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Chapter 1 to 10

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Chapter: 1

Author's Note: Having dipped my toe into the pool of Slash, I subsequently decided to leap straight into the deep end and drown myself to see if I could sink or swim. For those that enjoyed Draco's Escort Service, please be warned that this story is not as tame. Not hardly. In fact, I need to go immerse myself in ice cold water, now. Holy water. Wait, that might be a bad idea…

Draco and Harry's Escort Service

Chapter One

Draco stared out the window pensively, even though he could barely see through the collection of droplets that covered the glass and streamed in endless rivulets to accumulate on the sill.

Helluva view Potter has from here, he thought wryly, gazing out at the monotonous series of grey, rain-washed rooftops spread out in a bland vista until they disappeared into the misty cloud cover that currently blanketed London. Number Twelve, Grimmauld Place, was fairly gloomy for all that Potter had decorated it nicely. Rain hammered on the window with a sudden gust of wind, obscuring even that meager view.

Draco sighed and rested his forehead against the glass. His breath intermittently fogged the pane. Behind him, Potter turned a page with a quiet rustle. Draco scowled at the sound. Harry and his never-ending research. Draco seldom had the patience to sit in front of countless books and scrolls for long. He far preferred to be outside battling horrific dangers. Indoors, he had far too much to think, especially while lounging in Harry Potter's bedroom while Harry sat at the desk.

He felt Potter's eyes on him as if called by the thought, but Harry made no comment. Draco grinned ruefully, knowing Potter didn't dare speak. In Malfoy's current mood, they would get into an immediate row and Harry knew where Draco's rows usually ended up.

Draco's throat went dry at the thought, though he refrained from casting a glance at the bed. He

scowled in annoyance. He should never have taken the job to escort Harry to Hogwarts three months ago. Potter's insistence on a side trip to destroy Voldemort's last relic had led to a series of luckless events and culminated in their current state of affairs. Malfoy's mind backtracked to that fateful night in the forest when he had been forced to save Harry's life with a kiss. The fairy had warned him: *All gifts have a price. I wonder if you will have the strength to pay for yours.* Draco had not understood her words at the time, but they were crystal clear now. The price was the fateful attachment that had bound him to Potter since that moment.

He sighed, wishing he could go back to that night and undo everything. Potter could rot in Faerie and Draco would have his life back. A life without Harry's damned green eyes haunting his every thought. A life without Potter's satin skin and perfect kissable lips—

Draco cursed himself when his body responded to the familiar path his thoughts trod. He pushed himself away from the window and headed for the door.

"I'm going out," he snapped. He sensed Potter's surprise.

"In this weather? You hate London."

"I need a drink," Malfoy replied, silently daring Harry to mention they had liquor in the parlour as well as the kitchen.

"Draco—"

His hand froze on the knob. Harry never called him that, except… except in the throes of mindless passion. Draco shut his eyes.

"Don't go," Harry continued and Draco's heart did a slow flip.

He swore and turned the knob savagely. The door slammed against the wall with the force of the opening and Draco stalked out, trying to flee his demons.

His demons caught him before he reached the head of the stairs in the form of Harry's five-fingered grip on his shoulder. He spun Draco around to face him.

"Malfoy," Harry demanded. "Talk to me."

Draco examined him through half-lidded eyes. Potter wasn't so special. His glasses were sliding down his nose again and his hair was an atrocious mess from yanking on it while he read—an unconscious habit that Malfoy wished to hell he didn't find endearing. God, he knew if he had to do it over again, he'd do it all the same, save Harry's life and everything that came after, just to be here. He backed away to lean against the wall, ostensibly to affect a bored mien, but in reality to escape Harry's touch. Potter's hand fell away.

"Look, I know it's hard for you to be trapped in here, but no one is traveling in this weather. We'll

be back to work in a few days, at worst. In the meantime, can you please stop acting like a brooding beast and help me try and find some useful information?"

Malfoy glared. Potter's pet project was to try and undo whatever Voldemort had done to make travel by *Apparition* impossibly dangerous.

"You do know if you fix *Apparition* that we'll be out of a job," Malfoy had informed him, but Potter had laughed.

"You'll never be out of a job. You enjoy battling Dark magic too much and there is enough of that out there to keep you busy for a lifetime. Besides, it's the right thing to do."

You'll never be out of a job. *You*, not *we*. Those words had penetrated deeper into Malfoy's psyche than he would ever admit. As if Potter had already set him free… or cut him loose. On top of that, Potter and his "right thing to do" had caused Draco an endless amount of torment. At the moment, Malfoy felt the "right thing to do" was to drag Harry back into the bedroom… something Potter had to have known when he followed Draco out here.

Draco gave in to the urge by stepping forward and cupping the back of Potter's head with one hand as he planted a savage kiss on Harry's lips. Draco wanted to hurt him; punish Harry for forcing him to feel this constant, overwhelming need that never seemed to be sated. His anger increased when he felt Harry stiffen.

It was always the same—Draco was the aggressor, battering down the walls of Harry's resistance and overwhelming his irritating sense of moral outrage until Harry broke under the weight of sheer desire and base animal need.

Regardless, Draco felt the same triumph—and relief—when Harry relaxed with a sigh of surrender. He was afraid that someday Harry would not give in, and that would be the end of it. Potter's right hand slid into Draco's hair and his left dragged Malfoy's shirt free of the waistband before slipping inside to sweep across Draco's ribs. He reached down and lifted Potter off his feet without breaking the kiss. He carried Harry back into his room.

Malfoy dropped him unceremoniously on the bed and paused to tear his own shirt off. His eyes dared Harry to get up, but Potter had that semi-glazed look in his eyes and his lips were half-parted, still wet from Malfoy's kiss. He wasn't going anywhere. Draco groaned at the sight and lowered himself to the bed, halting only to violently tear Harry's shirt open before he pressed his chest against Potter's and took Harry's lips again. He felt Potter sigh and felt a twinge of amusement. Malfoy was hard on shirts—there were buttons all over the room. The recollection eased his anger—he no longer had a desire to hurt Harry.

He tugged off Potter's glasses and tossed them to a corner of the bed. He buried his hands for a moment in Harry's so-soft hair and ran his tongue over the ridges on the roof of Harry's mouth—God, he tasted like heaven.

Potter's hands caressed Draco's bare back and gooseflesh erupted across Malfoy's skin. Harry shifted suddenly until his thighs cradled Draco's hips. Malfoy sucked in a breath, feeling Harry hot and hard beneath him.

Their clothes were an unwelcome barrier. Draco's mouth reluctantly left Harry's to travel lower, following his hands as they glided across Potter's chest and abdomen to the top of Harry's jeans.

Malfoy's tongue probed Potter's navel and Harry arched beneath him while his hands clenched almost painfully in Draco's hair. Malfoy chuckled—Harry's belly button was a sensitive zone that Draco never failed to use to his advantage.

He made swift work of sliding Potter's jeans over his hips and away. Without pausing, he dragged Harry's briefs off as well and then quickly wrapped a hand around Potter's throbbing shaft. Harry made a soft cry of delight and Draco languidly stroked his tongue up the length of the velvet rod and took the head into his mouth. Harry gasped and his hands gentled in Draco's hair—his fingertips barely skimmed Malfoy's temples.

Draco moved rhythmically, licking, stroking, sliding lips and tongue up and down in a building frenzy until Harry thrashed in mindless ecstasy and his breath came in harsh gasps. He sensed Potter's pending explosion and stopped, wickedly prolonging the torture. It worked.

"Oh God, Draco… please," Harry pleaded. Malfoy groaned. As much as he enjoyed bringing Potter to the point of begging, it was always a bittersweet torment. He relented, enveloping the hot sheath in wetness again, stroking until Harry cried out as the orgasm rocked through him.

Draco released him and licked a slow path back upwards until he lay on Harry's chest again. He liked to look into his eyes when they were still dazed and forest green with residual passion; before the guilt and recrimination returned. He was let down this time—Harry's eyes were closed. The shutters were already down, locking Draco out. He tried not to feel disappointment.

Potter's arms suddenly wrapped around him, halting Draco when he would have rolled away and left the room. Malfoy always gave, never received. He wasn't willing to ask for more than Potter would give and sated himself in private with the memory of driving Harry past control. Draco laid his head on Harry's chest for a moment with a sigh. Potter tried to speak, but had to clear his throat to try again. Draco put a hand up and pressed his fingers over Harry's lips.

"Shhhh," he said softly. Already the guilt was rolling over him in a wave—Potter could only make it worse. He couldn't ask Harry for what he really needed. It had little to do with sex.

He pulled away finally, without meeting Harry's eyes. He got to his feet and walked to the door. He glance back, to see that Harry had sat up and swung his legs over the edge of the bed. His dark head rested in his hands and his buttonless shirt hung on his frame. Draco's throat was suddenly tight.

"I'll be downstairs," he said hoarsely.

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Chapter: 2

Chapter Two

Harry listened to Draco's footsteps on the stairs until they receded to inaudible. He felt like crawling under the blankets and sleeping until his problems disappeared—about a hundred years or so.

After putting his glasses back on, he slid off the bed and padded over to where Draco had tossed his jeans. He flushed at the memory and frowned at the quick frisson that accompanied it. God, what was wrong with him? As he dragged his clothes on, he reflected that he was most bothered by the fact that every time Malfoy touched him, he felt markedly less guilt and regret. In fact, it would be far too easy to let go of all resistance and submit completely to whatever Draco asked of him.

He sat on the bed and unbuttoned the cuffs of his shirt—he'd have to add it to the pile of those needing repair. He grinned ruefully at the bitter knowledge that he mainly wore shirts with buttons because Draco seemed to enjoy tearing them off. He swallowed hard at the thought and slammed a fist into the bed.

Why the hell was he so obsessed with the bastard? How had he allowed it to get so complicated? It had seemed so simple in the beginning—almost natural. *He* had made it seem so.

Harry pulled off his shirt and walked to the wardrobe to retrieve another… and remembered. They had been almost giddy when they had left the chamber of the last Horcrux. Harry had been flush with the return of his magic and the success of healing Malfoy. Draco had simply been glad to be alive.

They had barely left the place behind before tearing at each other in a frenzy of passion—a cloak thrown over a patch of clover where Draco had introduced Harry to a never-before dreamed of realm of sensation.

"Flesh is flesh, Potter," he had said. "Need is need."

