Harry, look at it! Look at its eyes. They’re so -oh God, it’s horrible, that blank leeching emptiness. You can’t feel sorry enough for it to keep it here. You’re already not well. It wouldn’t be good for you.”

coldly “It’s none of your business, Hermione. Let anybody try to take him away from me.”

“I… God, Harry, are those your clothes on that thing?”

“Hm? Oh, yes. I washed him this morning and found him some clothes. The black jumper goes well with his hair, doesn’t it?”

high voice “Harry, what are you doing?”

“How do you mean?”

“Stop touching that thing!”

“Sorry, I didn’t realise.”

“Harry, please get your hand off its hair.”

“Sorry. Do you want some porridge?”

“No, I think I’m going to be sick! Harry, please, I can’t stand looking at it for much longer.

You have to realise, this isn’t like -like someone who’s handicapped. Tending it doesn’t matter, it’s a body. It’s a shell. Its soul is gone forever, do you understand that? It’s not human!”

“Hermione, don’t shout. Loud noises upset him.”

voice wobbling “Harry, look at it.”

“In a moment. I have to spoon out the porridge.”

sound of porridge being poured into a bowl

“Harry, aren’t you going to have any-?-?”

“Oh, no, I’m not very hungry. He needs to eat, though. Come on, Draco. It’s all right. You see, Hermione? I’m looking at him. He’s eating his porridge. Everything -will be all right.”

“Harry, you can’t do this.”

tranquil “Hermione, you don’t understand.”

“Harry, no, I do. I visited Azkaban yesterday. I know all about it, but Harry, you mustn’t blame yourself. You mustn’t feel any kind of duty towards it. He was a savage killer -he was a traitor, and even he doesn’t exist anymore. He -oh, Harry, if anyone deserves this he did, and you can’t let yourself be trapped in this nightmare just because he thought he was in love with you!”

pause

blankly “What?”

“Whatever weird, perverse fascination he had with you -Harry, don’t feel guilty, it was just a part of his twisted psyche. It wasn’t -ugh, Harry, it wasn’t normal-”

bitterly “Hermione, I think you’ve got hold of the wrong end of the stick here. He wasn’t-”

“Harry, I’ve read his diary!”

pause

voice trembling “What?”

“They -they were clearing out his cell, and I took it, and I read some parts, and-”

“Where is it?”

“I have it here -Harry!” *sharp cry* “Give it-”

ruffle of pages

desolate voice “I can’t -I can’t see to read it. I -I’ll do it later. Draco has to have his food.”

shove back of papers “I’m sorry, Draco. I’m sorry. Here. Oh, it’s all right, it’s all perfectly all right, you’re with me…”

“Harry, don’t touch its face! I don’t like it -Oh, Harry, are you crying?”

viciously “No!”

“I -I’ll read it to you, if you like. Is that what you want?”

“All right.”

“‘September 21September 21st -Today I was told that they were going to administer the Dementor’s Kiss’”

“What? No, Hermione -you’ve got that wrong -I talked to him on the 23rd, and he didn’t -he told me he’d probably just get a slap on the wrist-”

“Harry, exactly! He was lying to you. He may have had good motives, but he was deceiving you, you don’t owe him a thing-”

voice fraying “What are you talking about?”

“I’ll read out the rest of the entry! ‘I’ve noticed that there are a few things sheer selfishness can’t save you from -which is a shame, since then I’d be buckled in triple armour. They’re going to administer the Kiss after this whole lonely pointless struggle, and there’s the paralysing terror and panic that came upon me sometimes in the war… that chill which wraps around you like a nightmare lover. I didn’t even know about that creeping chill during the war -it’s only in the dreams that I realise I felt it. Because back in the war, there was always something you could be strong for. My parents, my friends, my men, Pansy…

The need for a beloved talisman against nightmares. God, humans are pathetic creatures sometimes.

Harry can’t know yet.

I warned him. I tried to warn him, and if he keeps hanging onto those images he has, onto his belief that -something could be saved from all of this wreckage…

It's much like an amputation. It's cruel, but it will save him -and I've always been talented at cruelty. And after all, it doesn't take anything real from him, even if it takes away that stupid warmth, that one last thing I've been hanging onto so tenaciously through the nights…

I can't question it, I don't want to explore the full depths of all this hopelessness. I don't want to think about what I want or those idiotic beautiful dreams. I don't want to end without dignity, in a screaming clinging ball of terror.

And I won't see him destroyed. He has to be cut cleanly away.

In the end, it's always nightmares and one image to hold against them. He does understand that.

