Title: Hazards of Being a Barista

Pairing: Harry/Draco

Rating: PG

Era: Post-Hogwarts, but EWE

Word Count: ~2800

Warning(s)/Contains: Slightly cracky. Humour. Drama-queen!Draco. Long-suffering!Harry.

Summary: Harry might have made a mistake when he introduced Draco to Muggle coffee shops.

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Author's Notes: Written as a prompt fill for a September prompt at [info]hd_seasons . Prompt was "warm drinks on a cool evening." Sorry this is a bit cracky. Sometimes, I know a bit too well how Draco feels in this one. Also, unbeta'd. Will try to fix that soon.

When Harry had introduced Draco to the world of Muggle coffee shops, he had not expected to create a monster.

It had begun innocently enough. Every time Harry saw him, Draco looked more exhausted than the last time. "You really should get some sleep," Harry told him one day, after Draco had nodded off during their dinner date.

Draco had rubbed his eyes. "I can't afford to. Not until I secure my promotion. That Ravenclaw wench is chomping at the bit for it, and I have to snake it from under her nose. I just need something to keep me alert. I would take one of the invigoration potions, but they all have armadillo bile, and that makes me

violently ill for days."

"Well, what about coffee?" Harry had suggested.

"Plebeian swill," Draco scoffed, negating some of the bite with a yawn.

"Even the specialty drinks? Italian espressos, or lattes or the like?" Harry was aware that Draco was partial to many things Italian. He had even seen Draco stoop to enjoying a Muggle gelato over the summer, though he had claimed Imperio when caught. Harry had not bought the excuse for a second.

Draco had raised his eyebrows. "Specialty?"

It had been the start of an odd little obsession. Draco had browsed Muggle book stores for information on the history of coffee, and short little books on coffee house culture. Harry thought that if Lucius Malfoy were still alive, seeing Draco so infatuated with something Muggle might have killed him. One particularly memorable night, Draco had got hold of an old espresso maker from a pawn shop (Harry didn't even want to know how he had paid for the thing) and attempted to magic it into working without electricity, despite Harry's flat having electricity. One rather extensive set of fire-quenching spells and one trip to St Mungos later, Draco had decided that they could get their lattes and such from the coffee shop down the street from Harry's flat.

Relief did not begin to describe Harry's feelings on the matter.

Since that ill-conceived idea two months ago, they had been frequenting the same coffee house nearly four times a week. Well, truth be told, Harry could be found there four times a week. Draco, however, was there nearly every day. Often more than once per day. Harry knew Draco stopped by in the morning before heading to the office and had a four-shot espresso. Sometimes, there was another drink around lunch. The day that Draco discovered something he said was called a "dead eye"—four shots of espresso, poured into a full cup of coffee—Harry had had to speak to the manager and the head barista and ask them to never give Draco such a concoction again. There was now a sign with a photo of Draco behind the register that expressly forbade it. Harry checked it every time he came in. Just to be sure.

Harry was at this coffee shop late this evening, waiting for his boyfriend. Draco had been working exceptionally long shifts this week, and instead of walking here together from Harry's flat, they had decided to meet, have a drink, and then see to the matter of dinner. Despite the absurdly long day at work, it appeared Draco was going to be late. Again.

He showed up looking flustered, and Harry decided not to push the point. Two more days, and the matter of which member of Draco's department would be receiving the promotion they were all desperately striving for would be decided. "Rough day?"

Draco flopped into the small booth and theatrically collapsed onto the table. "Do you even have to ask?" His voice was muffled by the tabletop.

"Oh. That bad?" When Draco made a pathetic noise, Harry shook his head. "Fine. Stay here. I'll order for us."

"I was considering one of those 'dead eye' things again…" he heard as he walked away from the table, and he hoped he was far enough away to believably claim that he hadn't heard the request. Thinking about that night still made him a bit weak. Draco had come home positively thrumming, and after talking Harry's ear off without the apparent need to stop and breathe, he had tossed Harry into bed and kept him up until nearly three in the morning. Come six, when the alarm had gone off, Harry had rolled over and barely contained a startled shout. Draco had looked like the living dead. He didn't appear to have felt much better than he looked, either.