But Harry's remorse had been tangible once it was over. What he had not been able to explain—still could not explain—was that his regret sprang from the fact that his emotions were so inextricably woven into the complex web that was Draco Malfoy. Harry hated that he wanted him—needed him—to the point of physical pain. Need might be need, but why the hell couldn't Harry feel it for someone besides Malfoy? And why did he require *more* than the casual

relationship Draco offered: sarcastic companionship and the hottest sex Harry had ever imagined? Harry wanted more, but he knew Draco just thought of him as an amusing diversion. It also disturbed Harry that Draco never allowed him to reciprocate. He would see to Harry's pleasure and bolt like a skittish deer.

He sighed and shrugged on a pale green shirt, gritting his teeth at the unwitting image of Draco sending the verdant buttons flying across the room.

"Fuck," he said softly.

Harry knew he should return to his books and scrolls, but the room seemed empty without Malfoy in it. Harry tugged his hair in frustration. He couldn't read when Draco was in the room because he was too distracting. Harry found his eyes drawn to him time and again when he paced the room like a caged lion, or stood at the window framed in rain. Now he couldn't read when Draco was gone because he missed him.

Harry cursed himself again as he started for the door. As tortuous as it was to be with Malfoy, it was worse to be away from him.

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Draco seriously needed a drink. He entered the parlour—all light wood and pale fabric—and snatched up the decanter of brandy on the sideboard. He grabbed a glass and retreated down the hall to the room in which he felt most comfortable—the study. It was a relatively small room lined with leather volumes. Potter had mostly left the mahogany alone and the upholstery was burgundy and forest green. Muted and dark, like Draco's mood.

He lit a fire with a quick burst of his wand after filling his glass nearly to the brim. Draco settled on the couch and stared into the crackling flames. He wondered why he stayed with Potter.

He should leave. He had his own flat on the other side of London. In a wizarding neighborhood—not this run down place surrounded by Muggles.

Even as the thought occurred to him, he knew he wouldn't go. At least, not until Lupin and Tonks returned. They lived with Harry, but had left for a belated honeymoon a short time after learning that Potter had regained his powers. They had been a bit shocked to find Draco in tow, but Lupin seemed to realize after a couple of weeks that Malfoy was no longer Potter's enemy.

Draco sneered at that and took a long pull from his glass. Not outwardly, at any rate. Sometimes, Draco felt he was destroying Harry from the inside out. Breaking down his iron morality and excusing it with lame platitudes, trying to make Potter believe it was just casual fun. It might have started that way, but it wasn't casual for Draco any longer. Potter's hooks were set into him good and tight. Not that he would ever hand over that weapon. Better for Potter to continue to think him a hedonistic bastard than to know Draco cared—

He set his glass down and leaned his head back to press his fingers against aching temples. He definitely needed to leave, but the thought of Potter alone in this huge empty house was something he didn't care to contemplate. Though Harry refused to acknowledge it, Draco could feel the yawning pit of loneliness in Potter—the one that continually threatened to drag Malfoy in and drown him with the immensity of Harry's need. Hell, to be perfectly honest, Draco didn't want to be alone, either. And, fuck it all, the thought of not being near Potter was akin to being stabbed in the heart.

He sensed Harry before he heard him. Potter had an irritating habit of padding about barefoot. Although, Draco had to admit, it made it much easier to remove Harry's jeans… Potter halted behind him and his fingers slipped beneath Draco's to take over the massage. Malfoy sighed and relented to the small pleasure.

Harry said nothing, as usual, and his hands gently but firmly stroked Draco's temples and the top of his head before working their way down to Draco's neck. His thumbs kneaded the tight spots of tension at the base of Malfoy's skull and then lower, to compress and release Draco's shoulders. His hands were warm and strong and languorous heat stole over Malfoy, mingling pleasantly with the alcohol. God, he was becoming aroused again. He unquestionably needed to do something about that.

He reached up and grabbed Harry's hands.

"Enough, Potter," he said thickly. "Go read a book or something." He squeezed Potter's hands gently to soften the words. Harry hesitated. Draco grimaced. Heaven forbid Potter wanted to talk. The last thing Malfoy wanted to do was analyze their fucked-up relationship. Draco spent enough time doing that on his own. He said, "In fact, throw me one. I'll try to help you with your damnable research."

Harry sighed, but obediently walked to the nearby desk where he had several volumes already laid out. He tossed one to Draco and sat down at the other end of the couch, propping one leg on the cushion. His gaze was level.

"Do you remember how to read?" Harry asked.

Draco sneered at him, but he was secretly grateful for the jibe and the attempt to put things back to normal. Or as close to normal as they could get.

Harry fell asleep on the couch. Draco watched him in amusement as his head lolled back against the hard wooden trim of the sofa. Malfoy finished his drink—the third, if anyone was counting—and set the glass down. Potter was going to wake up with a nasty neck pain if he stayed like that. Draco sighed. He should carry him upstairs, but damn there were a lot of them. And Draco wasn't sure he could restrain himself from undressing Harry and screwing the life out of him once they got there.

He sighed and got up. He took off Potter's glasses and tugged the heavy book out of his lap

before fetching a pillow from a nearby chair. He lifted Harry by the shoulders and tucked the pillow beneath his head, chuckling slightly when Potter didn't even stir. The Chosen One slept like a damned corpse. Draco had been forced to bang pots together to rouse him at times. He stood and surveyed his handiwork, and then added a throw.

Impulsively, he bent down and placed a kiss on Harry's lips. He thought Potter gave a small sigh, but that might have been wishful thinking. Draco pushed a hand through the hair that fell over Potter's brow and then snatched his hand away, realizing there wasn't enough alcohol in the world to drown the beast raging through him tonight.

There might be enough to numb it, though. He went upstairs to throw on a shirt and then snatched up his cloak and went out into the tempest.

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Chapter: 3

Chapter Three

Harry woke to the sound of the front door opening. He was somewhat surprised to find himself on the couch, but he adjusted quickly and rolled to his feet after a quick glance at the mantle clock. It was nearing midnight. He crept to the doorway and *Accioed* his wand from upstairs. It snapped into his hand and he silently advanced down the hallway. After a moment, it became obvious the intruder was not exactly sneaking, especially when they ran into the hall table and sent the ceramic basin crashing to the marble floor.

Harry hurried forward to find Malfoy crouched over the shards making shushing noises. The sound was so incongruous that Harry just blinked at him for a moment.

"*Malfoy?*"

The silver head rose and a huge grin split his face. He stood up and Harry watched in amazement as he swayed. Draco was soaking wet. The ends of his sodden hair actually dripped, as did his cloak.

"Harry Potter," Draco said in a voice most unlike his, although Harry couldn't quite define why. Malfoy stepped forward and reached out to clutch Harry's shirt. Potter's eyes widened at the onslaught of alcohol that assaulted him. "Harry Potter… damn you…"

"Malfoy! You're foxed!" Harry gripped Draco's shoulders, doubting his senses. He'd been fooled before and *Malfoys never got drunk*.

"You've always been bloody good at pointing out the obvious, Potter. Twenty points to Gryffindor!" Draco raised a hand and pointed to the sky in accompaniment to his outburst. If he wasn't drunk, he was putting up quite a convincing show. When he lowered his hand, he flung it firmly around Harry's neck and drew him even closer. Harry felt the wetness from Malfoy's clothing soak into his.

"Potter. You've ruined me, you know," Draco said in a conspiratorial whisper. Harry began to feel lightheaded from the fumes. He wondered where Draco had gone… and when. Malfoy continued, "I'd *Crucio* you, but the thought of you writhing on the ground…" Draco groaned and buried his face into Harry's hair. His lips pressed into Potter's neck just below his right ear.

Harry forced down the familiar surge of want. He was beginning to believe Draco was well and truly smashed. He put an arm around Malfoy's wet shoulders.

"Come on; let's get you upstairs before you vomit all over the floor."

"Malfoys don't vomit," Draco mumbled. He seemed to have plans other than going upstairs. He nuzzled Harry's neck and pressed himself fully against Potter, who winced as the cold wetness permeated his clothing.

"Yes, I thought Malfoys didn't get drunk, either, but you seem to have overlooked that rule, for once. Let's get you out of these wet things, to start with." Harry reached up his free hand to unfasten the clasp on Draco's cloak.

"God, yes, let's," Malfoy echoed and sighed as the sodden cloak fell to the floor with a wet slap. "Yours, too."

Harry tried to stop him—too late. Malfoy's hand snagged the front of Harry's shirt and jerked sharply. The buttons sprang off and hit wall and floor with muted plinks. Both of Draco's hands—ice cold hands!—slid over Harry's bared chest and down his ribs.

Draco caught Harry's lips in a kiss, but Potter was more concerned with how he was going to get Malfoy up the stairs. He supposed he could levitate him, but in Malfoy's current state, the motion might nauseate him. Harry broke the kiss.

"Stop it. You need to go upstairs."

"Upstairs," Draco repeated and nibbled Harry's throat. Draco's hands, warming now, were sliding over Harry's skin. He tried to ignore the tingling sensation stealing over him. Malfoy ran his tongue over Harry's collarbone. "You taste good," he murmured.

Harry tamped down his sudden, ferocious rush of desire and pried Draco's face away from his skin.

"Help me get you upstairs," Harry demanded. Malfoy's silver eyes fairly glowed and a wicked

grin curved his lips. "If you're faking this, so help me I'll kill you."

He managed to maneuver Draco to the foot of the stairs—difficult since Malfoy did not relinquish his hold on Harry. They made it up a dozen or so steps before Malfoy stumbled, bringing them both down hard. Harry's hip banged into a wooden step and he hissed in pain.

Draco, who had landed atop him, was instantly solicitous.

"Want me to kiss it better?" he whispered and dropped down to blaze a path of wet kisses down Harry's abdomen. Harry laughed when it unexpectedly tickled.

"No!" he said sharply. He grabbed Draco by a large handful of hair and pulled him away. Malfoy didn't even flinch.

"Want to play rough, eh, Harry?" he murmured and clamped his lips onto Harry's. The kiss was bruising—almost painful, but Harry had never had any resistance to Draco's kisses and this was no exception. Before he turned into Malfoy's helpless puppet, Harry dredged up his reserves of strength and pushed Draco away firmly.

"Not here—let's go to bed," he said. As he'd hoped, the word got Draco's attention. "The nice, soft bed," he added.

Malfoy nodded and Harry sighed in relief when they made it up the remainder of the steps. Harry steered him into his own room—Malfoy had one down the hall, but he wasn't sure they would make it that far. Draco released him and allowed Harry to pull the wet shirt over his head. Harry steeled himself and unbuttoned Malfoy's black trousers, trying to ignore the hands that were now tangled in his hair. Draco watched him through half-lidded eyes and his lips were slightly parted. The light from the single candle Harry had lit gleamed on Malfoy's pale skin.