He'll be the talisman, and saving him will keep me from this humiliating horror and loss. And it'll be all for the best, and he'll forget, and I'll won't have the chance to disgrace myself in those last few minutes.

Oh, but I do love him. God help me, God damn him, but I do.'"

small, terrible sound

"Harry -Harry, please, don't. I know you must feel dreadful, I know you never meant to hurt

even someone like him, but you have to remember that he was evil, utterly utterly-”

savagely “Shut the fuck up, Hermione! If he was evil, what was I? You sat in your research rooms with your books, your books, and I drowned in blood. You would never believe that about me. Harry doesn’t want to kill anyone, do you, Harry? Yes I did. Yes I do. Didn’t you ever wonder what happened after we captured Millicent Bulstrode and I sent you out of the room? You never asked, but you have such perfect faith in me, you must believe I did the right thing. Do you want to know what I did to her?”

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“No! Harry!”

“What do you want me to do to you? You’re lying. This isn’t real.”

swift steps, shove of a body against a wall

“I don’t believe you. It’s not true. He never loved me, he-“ *shouting* “Why the hell did you have to tell me that, you lying bitch!”

terrified “Harry-”

sound of someone standing up

step back, voice soft “Draco, I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to scare you. Hush. There. Sit back down.”

brush hand against hand, shoulder, cheek *deep breath* *pause*

“There. Shhh… I’m sorry, Hermione, I didn’t mean to scare you. Of course he wrote it.”

voice lower “It sounds like him. He’s funny, did you know?” *soft laugh* “In a really infuriating way. I never really realised how funny when I was with him, it was usually when I got back home and had one of those nightmares, and then I’d sit up and think about what he’d said, and it would -he could make me smile.”

voice trembling “Harry, I’m begging you. Can’t you -what’s the matter with you, that you keep hovering around that thing and touching it and staring at it -can’t you stop?”

“What?”

“Harry, please stop touching it!”

“I told you not to raise your voice.”

faintly “I -Harry, are you trying to tell me that -that you had feelings for -that thing?”

pause *sudden sharp laugh*

“Feelings?”

“Don’t look like that-”

“I love him.”

“Oh God. Harry.”

“I love him. He’s -oh God, he’s everything in the world to me, do you understand that? I’m so ridiculously, painfully obsessed with him that I can recognise his heartbeat, I’d sell my soul for him, I’d sell anything for him, for one more second, just to hear his voice and I’m in hell, oh Christ, Hermione. It was nothing but bleakness before him and then he was the whole world and I can’t even get back to bleakness and it hurts so much I can’t think, I don’t want to do anything but scream and even when I’m lying right beside him he’s not there, he’s never going to be anywhere ever again-”

faint, sick “Lying beside him?”

raw “I can’t bear it. I love him so much it hurts to breathe.”

“Harry, what have you done?”

“… I don’t know. Oh, God, Draco, how could you think that I’d forget you, how could you pretend -oh God, Draco, please, you can’t have loved me, you can’t have been trying to save me when I-”

“Harry, it can’t hear you!”

“You bastard, you can’t have thrown away those last weeks -oh God, the last weeks. Tell me you didn’t do it, are you insane to think that I’d stop loving you if you did or said anything… anything at all… You destroy me even when you’re trying to save me, and God damn you,

you have to talk to me! I hope you're burning in hell, I hope you're in fucking agony, how could you love me and -oh Draco, Draco, please…"

fall to hands and knees, violent vomiting

"Harry -Harry, you're scaring me!"

tenderly, almost secretively "I can't bear it." *leaning against him* "You see why you have to be all right, you absolutely have to. I'll kill you if you don't speak to me, please, darling, you never even said-" *soft kiss on the neck* "I can't have… I can't live like this."

"Harry, get up, get away from it, you have to listen to me-"

voice muffled against the jumper "Draco, I can't have -Oh God, please, oh God, I love you so much."

strained to the point of tears "I don't understand anything, Harry, oh, you have to tell me, you have to get help…"

exhausted tones "I'll kill anyone who tries to take you away from me. You'll come back, Draco, you have to-"

crying "Harry… please, I'm so scared."

"Draco." *raw, choked sobbing against the wool* "I love you. Oh, I love you so much…"

“Harry! Oh, Harry, don’t do this to me, don’t leave me all alone, please look at me, please

try… Harry, stop making that sound, I can’t bear it. Harry, for God’s sake talk to me!” try… Harry, stop making that sound, I can’t bear it. Harry, for God’s sake talk to me!”

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