Harry placed the order with one of the baristas he liked quite a bit—a girl named Tiffany, who reminded him of Luna—and she sent him off back to their table, promising she'd bring their drinks to their table. "He's had another rough day at work, looks like," she said, looking over at Draco, whose head was now cradled in his arms. "Poor thing. What is it he does again?"

"Medical research," Harry said promptly. That wasn't far off. Draco was actually on the research and development team for a private company who supplied potions to St Mungos and other medical facilities in a handful of countries.

"Ah. Go tend to him, dear. Your drinks will be up in a moment. Heidi's working on them now." She

gestured to the petite girl at the espresso machine, who was busy tamping the grounds. Harry didn't recognise her. Must be new. He nodded and headed off to their booth.

"Where's the coffee?" Draco greeted him.

"Tiffany will bring it over when it's ready. Ordered you a cappuccino."

"I suppose that will do. Stick with your usual pumpkin spice latte?" Even with Draco's head buried in his arms, Harry could hear the light tone of mocking in his voice. He knew Draco was very particular about his coffee, and considered the flavoured syrups as something of a bastardisation.

"No. Tried something different."

"You? Branched out? What on earth did you order then?"

"Café mélange. Whipped cream and coffee."

Draco raised his head just enough to see above his arms and fixed Harry with a considering stare. "That actually sounds pleasant. I should try one of those next time."

Harry rolled his eyes as Draco's face disappeared again. Thankfully, their drinks were placed in front of them in short order. Tiffany was careful not to place Draco's drink too close, or to make too much noise rattling the cup in the saucer. "Here you go, love." She gave Draco a smile he didn't see, then flashed one to Harry. "Good to see you gents again. I expect I'll see you soon."

Draco gave her a little wave without even looking then finally raised himself into a proper sitting position. Harry was glad to see that his boyfriend had decided to appear human once more, and pulled his drink toward him, looking forward to the mingling of whipped cream and coffee.

“What on earth is this?”

Harry paused in blowing over his hot beverage, hoping to get it to drinkable temperature. “What?”

Draco was looking at his mug in something resembling horror. “This thing she set in front of me. What is it?”

“It’s a cappuccino,” Harry said, peering at it. “Isn’t it?”

“It most certainly is not a cappuccino. It’s…it’s…I have no words. A proper cappuccino has much more foam. And microfoam, at that. This couldn’t even pass for a latte. The bubbles are big and sloppy, and there’s not nearly enough foam. And I think that might be nutmeg on the top, and not the cinnamon I always get—you know how I feel about nutmeg. You didn’t mis-order, did you?”

“No,” Harry said, afraid where this was going. “Look, if it’s that bad, I’ll drink it, and you can have mine. You said mine sounded good.” It looked good, too. He just hadn’t yet been able to try it.

“Why would someone serve me this? Why would Tiffany do this to me? Have I offended her in some way? Did I make some Muggle faux pas? Her drinks have always been so good before.”

“It wasn’t Tiffany, Draco. It was a new girl. Can’t remember her name.”

Draco’s eyes narrowed. “I believe I’ll go have a talk with her then. She shouldn’t be allowed to inflict this kind of cruelty upon innocent people.” And with a move that defied his apparent exhaustion, Draco cast a quick wandless time-delay on Harry, who found himself stuck to the booth, unable to get up and grab Draco’s arm before he was up and away, headed toward the counter with a dangerous sense of purpose.

Great, Harry thought, glad he was at least facing the right direction to see what was going on. Draco would pay for this. Also, perhaps it would be a good thing to remember that when dating a Slytherin, especially one so close to the edge of his sanity, one should not always let their guard completely down.

As an Auror, Harry would never have been caught by a simple, weak spell like this. But he was in boyfriend mode. Clearly, that mode would have to be adjusted.

Seconds went by much too slowly. Harry counted them as he waited for the spell to wear off. Unfortunately for the new barista, it was not soon enough to protect her from the mess that was an over-worked and under-caffeinated Draco Malfoy.

Harry could not hear all of the words, but the flailing Draco was doing was a pretty clear indicator of how the conversation was progressing. Finally, the move Harry had tried to enact several moments ago—reaching for Draco's arm—was carried out, and his hand closed around nothing. With that, Harry sprang up from his seat, only just missing upsetting their coffee drinks on the tabletop.