Harry, already aroused from the encounter on the stairs, felt himself grew rock hard with lust. His hands shook and he clumsily undid the last of the buttons before carefully sliding the damp slacks down over Draco's hips and thighs.

Malfoy swayed and nearly fell when he stepped out of the clothing, but his hands on Harry's head steadied him. When Harry stood, Draco tried to kiss him again, but he avoided the incendiary lips and steered him next to the bed before shoving the blankets back.

"Into bed," he ordered. Draco obediently tumbled into bed, but dragged Harry down with him.

"Draco, you won't remember any of this tomorrow."

He pushed himself up, but Malfoy's hands tightened on his shoulders.

"Just stay with me, Harry," Draco said softly. Harry groaned. He had fully intended to go sleep in Malfoy's room. The two of them had never slept together, likely fearing the intimacy of

non-sexual contact. "Please."

The word was Harry's undoing. Draco never pleaded. He sighed and dropped next to Malfoy and tugged the blankets over them both. Draco relaxed immediately and Harry could tell he was thankfully drifting off to sleep. He moved slightly and Draco's arm tightened around him reflexively.

"Don't leave me," Draco mumbled and Harry laid his head on Malfoy's chest and pressed himself against Draco's side.

"I'll never leave you," he whispered, knowing it was true. Even if Malfoy left him, a part of Harry would be with him always.

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Draco cracked his eyes open and instantly regretted the action. Pain lanced into his brain with every speck of light. He quickly clamped them shut again, but the pounding did not subside.

He tried to raise a hand to remove the daggers that someone had obviously slammed into his skull, but found his arm trapped. Draco froze, trying to send his mind back through the painful fog to locate a memory. What the hell?

He felt soft breath against his chest from the head that lay upon his shoulder. An arm was thrown across his abdomen.

Draco suddenly remembered going out into the storm. He recalled the three buxom beauties plying him with drink and then kisses. He remembered trying to drive Potter out of his mind… did he sleep with one of those girls?

No… he vaguely remembered a dull disappointment that the girls' lips were too soft… their eyes not expressive enough… or green enough… He had staggered out into the night.

The head shifted slightly and Draco caught the comforting scent of Harry's hair. He was both relieved and alarmed. What had happened last night? He semi-recalled Potter on the stairs, threatening and cajoling, and Draco wanting nothing more than to wrap himself in Harry.

I'll never leave you. Had he dreamed that? He must have, but why was Potter here, now?

He remained still for a long time, listening to Harry's rhythmic breathing and watching the room brighten around them.

Draco knew the exact moment that Harry woke up. There was no obvious change—just a slight altering of his breathing and the tiniest shift of his head that sent a miniscule brush of soft hair tickling across Draco's collarbone. Shortly thereafter, Potter's entire body tensed like a snared rabbit. Draco's jaw clenched, but he berated himself. What had he expected? A big hug and

sweet morning kiss? He thought it best not to dwell on the idea.

Potter's head rose with a shiver-inducing sweep of hair sliding over Draco's skin. Malfoy kept his eyes shut as Harry levered himself to look into Draco's face. Malfoy planned to fake sleep, but Harry's hand suddenly slipped from Draco's ribs to glide upwards in a delicate caress that ended on Malfoy's chest, leaving a crop of gooseflesh springing in its wake.

"You are awake," Potter said.

"No, I think I'm dead," Draco admitted. "Did you impale my head with train spikes somewhere behind my eyes while I slept?"

"You did that to yourself. Prior to sleeping."

"Bloody hell."

"Welcome to the aftereffects of too much drink."

"Is there a cure?"

"How should I know? I've never been drunk," Harry replied, somewhat smugly.

Malfoy huffed, an action that shifted Harry slightly on his chest.

"Of course not. How silly of me. The Boy Who Abstained."

"Don't be ridiculous," Harry said sharply. "I've had plenty of alcohol. Just not enough to get myself to the point… where you were last night."

"I wasn't drunk," Malfoy lied.

"Well, you were doing a damned fine impression of it, then!"

"Do you really need to shout?"

"I'm not even talking loudly."

"Your voice feels like a bludgeon."

"I suppose I can try to locate a spell or potion to help you," Harry offered.

"Wouldn't you rather watch me suffer?"

Harry chuckled. "No. It's not as amusing as expected." Draco braved a glance at Potter, to find those guileless green eyes sparkling at him. He groaned and clamped his eyes shut again.

A fluttering sound caused him to crack them open again. Harry's white owl perched on the end of the bed, accompanied by a smaller, darker owl. The sight caused Harry to scramble out of bed. Malfoy kept his eyes open to peruse Potter's near-naked form as he detached the message from the dark owl's leg.

Harry unrolled it and then grinned happily at Draco.

"We have a job! And look, the weather has cleared."

"I assumed that from the shards of light torturing me."

With Harry gone, Draco found no reason to lie abed wallowing in self-induced pain. He swung his feet over the edge of the mattress and sat up. His headache increased fivefold at the movement. He leaned over and buried his face in his hands.

"What's the job?" he muttered to take his mind off the pounding.

"It's from Luna Lovegood. Remember her? We're to escort her and a teacher to Hogwarts. Easy job, eh?"

Draco vaguely recalled Lovegood.

"Which teacher?"

"Doesn't say, but they want to leave today. They were already delayed by the storm."

"Great. As soon as I get this Hippogriff to stop gnawing on my skull, we can leave."

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Chapter: 4

Chapter Four

They met on the outskirts of London—in the same spot Harry had first met Draco prior to their adventure, though neither of them mentioned the fact.

Harry was surprised at the change in Luna, but even more shocked at the sight of her companion.

"Hi, Harry!" Luna called happily and threw herself on him in a giant hug. She was tall and lissome and her blonde hair was waist-length and oddly streaked with ribbons of magenta. Harry

recognized it as a Muggle affectation, but it looked bizarrely appropriate on her.

Luna's companion was Cho Chang.

The Ravenclaw girl looked at him coolly while Potter fairly gaped at her. She had been pretty at Hogwarts, but now she was stunning. She was a head shorter than Harry—still petite, but her body had filled out in places that invited a second look.

"Hello, Harry," she said.

"Hi, Cho," he replied.

"So. You're chumming with Malfoy these days?" she asked somewhat harshly. Harry's eyes flicked to Draco, who stood nearby like the antithesis of shadow. Harry flushed, thinking that "chumming" did not begin to scratch the surface of their volatile relationship. After a moment, he realized he was watching Malfoy again—sliding his eyes over the too-tight slacks and white shirt that clung to every curve and muscle…

He tore his gaze back to Cho and grinned lamely.

"Yes."

"What's your business at Hogwarts?" Draco asked and managed to sound both rude and condescending at once. Harry could see Cho bristling. She and Malfoy locked gazes and Harry groaned inwardly, hoping it wasn't going to be one of those trips that required Harry to play peacemaker the entire way. Malfoy conjured a small notepad. "I need it for our records."

"I'm researching the Hogwarts' ghosts for a story I'm writing," Luna said brightly. She hurried over to Draco and peered over his arm to watch him write. "I'm the Assistant Editor of The Quibbler, you know."

"The ghosts of Hogwarts?" Harry repeated. "That sounds like a *real* story."

Luna's blue eyes narrowed.

"What do you mean by that?"

Harry cleared his throat uncomfortably, but did not mention that The Quibbler generally published tales that were… farfetched… to put it mildly. Luna sniffed.

"And Cho will be teaching flying lessons. Madam Hooch is taking some time off to care for her sick mother. You have beautiful handwriting, by the way."

"Thank you," Draco said noncommittally and vanished the pad and quill. Malfoy conjured a pair of sunglasses—a Muggle accessory Harry deeply regretted introducing to Draco. He looked so

utterly devastating in the dark shades that Harry's heart nearly stopped whenever he wore them. This time was no exception. Luna sighed deeply, looking at Malfoy when he slipped them on and Harry felt the momentary urge to drag her from Draco's side.

"Shall we go, then?" Draco suggested.

The four of them mounted their brooms and set off.

Malfoy took the lead and Luna hurried to ride next to him. Harry found himself next to Cho Chang. Her long black hair blew gently in the breeze.

"You're looking… well," he said after a long silence.

"So are you," she replied. He wasn't sure how to respond, and resigned himself to the fact that he would always act like a tongue-tied imbecile around her.

"Where's Hermione Granger?" she asked finally.

"Hermione? She married Ron Weasley. They live in Ottery St. Catchpole."

Cho turned shocked dark eyes on him.

"She married *Ron*? But I always thought—"

Harry laughed. "You thought me and Hermione?"

"Well, you were always together."

"The three of us were always together. Actually, I was planning to marry Ginny Weasley, but—" He broke off, not willing to wander down that dark path again. Ginny had died to save him—the catalyst that had led to Voldemort's defeat and the loss of Harry's powers. Powers that Draco had helped him regain. His eyes touched on Malfoy, whose black cape fluttered in contrast to his platinum hair. Luna laughed and reached out to touch a hand to Draco's arm. Harry felt a flash of irritation that surprised him.

"Ginny Weasley?" Cho asked and Potter dragged his thoughts back to the conversation with a sigh. Harry used to dwell on Ginny's memory constantly, but these days he found himself preoccupied by grey eyes and silver-blonde hair. It felt like betrayal.

"She died," he said simply.

Cho reached out and touched his arm—a strange mirror of Luna and Draco.

"I'm so sorry. I hadn't heard."

"So," he said, changing the subject. "Flying lessons?"

She nodded. "I played Quidditch for the Tutshill Tornadoes after Hogwarts, but my parents kept worrying that I'd be seriously injured. Flitwick wrote me and said they were looking for a fill-in, so here I am."

"And Luna?"

"I feel bad for the way we treated her in school," Cho admitted. "She's… fun. Something I didn't appreciate back then. She did this really bizarre story about some creatures infesting Bludgers. Complete bollocks, of course, but I kept in touch with her after the interview."

Harry felt a brief nudge from his constant companion—guilt. He had barely kept in touch with anyone after the war. Ron and Hermione knew he had regained his abilities and was working for an escort service (Hermione had laughed hysterically about that), but he had not been brave enough to mention Draco Malfoy. That would have to wait until he saw his friends in person. He flushed, knowing that even mentioning Malfoy would cause Hermione to sense the volumes of unspoken information Harry had no intention of ever revealing to them.

That erratic thought conjured images of Draco's hands and lips and—

"You certainly do drift off into your own thoughts," Cho commented. Harry was startled at her perception and hoped his face wasn't ludicrously red from his daydreaming.

"I spent a long time alone," he commented. "I think it's become a habit."

Malfoy halted suddenly and the other followed his lead. Harry hopped off his broom and joined him. He looked at Draco questioningly. It was early for anything dangerous. The first spot of trouble was normally a bad patch near Northampton that caused brooms to do unusual things like flip upside down or shoot upwards.

"Something's changed," Malfoy said seriously.

Harry looked ahead at the placid countryside. Everything looked normal, but he had learned to implicitly trust Draco's instincts. They were uncanny, at times.

Malfoy stared impassively into the early afternoon air for so long that he looked like a chiseled statue. With sunglasses. The girls shifted impatiently. Harry stepped back to join them.

"What is it?" Cho asked.

"I don't know. There normally is no danger in this area, but something is different. Perhaps it blew in with the storm," Harry replied.

Malfoy finally turned.

"I can't put my finger on it, but I think I know where it is."

"We confront it, then," Harry said instantly, feeling a flash of excitement at the thought. He hadn't dispatched anything horrid in far too long.

He sensed Draco rolling his eyes.

"You're such a Gryffindor."

Harry scowled. "You suggest we avoid it, then?"

"No, you're right. We need to get rid of it." Malfoy grinned. "I just like to point out your shortcomings."

"Being a Gryffindor is not a shortcoming."

"Says you."

Harry tugged at his hair, but gave Malfoy a playful shove.

"Let's just go, damn you."

"Gryffindor idiot."

"Slytherin jerk."

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Chapter: 5

Chapter Five

They proceeded more cautiously, flying low and slowly. Malfoy took the lead and the two women rode together behind him. Harry brought up the rear. They all kept their wands out and Harry was glad to know if there was trouble that neither Cho nor Luna would be screaming and shrinking away from danger.

The attack came without warning. One moment Draco was flying warily, the next he was gone. Harry blinked and maneuvered his broom past Cho in a flash of motion.

"Where did he go?" Harry yelled. Before Cho could respond, the earth burst upward and

slammed Harry into the sky with such force he felt bones crack. He spun away with a dizzying sensation, but managed to keep one hand on his broom. He began to fall back to earth and forced down the pain as he struggled to orient himself.

He flipped the broom beneath him in a rolling maneuver and scanned the ground for Cho and Luna, but before he could spot them, both were flying beside him.

"Harry!" Cho cried. "Are you all right?"

"What was it?" he yelled, frantically searching both ground and sky for any sign of Draco.

"I don't know—the ground just came up and hit you. Luna and I both flew after you."

The ground came up—what the hell could it be?

And where was Malfoy?

"Stay here!"

He darted back to the place where Draco had disappeared and boulders suddenly began to fly at him like a meteor storm. He dodged most of them, but one grazed his hip—the same one he'd bruised on the stairs the previous night—and another slammed into his chest, nearly knocking him spinning before he recovered and ducked another spiraling at his head.

He began throwing spells at the ground—how could the *ground* be attacking?—although he wasn't certain what to use. Nothing seemed to have any effect.

As he approached, the land reared up in a large, solid mass with the crunching, grating sound of rock on rock.

It suddenly clicked for Harry. An earth elemental. Where the hell was Draco? Malfoy was the one that knew how to battle all these freakish creatures—oh God, he was underground. He had to be, or he would have been here. Harry suddenly knew the clock was ticking.

He racked his brain trying to recall what he knew of elementals. Typically, they needed to be summoned—obviously a task Voldemort or another Death Eater had accomplished. This one had likely been freed by the death of the summoner, so dispelling it could be tricky.

Harry didn't have time for finesse. He executed a barrel roll and narrowly avoided a chunk of rock large enough to pulverize him. Harry, feeling the beginnings of panic, dove straight at the creature.

He leveled a concentrated blast of force that demolished the elemental, but Harry knew it wouldn't take long to reform. He needed to remove it from its element. Movement caught his eye and he noticed Cho and Luna flying beside him. He briefly wondered if there was a female alive

that ever listened to a man.

"Cho, when it returns, I need you two to levitate it as high as you can manage!" he yelled. She nodded.

The three of them hovered just above the ground, alert for movement. The earth suddenly exploded beneath them and Cho's spell yanked a massive chunk of rock and dirt into the air. Luna helped, but Harry could see them straining with effort.

The creature began to hurl stones at them again, but Harry concentrated all his energy and sent a blast of force at the elemental. It exploded.

"Don't let it fall!" he bellowed and continued to send spell after spell at it, shattering the smaller bits into powder. Luna caught on to his purpose and assisted, creating a strong wind that scattered the dust in every direction.

When the creature was completely dissipated, Harry turned and hurried back to the place where Draco had disappeared, praying he was in time. Without dismounting—he knew his leg was broken—he collected every bit of his energy and extracted a massive chunk of earth. He levitated it and held it above the ground. It began to fall to pieces and he hurried the process by shaking it like a giant sieve.

To his immense relief, Draco's silver-blonde head soon appeared. Harry switched the spell to Malfoy and removed his still form, allowing the soil and stones to fall back to earth. He set Draco down gently and then flung himself off of his broom, wincing as he realized that although his left foot wasn't broken, it was definitely bruised. He kept his weight off the right leg entirely, but movement alone shifted the broken bone and sent red agony exploding through his body.

Harry ignored the pain and threw himself at Draco's side. Both hands grasped Malfoy's neck, begging for a pulse—he found one, but it was weak and erratic. If Malfoy breathed, Harry couldn't detect it.

He put a hand under Draco's neck and tipped his head back before placing his mouth over Malfoy's—how many times had he done that?—in desperation. He breathed air into Draco's lungs. Three times, then four. Then five.

Draco coughed. Wild joy surged through Harry and he gave Malfoy one last breath that was half-kiss. Draco's hand rose weakly to touch Potter's hair gently.

Harry pulled back in relief to see the grey eyes open.

"Bastard broke my shades," Draco said hoarsely.

"I'll buy you another pair," Harry promised with a relieved chuckle.

"What were you doing?" Cho asked. She and Luna stood nearby, watching his antics.

"Breathing for him," Harry replied. "It's a Muggle remedy to save someone's life. Works great on drowning victims, although Muggles generally don't drown in dirt."

"Where's my wand?"

Harry *Accioed* it from its burial spot and handed it to Malfoy, who immediately sat up and set about restoring his appearance. Harry smiled ruefully and sat back carefully to examine his injuries.

"Harry! You're leg is broken!" Cho exclaimed.

"That would explain the blinding pain," Harry said dryly. Draco broke off his preening and looked at him worriedly. There were dirt and twigs in Malfoy's platinum hair—a capital offense. Harry closed his eyes for a moment as his brief movement caused a wave of nausea and flickering blackness to lick at him. He felt Draco's arm under his shoulders leaning him back.

"I can heal it myself," Harry muttered.

"Not if you pass out first," Draco snapped.

"Nag."

"Imbecile."

"I'll do it," Cho said. Harry felt the leg of his jeans being torn open. "Hold him—I have to put the bone back into place."

Harry steeled himself as Malfoy's familiar, comforting arms enfolded him. He gripped Draco's arm with one hand and pressed his head into Malfoy's chest.

Cho shifted the bone and it took every ounce of Harry's willpower not to scream. He vaguely heard Draco's voice murmuring to him soothingly, though he couldn't make out the words.

An instant later, his calf was enveloped in heat and the tingling pain of knitting bone and flesh. He breathed a sigh of relief when it was done. Draco's hands fell away and Malfoy stood up.

"Well, wasn't that fun?" he asked flippantly. "Elemental?"

Harry nodded and leaned forward to repair his jeans. The torn fabric wove together, albeit not prettily.

"I'm going to be penniless if I have to keep buying clothes," he commented and looked at Draco in amusement. The silver eyes gleamed warmly as Malfoy cast a spell that returned his bright

locks to perfection.

"You can't blame *me* this time," he said. Harry grinned and stood up. His left foot could barely support his weight, but he would deal with that later. He was too tired, at the moment.

"We dispersed the elemental, but it will be back," Harry said. Malfoy nodded.

"We'll deal with it permanently when we return, now that we know what it is. For now, let's keep moving."

They flew without further incident until dusk, when Draco landed at a familiar camp site. Harry pulled out the tent they used when traveling with clients. Malfoy set it up while Harry wandered off to collect firewood. A fire wasn't necessary, but they generally built one in order to look like typical Muggle campers. Cho decided to accompany Harry. Normally, he would have been glad for the company, but at the moment he would have preferred solitude. Harry hadn't slept well, between Malfoy's midnight return and the subsequent pleasant torment of sleeping next to him.

"You're limping," Cho commented.

"Just a bruised foot," he said and *Accioed* a small branch to add to the growing pile he levitated nearby. He also had a gargantuan bruise on his chest and a smaller one on his hip, but those were more annoying than painful.

"Let me heal it for you," she suggested.

"It's nothing."

"If it were nothing, you wouldn't be limping. Now sit down and let me look at it."

Harry scowled at her.

"You've grown awfully bossy."

"And you remain as stubborn as ever."

Years of dealing with Hermione had taught Harry not to argue with females when they got that particular glint in their eyes, so he sighed deeply and sat on a nearby boulder.

Cho carefully pulled off his black boot—no easy feat considering his foot had swollen tight against the leather—and peeled his sock down. Her fingers probed the purpling wound and Harry observed with a clinical annoyance that he felt absolutely nothing at her touch. He found it astonishing that a beautiful woman knelt at his feet and his only desire was for her to hurry with her ministrations. Had he gone completely insane?

Harry wondered how he would feel if Malfoy performed the same chore—he imagined the long,

pale fingers sliding over his bruises and his reaction was immediate and disturbing. Harry flushed scarlet, painfully acknowledging his undeniable obsession with Draco.

The Slytherin in question chose that moment to appear nearby. His pale brows rose sharply as he took in Cho's position and Harry's blush. Draco's expression turned glacial and Harry groaned.

"Sorry to interrupt," Malfoy drawled without sounding even vaguely apologetic.

"I'm only healing Harry's foot," Cho said sharply.

"What's wrong with his foot?" Draco demanded.

"I think it might be fractured. It's very swollen."

Draco's eyes leveled on Harry.

"Too noble to mention it, eh, Potter?" Draco asked. His tone was perfectly even, but Harry knew him well enough to pick up volumes of emotion beneath the words. Malfoy was livid. "Carry on, then."

Draco spun on a heel and stalked away. Harry stared after him in bewilderment.

"Carry on?" Cho snapped. "He's such a bastard! How can you even stand to work with him?"

"He's not so bad," Harry said quietly with a sudden flash of memory. A hot summer night three or four weeks prior; they had been returning from a job and camped under a brilliant star-filled sky. They were both too tired to converse—too tired to even move, and had simply lain on the grass side by side, shoulders touching, and stared at the brilliant panorama of constellations.

Harry pointed to a bright trail of stars gleaming across the heavens.

"There you are. Draco. How does it feel to have your own constellation?"

"Appropriate."

Harry laughed and Draco said, "We need to find one for you."

"I think they've all been named. And Constellation Harry doesn't sound very romantic."

Draco pointed. "There. That one is you. Leo; the Gryffindor lion."

Harry was strangely pleased. Draco levered himself up and placed a sweet kiss on Harry's lips.

"Goodnight, Potter."

"Goodnight, Malfoy."

Harry sighed and shook off the memory. He had barely noticed Cho healing his foot, but now he wiggled his toes.

"He doesn't like me much," Cho commented.

"He doesn't like anyone much. Where did you learn to heal?"

"The war."

Harry nodded and pulled his sock and boot back on.

"We should get back."

"Yes, it wouldn't do to upset Lord Malfoy."

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Chapter: 6

Chapter Six

Draco stalked back to the tent, cursing himself for six kinds of a fool. He had gone after Potter like jealous idiot, hoping to stop him from… what? He halted before the innocuous-looking tent and ran a hand through his platinum hair. Draco had to let go and stop wishing for something that could never be. If Potter decided he wanted Cho Chang, there was nothing he could do about it.

He stooped and entered the tent, which was a lovely two bedroom flat on the inside. Luna glanced up from the sofa on which she reclined.

"What's wrong?" she asked. Draco scowled.

"What do you mean?"

"You look upset."

Draco froze. Bloody hell, he really was losing his mind if his emotions were that easy to read.

"Nothing. I'm going out to hunt. Potter should be back shortly. Maybe." He managed to control the bitterness in his voice. He hoped.

He left the tent and entered the woods, looking for something to kill.

ooOoo

Harry had built a bonfire outside the tent and the darkness was complete before Malfoy returned with a brace of partridge. Draco barely nodded at Harry before ducking inside to prepare dinner. Potter had been banned from food preparation after Malfoy had tasted Harry's cooking. Draco cooked like a bloody gourmet chef, another of his limitless talents. Cho stayed outside with Harry, even though he wasn't in the mood for company, but he kept the conversation safely on Quidditch. Cho had several stories about the Tutshill Tornadoes that managed to get Harry chuckling after awhile.

Luna came out to announce dinner. When they went inside to eat, Harry found that Draco had already retired for the night. Harry was disturbed, wondering what Malfoy was upset about and how long he planned to sulk. He and the women ate and cleaned up. Cho and Luna entered the guest bedroom and Harry went to find Draco asleep—or feigning sleep—in the master suite.

He debated waking Malfoy for a brief moment, but knew the consequences would be unpleasant. Either Draco would snarl at him in ice-cold rage, or he would simply hex Harry into unconsciousness, or worse. Harry wasn't willing to risk either option, so he sighed, undressed, and climbed into his own bed where he lay awake for several exasperating hours, listening to the sound of Malfoy's breathing.

ooOoo

Draco rose early after a mostly sleepless night. He dressed quietly and paused before leaving. Harry was sprawled across his bed with the blankets twisted haphazardly over his legs. His bare back rose and fell in a steady pattern. Malfoy sighed and went out. He cooked a quick breakfast and ate alone; hoping to escape before the others awoke, but Harry caught him in the kitchen doorway. Potter was disheveled and shirtless and Draco nearly had to clench his hands into fists to keep from touching him.

Harry's green eyes flashed.

"How long do you plan to avoid me?" he demanded.

Until you beg my forgiveness and promise to stay with me forever, Draco thought wryly, but what he said was, "I don't know what you're talking about."

Harry reached out a hand and Draco, who had never backed down from a challenge in his life, considered bolting, but the matter was taken out of his hands.

"Good morning," said Cho Chang pleasantly, pulled her long hair back into a horse's tail as she approached. She looked pretty as a ripe peach. Harry's hand fell away and Draco escaped the tent as though chased by the hoards of hell.

ooOoo

Harry watched him leave in growing annoyance.

"He's about as pleasant as a rabid werewolf, isn't he?" she asked.

"Yes, mostly," Harry agreed, trying not to recall the dozens of times Mafloy had been the exact opposite. When this job was over, Potter planned to tie Draco up and torture him until he got some straight answers. The mere thought of doing so made Harry feel a bit lightheaded, so he hurriedly fetched a plate and loaded it with sausages, potatoes, eggs, and toast. Luna joined them and they ate quickly before Malfoy decided to dismantle the tent around them.

As expected, Draco was completely prepared and impatiently waiting by the time they finished. The pleasant weather had already turned and a light drizzle greeted them outside.

When Luna spotted Draco, she happily threw her arms around him and planted a kiss on his mouth. Malfoy and Potter shared a glance of total surprise at her gesture before Harry's brows drew down in displeasure.

"Good morning, Draco!" Luna said brightly. "Thank you for breakfast—you're a fabulous cook." She snuggled against him for a moment. "You're warm, too. And you smell good. Can I ride with you today?"

The urge to hex Luna was strong, but Cho spoke before Harry could react.

"Luna! Don't be ridiculous!"

Luna looked at her without releasing Draco.

"What's ridiculous about it?"

Draco raised a brow at Cho with a hint of his emblematic smirk. Harry opened his mouth to comment, but then Draco's hand rose to the small of Luna's back and he gave her a small pat. Words escaped Harry in a flare of white-hot rage that took him completely by surprise. Luna watched him with curious interest. Harry spun away and began to tear down the tent automatically. He could barely see what he was doing and his thoughts were in turmoil. Malfoy's words kept ringing in his head.

Flesh is flesh. Need is need.

Apparently Draco's amusement with Harry had come to an end and Malfoy was ready for a new game. Potter suddenly wished the elemental would return and encase Harry in a tomb of stone and earth. He felt suddenly, completely cursed.

Malfoy had saved his soul with a kiss and stolen it away with those that followed.

ooOoo

To Draco's relief, Luna did not insist on riding with him. Once Potter began to dismantle the tent, Luna patted Malfoy on the cheek, released him, and fetched her broom. Draco watched Harry with narrowed eyes for a moment. Potter didn't seem to be bothered in the least by Luna practically mauling him. Draco berated himself. What the hell did he expect? A jealous tirade? Hair pulling? Something besides casual acceptance, at any rate.

Cho Chang, however, shot him venomous glares, as if by merely touching Luna he had tainted Cho's friend. Malfoy ignored her, which wasn't difficult in the least. He mounted his broom once Potter had finished packing and turned an expressionless green stare on Draco.

The final obstacle to Hogwarts was reached before midday. A null-flying zone prevented travel by broom and they would have to walk through an unpleasant stretch of swampland inhabited by Cornish pixies, dugbogs, and swamp insects. Nothing terribly dangerous, but quite unpleasant. Draco found the muck to be far more irritating than the inhabitants.

Draco allowed Harry to explain the situation to Cho and Luna while he calmly unbuttoned his sleeves and rolled them up a bit. The cloudy, damp day had grown damnably hot and humid.

Several fried pixies and dead dugbogs later, they stopped for a short break on the first dry hillock they encountered. The girls collapsed, panting from the exertion of walking through calf-deep water and clinging mud. Harry leaned on his broom, looking tired. Draco was reluctant to stop moving. He wanted to get to Hogwarts and shed himself of his companions as soon as possible.

"I'll scout ahead a moment," he said and walked onward, using his wand as a machete to cut offending branches from his path. He hadn't gone twenty steps before a hand on his arm halted him. He turned and was not surprised to meet Harry's stormy eyes. Draco tried to pull away, but Potter's grip tightened. Draco took a step back. Instead of solid ground, his foot dipped into a hole and Malfoy lost his balance with a sharp intake of breath. His back slammed into a tree trunk and the movement jerked Harry forward by his hold on Draco's arm. Their torsos banged together and Draco dropped his broom to keep Harry from toppling them sideways into the swamp.

Potter's startled face hovering before his was an opportunity Draco didn't dare let go to waste. Without hesitation, he took Harry's lips in a searing, possessive kiss.

ooOoo

The instant Draco's lips touched Harry's, he was lost. He had followed Malfoy with the intention of forcing a confrontation. He didn't expect to fall headlong into him, although he shouldn't have been startled at Draco's response. He wasn't at all surprised by his own capitulation—he clung to Malfoy like a lifeline and devoured him even as he was being consumed.

Harry could no longer think—all he could do was feel, and taste, and touch. His hands tugged at Draco's shirt and a low moan burst from his throat when Malfoy's mouth left his to burn a hot path down the side of his neck.

Draco paused at the open throat of Harry's shirt long enough to nip off a single button. Startled, Harry began to laugh. Malfoy straightened and kissed him again. Harry felt the button on Draco's tongue and took it with his own, still chuckling.

They froze when an approaching voice interrupted them.

"Harry?"

It was Cho. Malfoy broke the kiss and looked at Harry with eyes of silver flame for a moment.

"I really hate that woman," Draco said. An instant later, he had picked up his broom and was gone. Harry stared into the undergrowth where Malfoy had disappeared and reached up in bemusement to take the button out of his mouth. He grinned and slipped it into his pocket instead of reattaching it.

Harry felt strangely content. While he hadn't exactly gotten the intended confrontation, it was at least obvious that Malfoy still wanted him.

"Harry? What are you doing?" Cho asked when she came into view. "Are we moving on already?"

"I… needed to talk to Malfoy for a minute." Harry made as though to return to Luna, but Cho stopped him with a hand on his chest. He looked at her curiously and waited.

"Harry. I wanted you to know… in school I was something of an idiot," she said.

Potter wondered why she was bringing it up. Frankly, he had no desire to remember the days when she had acted like a human hosepipe.

"I really liked Cedric," she went on. "But, I didn't realize until much later… that I liked you more."

Her hand on his chest slid up to rest on his shoulder and she leaned closer.

"I like you even more now, Harry," she murmured breathily and raised her lips to kiss him. It was lucky her eyes were closed or she would likely have been shocked to see Harry's eyes widen in astonishment. Her soft lips pressed gently against his and Harry couldn't help but compare the kiss to Draco's possessive, scorching, demanding kiss from moments before.

Cho pressed harder and parted her lips a bit, as if seeking a response, but Harry felt completely

wooden. He couldn't even raise his arms to hold her.

She broke off and stepped back to look at him in hurt bewilderment.

"You don't want me, do you?" she asked.

"It isn't your fault," he whispered.

She turned and fled while Harry remained where he was, feeling mortified and confused. He hoped she didn't spend the rest of the journey sobbing.

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Chapter: 7

Chapter Seven

A shout yanked Harry out of his reverie.

"Potter!" It was Malfoy. Harry turned and hurtled through the brush, splashing through puddles as he went. He tore his wand out of his pocket and paused, uncertain as to direction until Draco called again.

Harry raced forward until he burst upon a bizarre vista. Malfoy stood thigh-deep in an open pool skimmed with green scum. He was ringed with horrible-looking grayish creatures only slightly shorter than a man. They were armed with brutish clubs, rusted iron daggers, or sharp spears tipped with bone.

Three of them were down, which explained why the others hung back cautiously. As Harry watched, one of them hurled a spear at Draco's head. A bolt from Harry's wand broke it in half in mid-flight and sent the pieces splashing into the water.

Malfoy laughed.

"I knew I called you for a reason."

"I thought you just wanted me to see how pretty you looked when you were wet," Potter replied.

"Not the best time to seduce me, Potter."

"You know I can't control myself around you," Harry said in a teasing tone, although the words were true. "What are these things?"

At least a dozen of them clustered in small groups. Three of them were shuffling toward Harry. One tried to creep up on Draco from behind, wading into the pond, but Malfoy turned and hit it with a bolt that sent it scrambling back to dry land.

"Bugbears."

"Bugbears are real? I thought they were stories to scare children."

More of the creatures appeared through the trees.

"Are you scared, Potter?"

"No, but I'm getting a bit ill looking at them." The creatures were horrendously ugly, with grayish-green skin covered in warty knobs. They had two great Dobby-like ears with tufts of hair at the ends, and huge mouths full of snaggly, pointed teeth. Their bodies were squat and their limbs bony and mottled. They wore tattered clothing held on with vines or frayed cord. Harry recognized a Muggle tie draped around the neck of one and another wore a barely recognizable floral-patterned skirt. Harry was taken aback—their clothing seemed to have been taken from Muggle victims.

"I'll protect you," Draco said as Harry waded into the water to escape the group that approached his vicinity. Two threw spears and one a bony club, but Malfoy deflected the spears and Harry sent the club flying back to smash into the head of the sender.

Harry hissed as the cold water rose to his thighs and he pushed through the green froth to stand with his back to Draco's.

"Why aren't they attacking?"

"They don't like water," Malfoy replied, pressing his back against Harry's. Potter leaned his head back against Draco's for a moment and chuckled.

"They hate water, yet they live in a swamp?"

"Not originally. They were mountain creatures until… you know."

"Voldemort, yeah."

One bugbear began to make grunting, snarling sounds and gestured at the others. Malfoy pounded a spell at it and it flew backward into a tree and lay still.

"Anyone else want to volunteer to take charge?" Draco called. To Harry, he said, "Stunners don't work on them."

"What does?"

"*Avada Kedavra*."

"I won't kill them!" Harry protested.

"For pity's sake, Potter, your bloody Gryffindor morality is going to kill both of us one day."

"But not this day."

"Well, probably not. They're only bugbears." To illustrate, Draco raised his wand and grinned. "Watch this." He cast, muttering, and one of the bugbears suddenly went berserk and clubbed his nearest companion. The bludgeoned bugbear howled in pain and slashed his attacker with a jagged bone knife. In moments, several of them were involved in a muddy brawl. Malfoy laughed in delight. "They're really susceptible to the *Imperius Curse*."

Harry frowned. "That's horrible."

"I'm a horrible person, Potter. I thought you knew that."

"No, you're not."

A huge rock flew at them and Harry knocked it casually aside.

"Other than having them kill each other, how do you propose we get rid of them?" Harry asked.

"What's wrong with having them kill each other? Don't answer that, you bloody altruistic Gryffindor, you. Actually, I'm just waiting for our diversion."

"Diversion?"

"Here she comes now," Draco said casually as Cho Chong's voice carried to them. The bugbears froze and then began an excited grunting, as if the prospect of tender, female flesh whet their appetites.

"You're using Cho as bait?" Harry snapped.

"Sure. Don't worry; your girlfriend is no weakling. In fact, I'd consider her to be a—"

"She's not my girlfriend."

The bugbears moved en masse into the trees, heading for Cho. Malfoy began picking them off while wading quickly out of the pond.

"They're more vulnerable from behind," Draco explained.

"So are you!" Harry cried as a spear thrown by a straggler sailed toward Draco's back until Harry blasted it off-course.

"I trust you to keep them off me," Malfoy said simply. Harry found the best methods to stop the creatures were to slam them into objects or bash them over the head—they seemed to be immune to sleep, stun, and immobilization spells. He didn't ask what Draco was using, since he feared the effects were much more permanent.

Harry heard Cho shout and knew the bugbears had reached her. Malfoy climbed out of the water and darted through the trees with Harry on his heels. They reached Cho and Luna to find three bugbears gyrating in the air where Luna had levitated them. Another lay still at Cho's feet while two others menaced her.

A green light from Draco's wand hit one and a burst from Harry's sent the other winging away from Cho to pound into a nearby tree. Luna released hers and they slammed into the ground. Two of them lay motionless and the third picked itself up and scrambled into the wood. Malfoy and Potter spun warily with wands ready, but the remaining bugbears seemed to have given up the fight.

Harry gripped Cho's shoulders.

"Are you okay?" he asked. She nodded and enveloped him in a relieved hug. It surprised him, considering his earlier rejection. He patted her back reassuringly. He met Luna's gaze over his shoulder. She looked puzzled.

"Let's get out of here before they regroup," Draco said harshly. Harry looked at him in surprise, but Malfoy was already striding away.

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They quickly collected brooms and gear and resumed their trek. Malfoy set a blistering pace that soon had Cho complaining angrily as she climbed over rotting tree stumps and waded through mud.

"Does he have to walk so bloody fast?" she snarled at Harry after Draco had disappeared for the fourth time. Harry knew he'd be back shortly to give them another disapproving silver glare and urge them onward.

"He only wants us to get there before nightfall," Harry explained.

"Why are you always defending him?" she demanded.

Harry glared at her.

"Stay here and take a bloody break!" he said. "I'll go talk to him."

Without waiting for Cho's response, he stalked after Malfoy and quickly caught him on his return.

"Can't you persuade your girlfriend and the loopy one to hurry?" Malfoy asked mildly.

"For the last time, she's not my girlfriend and it's obvious you're pushing us ridiculously fast. What's the hurry?"

Malfoy reached up and patted Harry's cheek as if he were a cute pet or little child.

"I just want to get there, Potter."

"Why?"

Draco leaned closer to murmur in Harry's ear.

"I'm sure you know why."

Harry had finally had enough of Malfoy's mercurial mood swings. He pushed Draco away forcibly.

"Malfoy, you've got to stop treating me like your goddamn plaything!" he snapped.

"I thought you liked being my plaything, Potter," Draco said, though his eyes glittered dangerously.

"Well, I *don't*!" Harry said angrily. "I think I need…" He struggled for words. "I deserve better—"

A mask of ice seemed to slip over Malfoy's features. Harry instantly knew he had said the wrong thing.

"You're right," Draco said with finality before Harry could explain. "You deserve much better than me." With that, he turned and vanished like a panther knifing into the shadows. Harry swore and hammered his fist into a nearby tree.

"That's not what I meant, you pigheaded Slytherin son of a bitch!"

But Draco was gone. Harry renewed his vow to tie the silver-haired bastard up as soon as they reached Hogwarts.

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Chapter: 8

Chapter Eight

Harry stalked back to the girls, but halted when he overheard Luna talking to Cho.

"…wasting your time with Harry."

"What are you talking about, Ms. Hanging On Draco Malfoy Tighter Than a Quidditch Robe?" Cho demanded.

Harry nearly kept walking, especially when he heard Malfoy's voice in his head with a mocking timbre say, "Eavesdropping is *wrong*," but he was simply too curious. Luna laughed.

"Oh, that. I was just trying to make Harry jealous."

Harry's brain did a momentary disconnect at her words, a condition obviously mirrored by Cho.

"What? Make Harry jealous? Of you? Or of Draco? That makes no sense."

"Of course it does. Can't you see they're terribly in love? I just wanted to give them a little nudge. Because they don't seem to want to acknowledge it."

Harry suddenly felt like he was suffocating.

"In love? Who?"

"Harry and Draco!" Luna said in exasperation. "Honestly, are you blind? Haven't you noticed how Harry's eyes go all out of focus when he talks about Malfoy? And haven't you seen the way Draco is constantly watching him? You should have seen him when you and Harry went into the woods yesterday. Draco paced like a caged tiger. It was dreadfully sweet. He loves Harry so much it's almost painful to watch. I just wanted to give Harry a taste of what Draco was feeling. Because he doesn't seem to know."

Harry's knees felt weak. He didn't hear Cho's response because he turned and raced into the wood, looking for Malfoy.

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Harry was too late. Draco was gone. He searched for twenty minutes before he realized that Malfoy had actually left. After forcing down his frustration and growing despair, he collected Cho and Luna and they continued on to Hogwarts.

Cho watched him closely as they flew, but she didn't bother to ask where Malfoy went. She was likely too busy processing the information Luna had disclosed. Harry was having a hard enough time with it, and he was the one in love with Draco Malfoy.

He dropped them off at the front gates of the school after sending a *Patronus* message to Hagrid to open the gates. He didn't even feel like sticking around to say hello to the groundskeeper.

Luna hugged him.

"You had a fight, didn't you?" she asked.

"Sort of, yes," Harry admitted.

"It will all work out," she said confidently.

"I hope so. Thanks, Luna."

Cho gave him a cool handshake and a measuring look before saying, "Good luck, Potter. I think you're going to need it."

As he pushed off and headed for London, he knew she was right.

xxXxx

Harry went home first, hoping against hope that he would walk in to find Malfoy reclining on the sofa in the study, or pacing in Harry's room waiting for him to return. But Number Twelve, Grimmauld Place was empty. Harry did not want to consider just how empty it would seem if Draco never returned. In the vacant hallway, something crunched under Harry's boot. He bent down and picked up a single button. As it glittered in his hand, he felt like weeping. Instead, he left immediately and went to Draco's flat on the other side of town.

The place was beautiful and cold, furnished all in white. The artwork and fixtures looked elegant and expensive, but they were made to look at and never touch. It looked like the sort of place people would expect Malfoy to inhabit. Another façade. As Harry walked around the sterile flat, he realized why Draco never spent any time there. It looked as desolate as Harry felt. It had taken Harry the whole night to fly back to London at top speed, and he had no idea where to look for Draco next. Harry collapsed on Malfoy's stylish but uncomfortable white bed and fell asleep.

When he awoke in the morning, he felt a bit better and immediately resolved to go and see Fred and George Weasley. If anyone knew how to find a missing person, it was the Weasley twins.

Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes resided in the same spot in Diagon Alley, although it had grown to encompass the shop next door. Fred (or George) looked up when Harry walked in and then leaped over the counter to pound him on the back.

"Harry Potter! Slumming with the regular folk today?"

The other twin hurried from the back room at his words and gave Harry the same treatment on the other shoulder blade.

"Harry! What brings you here?"

"In the market for some Decoy Detonators or Extendable Ears?"

"We heard you were in the escort business now."

"You need something to help you fight the Dark Arts?"

"Actually," Harry interrupted, "I need to find someone."

"Missing person, eh?"

"Haven't thought to go into that line of business."

"Not too many people disappearing nowadays."

"Not like they used to."

"I need to find Draco Malfoy."

Fred (Harry was pretty sure it was Fred) scowled at him.

"What do you want to find that git for?"

"Is it true you were working together?" George asked.

"Yes, but he's disappeared and now I need to find him."

"So you can kill him?" Fred asked hopefully.

"I was thinking more along the lines of torture," Harry said evenly.

Fred clapped. "Even better!"

George said, "You don't really need us, mate. All you have to do is go to Knockturn Alley and ask his old followers."

Fred nodded. "Yeah, Crabbe and Goyle. They took over Borgin and Burkes after Borgin vanished during the war."

"It's still called Borgin and Burkes, probably because they can't spell Crabbe and Goyle."

"If anyone knows where Malfoy hangs out, it should be them."

Harry wandered around the shop for a bit, trying not to appear impatient, but he finally escaped and practically ran to Knockturn Alley.

Borgin and Burkes looked precisely the same as it had when Harry had unwittingly visited the shop years before, except that everything now looked much smaller. He remembered hiding and watching young Draco try to wheedle gifts from his impatient father. He never would have dreamed that the boy he hated would have grown up to be the man he couldn't live without.

Crabbe was behind the counter, and fairly gaped at Harry when he walked in.

"Harry Potter?"

Potter didn't waste time with small talk, which was generally wasted on Malfoy's former minions, anyway.

"I'm looking for Draco Malfoy."

Goyle had been sitting in a chair behind the counter with his feet propped up and the front legs of the chair hovering off the ground. Goyle sat forward and the chair legs banged on the floor. He stood up and flexed muscles that had grown to outlandish proportion in the intervening years.

"He ain't here."

"Hold off, Greg," said Crabbe. "We're business owners, now, remember? We don't beat up potential customers."

"Customers," Harry repeated. "All right, then. If you tell me where I might find Malfoy, I'll buy something ridiculously expensive."

Goyle cracked his knuckles dangerously, but Crabbe's eyes lit up.

"*How* ridiculous?"

"What's the most expensive thing you've got?"

Crabbe pondered for a moment and Harry could practically see him adding several hundred Galleons to the price of everything in the store. Harry didn't care.

"You aren't planning to hurt Draco, are you?" he asked reluctantly.

"Of course not. I just need to have a little chat with him."

In the end, Harry purchased not only a ridiculous amount of magical bric-a-brac, but a ludicrous amount. He arranged to have it sent to Number Twelve, Grimmauld Place and hoped he could dispose of it before Lupin returned, but he didn't waste time worrying about it. Goyle informed him that Malfoy could usually be found at a pub in Chelsea. Harry had the feeling Goyle was lying, but it was the only lead he had. He tossed a pouch full of Galleons on the counter and went out.

Harry had not gone far up Knockturn Alley before he heard his name called. He turned to see Vincent Crabbe running after him.

"Hey, Potter!" Harry waited and Crabbe huffed to a halt.

"You really aren't planning to hurt Draco, are you?"

"No. I rather… I sort of like him, now."

Crabbe laughed and it was no longer the evil, horrid laugh that had followed Potter through the halls of Hogwarts. It was a mature, natural laugh. Who would have guessed Vincent Crabbe would have grown into a human being?

"You love him, mate. I can tell. Everyone loves Draco once they get past… you know, the *walls*."

Harry grinned ruefully, surprised at Crabbe's astuteness.

"Yeah."

"You can probably find him at Malfoy Manor."

"Malfoy Manor? But I thought it was destroyed."

"It was. You'll see what I mean when you get there. Luck to you, Potter."

Crabbe raised a hand and trotted back to Borgin and Burkes.

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Chapter: 9

Chapter Nine

Thankfully, Wiltshire was close to London. Harry didn't know exactly where Malfoy Manor was, but the old Order of the Phoenix records had it pinpointed quite nicely. It only took a quick trip back to Twelve Grimmauld Place to snag the information and Harry was in the sky again.

He was so single-minded about his destination that he shredded through a stray group of dementors on the way as if they were black tissue paper. It was early afternoon when he set down on a beautiful green sward before a partially rebuilt mansion. Harry swallowed as he climbed the makeshift wooden steps that led to the front porch. The outer walls of the mansion were in a rough state of construction. The roof seemed to be done, but none of the brickwork had been started and the pillars holding up the porch were simple large posts. The front door stood open.

Harry propped his broom against the outside wall and went in. A massive amount of framing met his gaze. He seemed to be in a huge vestibule and a vast staircase led both upstairs and downstairs beyond. To his right was a large room—possibly a parlour—that had barely been started. The floors were bare and an opening stood where a fireplace belonged.

Harry heard banging around the corner to the right and headed that direction. He walked down what would eventually be a hallway and entered a room that was surprisingly near completion. The walls looked finished and a huge bay window looked out over the green lawn. The fireplace mantle was black-veined grey marble and the partially-finished floor was dark hardwood. Draco was working on the floor. He had his back to Harry and his shirt was off as he expertly cut a plank of wood with his wand and levitated it into place on the floor. He conjured nails and hammered them into place using a spell Harry had never suspected existed.

While less strenuous than the Muggle method, the repetitious motion was not without effort and Malfoy's skin shone with sweat. His long, silver-blonde hair fell over his eyes in abandon. Harry thought he'd never seen Draco look more appealing. He leaned against the doorjamb and watched him in appreciation.

Malfoy seemed to sense his presence and his grey eyes snapped up to stare implacably at Harry for a moment before he straightened.

"Potter," he said casually. "Took you long enough."

Harry nodded. "You knew I'd find you?"

"Of course. I assume you've come to give me a stern talking to? A piece of your narrow Gryffindor mind? A lecture about the error of my ways? A long list of reasons why you plan never to see me again?"

"No, not really," Harry said and chuckled. "In fact, you've managed to get it wrong on every count."

Draco's eyes narrowed and Harry noted with satisfaction that he'd finally managed to perplex the overconfident Slytherin. Harry fingered his wand with growing anticipation.

"Why are you here, then?" Draco asked.

Harry nodded. "We'll get to that. First, I need to find something." He turned and walked back through the house. As expected, Malfoy followed suspiciously. Harry wandered, apparently aimlessly, and finally stopped inside a large room that contained a group of pillars that would eventually be sheathed in something decorative—marble, most likely.

"Practically perfect," Harry muttered. "What room is this?"

"Drawing room," Draco replied, sounding perplexed. Harry turned and cried, "*Expelliarmus*!"

Malfoy's wand spun across the unfinished room. Before Draco could move, Harry ejected magical ropes from his wand that bound Malfoy's hands together. He gestured sharply and the ropes pulled Draco to the nearest pillar and wrapped around the post tightly, drawing his hands up over his head.

"What the hell are you doing, Potter?"

Harry, not wanting a knee in the groin, bound Draco's booted feet to the post, as well, before he leaned forward to grin at Malfoy in satisfaction.

"You know how irritating we Gryffindors are regarding promises, right? Well, I made a promise to myself that I would tie you up at the earliest opportunity. Naturally, I had to track you down in order to fulfill that vow."

Draco struggled against his bonds for only a moment before he relaxed and affected an air of boredom.

"Fine, Potter. You've tied me up. Now you may go."

Harry bent forward and kissed Draco's neck just below his right ear, making certain he dragged his teeth across the skin in a sensual torture before licking a swift line up to Malfoy's earlobe, tasting the salty tang of sweat. Draco inhaled sharply.

"I can't possibly go now. I haven't even started."

Harry, pressed firmly against Draco, felt Malfoy shudder at Harry's words. He slid his left hand over Draco's ribs, smoothing upward over each bump with his thumb. His right hand still held his wand, which he wasn't quite ready to relinquish.

Harry trailed his hand over Draco's breastbone and then followed the path of palest blonde hair down his abdomen to the waistband of Draco's black trousers.

Malfoy drew in a ragged breath and his shoulders flexed as he pulled at his bonds. Harry slowly

unbuckled Draco's belt.

"Don't, Potter," Malfoy said hoarsely.

"Shhhhhh," Harry hushed as he kissed a trail downward, following his hand as it unbuttoned Draco's slacks. He dropped to one knee and nuzzled his face into the gaping waistband, grinning with wicked glee when Draco gasped and jerked against the pillar. He pulled back for a moment and tapped one of Draco's boots with his wand, giving a brief word of thanks for magic when the boot vanished. He did the same to the other.

After that, he went to work on the trousers, using a severing spell to tear the seam on the slacks until it was a large enough rip for him to tear them completely open using brute force. Draco watched him through half-lidded eyes as Harry shredded his trousers until they were no longer an obstacle. Harry stepped back, panting a bit from exertion, and admired Draco's bound form, now clad only in thin black silk boxers.

"Why are you doing this?" Draco asked quietly.

Harry curled his lip in a passable imitation of Draco's sneer. He moved forward again and caressed the other side of Malfoy's neck with his lips.

"Just having a bit of fun. Isn't that what you always say? Just casual entertainment, right, Malfoy?"

Harry tucked his wand into his back pocket and put both hands on Draco's body, roving them slowly over chest, abdomen, back, and buttocks while kissing him hotly in various places, but not on the mouth—not yet. He could feel Malfoy tremble and his breath became unsteady. Harry slipped his hand under Draco's boxers and gripped Malfoy's hard, throbbing member. Draco thrashed against his bonds.

"Don't do this, Harry," Malfoy whispered.

Harry stroked the velvet shaft with his thumb and shut his eyes. If he met Draco's silver gaze, he'd never be able to continue.

"It's not quite as fun when you're not in control, is it?" Harry asked and partially opened his eyes to see Malfoy shake his head. He never stopped moving his hand, stroking languidly. Harry laughed wickedly. "Deal with it."

"You just came here to torture me, then?"

"Initially, yes," Harry admitted. "But not completely. The last time I spoke to you, I wasn't allowed to finish." Harry's caress grew stronger, more purposeful. Draco's breathing was uneven and he tipped his head back. His platinum hair brushed the long line of his neck and lay against his pale shoulders. Harry felt his own breath hitch at the erotic sight.

"You made yourself clear," Draco breathed. Harry pressed himself against Malfoy, nearly moaning as he thrust his hips forward to give Draco a taste of his own arousal. He dragged his open mouth over Draco's jaw, almost desperate to kiss him, but knowing such a move would shatter what was left of his self-control.

No, I don't think I did. You once told me that flesh is flesh and need is need, but that's not completely true, is it?" His mouth left Draco's jaw and moved downward to the hollow of his throat. Harry licked Malfoy's collarbone provocatively.

"You see, it doesn't explain why yours is the only flesh I want and *you* are the only one I need."

Harry pulled back slightly to meet Draco's startled silver gaze.

"When I said I deserve better, I meant that I deserve more than a casual relationship. I need more than that. And so do you."

His hand had not stopped moving and he was encouraged by the almost imperceptible trembling that afflicted Draco's body.

"What I need is to make love to you right now, and tonight, and tomorrow, and every bloody day that follows. I need to wake up in your arms and kiss your perfect lips and possess you as utterly and completely as you have possessed me."

He let go of Draco and allowed both hands to slide up the length of Malfoy's torso before he took a full step backward.

"Since I am, as you continually point out, a noble Gryffindor and not an unscrupulous Slytherin bastard, I'm going to release you and allow you to make a choice. Either you accept me on my terms or I walk out of here and never return."

Harry pulled his wand from his pocket and released Malfoy's bonds. He watched warily as Draco slowly lowered his arms and flexed his hands. The silver eyes burned like white-hot flames.

"Noble Gryffindor, my ass. That was the most unscrupulous bit of business I have ever seen." Malfoy stepped away from the pillar and walked slowly around Harry, who suddenly felt that he had just released a very hungry, very unpredictable, dragon.

Draco halted behind Harry, who felt a sudden chill of trepidation. What if Luna had been wrong?

"I see one small problem, Potter," Draco said and Harry felt Malfoy's hot breath behind his ear at the words.

Harry found his voice with difficulty.

"Which is?"

"Your shirt has too many fucking buttons."

Malfoy's hands suddenly reached over Harry's shoulders and violently tore his shirt open, sending buttons cascading across the floor. Draco body pressed hard against Harry's back and his hands slid over Potter's chest in a possessive caress. Harry felt Draco's lips beneath his ear as he tipped his head back in surrender.

"I accept your terms, Potter," Draco murmured.

Malfoy unexpectedly picked Harry up and carried him from the room.

"Where are we going?"

"Bedroom," Draco said and started up the stairs.

"It's finished?"

"Of course. You don't expect me to sleep on the floor in my own house, do you?"

Harry chuckled.

"Perish the thought."

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Chapter: 10

Chapter Ten

Draco's bedroom was nothing like the one in his stark, white flat in London. This one was all dark wood, rich fabrics, and luxurious comfort. The four poster bed was huge, as Harry discovered when Draco tossed him on it and immediately sprawled over him.

The long-awaited kiss was sheer bliss. Harry felt reality slipping away until Malfoy raised himself on his arms to look down at him.

"I like what you did to my pants, Potter. Your turn."

He snagged Harry's wand and spent the next few minutes leisurely slicing away Harry's jeans in a seductive reproduction of Harry's action downstairs. He didn't stop at the jeans, however. When

Harry was nude below the waist, Draco surveyed him with a wicked smirk and reached for him, but Harry scissored his legs around Malfoy's and flipped him over.

He pinned Draco's wrists to the bed and smiled down at the surprised Slytherin.

"Not this time," Harry said. "It's my turn."

His hands skated down Draco's arms and explored his smooth torso and flat stomach. He continued the caress over Malfoy's hips and thighs, removing Draco's final item of clothing in the process. Harry kissed his way back up Draco's long legs and nuzzled the blonde curls for a moment before sweeping his tongue up the length of Malfoy's so-soft yet rock hard penis.

Draco drew in a harsh breath and Harry chuckled at the heady sense of power. It felt bloody good to have the proud Slytherin at his mercy. His mouth enclosed the shaft completely and he methodically repaid Draco for every tortuous, euphoric stroke he had ever used on Harry, using hands, lips, and tongue.

Malfoy's breathy gasps of pleasure were driving Harry wild. He quickly dropped his wet hand downward, fondling Malfoy's hard testicles before sliding lower. Draco jerked at the contact. Harry released Draco and moved upward. He probed the opening with his own throbbing member while gripping Malfoy's in his hand again.

"Wait, Harry—" Draco began.

"Shhhh, just relax," Harry murmured against Draco's mouth.

"Don't shush me. Malfoys are not shushed," Draco commented, but Harry felt him relax.

"Malfoy's need to learn when to be quiet," Harry said and groaned with delight as he entered Draco with a careful push. Malfoy gasped and Harry kissed him lingeringly as he began to move. Draco thrashed and his fists clenched into the covers, half-tearing them from the bed. Harry thrust in time with the strokes of his hand until, incredibly, they climaxed at the same instant. The feel of Draco's shudders vibrated through his own body. Harry collapsed on Malfoy's chest, wet with sweat.

After a long, spent moment, Harry gently withdrew from Draco and slipped over to lie next to him. He stared into Draco's enigmatic grey eyes with a wicked smile.

"This aggressive new Potter is going to take some getting used to," Draco said seriously. "Not that I'm complaining." Harry felt warmth tint his cheeks and Malfoy's hand reached up to caress his face. "Blushing again?"

"This wasn't supposed to happen," Harry said wistfully. "You and me, I mean."

"Really? I think it was inevitable," Draco replied. Harry cocked a brow.

"Why?"

"Well, *you* are the Chosen One, Savior of the Wizarding World, and *I* am practically perfect. Who else is good enough for us?"

Harry had to laugh.

"Your logic is delightfully twisted."

"You know it's true."

"I suppose you're right."

"Harry Potter admitting I'm right? This is a momentous day."

"What shall we do now?" Harry asked and Draco's silver eyes glinted.

"I can think of a few things."

"Besides that," Harry said dryly.

"I was referring to finishing the library. Honestly, Potter, you must pull your mind from the gutter on occasion." He grinned at Harry's expression. "However, we could take a bath, first."

"Oh no, your bath water could cook a lobster. I'd rather emerge with skin intact."

"Fine, I'll cool it down a bit so it won't mar your delicate skin. I thought Gryffindors were brave."

"Bravery does not include suicide by hot water."

In the end, the bath took quite a lot longer than planned and the water had to be reheated twice. Both were tired and famished when they retreated to the kitchen clad in two of Draco's thick dressing gowns.

"Another advantage Muggles have over wizards," Harry commented as he took a seat at the small kitchen table and watched Malfoy retreat into the huge pantry. "Pizza delivery."

Draco ignored him, as he usually did when Harry made Muggle references, and Harry quickly stopped envisioning pizza when Draco produced seared scallops and crab fettuccini. The Slytherin was sheer genius in the kitchen.

"I have something to show you," Draco said later over his glass of Bordeaux. "Although I'll most likely regret it."

"That sounds serious."

Draco sighed. "I'll probably never see you again once I disclose this." He got to his feet and motioned Harry to follow. They left the kitchen and returned to the drawing room. Draco retrieved his wand from the corner with a suggestive look at Harry, who shook his head in puzzlement. What could possibly cause him to leave Draco, now?

Malfoy stood in the center of the room and cast a few spells. A large section of the floor detached itself and moved aside, revealing an opening.

"I'm not certain why the Order did not empty this prior to the Ministry torching the house. They knew it was here. Afterward, they must have assumed it was destroyed. It was, however, protected with several spells and survived intact."

Harry recalled Arthur Weasley disclosing the location of the Malfoys' room full of "Dark Arts" items. It was possible the Order of the Phoenix never mentioned it to the Ministry. Harry suddenly did not want to see whatever Draco meant to show him. He would rather not know any dark secrets if the knowledge would snatch away the happiness he had so recently discovered.

"Draco—wait."

Malfoy was already partway down the steps.

"No help for it, Potter. Come along." Light flared in the room and Harry swallowed his trepidation. He descended the stairs. At the bottom, he stood next to Draco, who gestured at a huge wall of books. A large black desk stood before the shelves, piled high with scroll cases and parchment.

"My father's private library. You might find the solution to your *Apparition* obsession. My father may have even written notes on the subject—I haven't looked through any of it." A flicker of pain crossed his features and Harry realized Lupin had been right. Harry missed parents he had never really known. Malfoy missed the people that had read him stories, healed his skinned knees, tucked him into bed, celebrated holidays, and shared his life. His loss really was greater than Harry's.

He gripped Draco's shoulder comfortingly and then looked at him in confusion.

"Why would this make me leave you?"

"Are you joking? The moment you sit at that desk and begin reading, I'll not see you again until I come down here and carry you back upstairs."

Harry grinned, relieved. "That shouldn't be a problem for you," he said wickedly. Draco glanced sidelong at him.

"I suppose not."

Harry took a step toward the desk, but Malfoy stopped him with an arm across his chest.

"Oh no, not tonight. You were yawning all through my excellent dinner. You can get up bright and early tomorrow and run down here to read until your eyes cross. Right now, you are going to bed."

Harry sighed, knowing he was right. He had barely slept at all in Draco's London flat. The thought of sleeping upstairs in Malfoy's comfortable bed wrapped around Draco's long form held a particular enticement. He spun about and paused at the foot of the steps to look over his shoulder.

"Coming?" he asked hopefully.

Draco smiled and snuffed the lights.

They were crossing to the main staircase when an owl fluttered through the still-open door. Draco slammed it shut with a careless spell while Harry detached the message from the bird's leg.

Draco looked at him sharply when the blood drained from Harry's face.

"What is it?"

"The books will have to wait." Harry handed the message to Draco. "Hermione and Ron want an escort to London."

Draco snorted. "Granger needs an escort? Weasley the Wonder Witch should be able to handle anything we can."

"I think she just wants to see me. It's been… bloody hell, over six months." Harry was assaulted by guilt. He hadn't even thought about his friends much since teaming up with Malfoy.

"Well, feel free to go alone. I'm not particularly fond of your minions and it will save you coming up with any… uncomfortable explanations."

Harry scowled. "They are not 'minions' and I'll have to tell them eventually."

"Why?" Draco asked blandly.

"I don't keep secrets from my friends!"

Draco rolled his eyes and muttered something about "idiot Gryffindors" on his way up the stairs. Harry sighed and wondered if his life would ever be boring. Certainly not as long as Draco

Malfoy was in it, at any rate.

Author's Note: I was planning to end this story, but it seems to have evolved into a trilogy, since I'm dying to see Ron and Hermione's reaction to this relationship.