He was too late. "…and a dry cappuccino is generally just foam—tight little bubbles, mind you—over the espresso. A wet cappuccino is essentially a latte. But whatever you made tonight was neither. Please do get some instruction on proper milk foaming techniques."

Harry yanked Draco's arm and pulled him away from the new girl, who looked near tears. "Draco! Stop it! You're upsetting her."

"Well, she's upset me!" he huffed, then got a good look at the girl, whose lower lip was trembling. "Oh."

"Go sit down, Draco." He used his best I'm-the-Auror-in-charge voice. When Draco sighed and did as ordered, Harry turned to the poor girl, who couldn't have been more than eighteen. "I'm so sorry, miss."

Tiffany popped behind the counter then and gave the girl a hug. Harry was mortified. "I'm so sorry," he tried again, but Tiffany waved him off.

"It's not your fault, Harry. I didn't have a chance to warn her about how particular Draco is before you came in. Really, we should cover that in orientation."

"Still, he was being ridiculous." He looked at the new girl, who looked to have calmed down some. "I apologise on his behalf. He's just..." He's just Draco, his mind finished for him.

"He's just very stressed," Tiffany said in her most soothing voice. "Up for an important promotion at work. And I don't think he's been sleeping much, has he, Harry?"

"No, but that doesn't excuse it." He looked over to their table, where Draco was sitting, facing away from the three of them. "Here." Harry reached into his pocket and pulled out some Muggle money. He wasn't sure a large percentage of Draco's Gringott's vault would have been enough for the poor girl. "Consider it a tip for putting up with him. I promise, he'll be better behaved next time."

The girl waved off the money. She was studying the back of Draco's head. Eventually, she spoke. "Is he...is he the one from the photograph behind the register? The one we're not supposed to serve dead-eyes to?"

"Yes," Harry and Tiffany said in unison.

"And you're sure he's not imbalanced in some general way?" She looked thoughtful.

Harry suppressed a smirk. There were so many ways he could answer that. Most of them would have him sleeping on the sofa, were they living together officially. "No. Just overworked."

"I see." She looked back at the espresso machine. "All he really wants is a cappuccino, yeah?"

Tiffany smiled as if this was something she had been hoping for. "Yes, dear."

"You think he'd be nice if I gave him what he wanted?"

Harry opened his mouth to say that perhaps it was best for the girl to give Draco some space, but Tiffany

cut him off. "Honey, you're holding his caffeine hostage. I'm sure if you give him what he wants, he'll forget the whole thing."

"And what makes you think that?" Harry couldn't help but ask.

"Because you've seen how he is with me. And I screwed up his drink order the first time I made it. Macchiato, I think it was. Can't remember anything but the fallout."

Harry shook his head. In their place, he might have insisted Draco be banned from the coffee shop. These women must be mad.

"Okay then. He wants cinnamon, right?" Harry nodded, still a bit dumbfounded that this girl was going to give it another go. He watched her tamp more grounds, then pour another shot, visibly counting the seconds. He stared while she frothed the milk. When she brought the drink for Tiffany's inspection, she sighed. "He was right, you know."

"About what?" It was morbid curiosity that made him ask.

"About the wand. He suggested only putting it in so far, and listening for the sound instead of relying upon the thermometer. And look—perfect foam."

Harry couldn't decide if telling Draco he had been right would be the best thing the girl could do, or the absolute worst. He didn't have time to tell her either way before she took the cup and saucer and strode over to the table.

Harry stood with Tiffany and watched. They both saw the girl say something, then hold out the drink. They watched as he gave the girl a distrustful look and scrutinised the beverage before him. And they both flinched as Draco stood. But then Draco pulled the girl into an embrace and kissed her cheek before shooing her away, sitting down, and curling his fingers around the ceramic mug.

“Things are fine now, Harry,” Tiffany whispered to him. “Go, enjoy your drinks. I’m sure we’ll see him bright and early tomorrow.”

“But... That’s it? He has a fit and you’re all fine with it?”

“We’re baristas, dear. We see people first thing in the morning, before they’re awake and fully functional. While some folks are pleasant enough, not everyone is fit for public interaction until they’ve had their coffee. Draco’s just one of the latter.”

Harry blinked at her. “You women are saints. Or utterly mad. I’m not sure which.”

“Might be a little of both. Now shoo. Tell Draco I said I hope he gets the promotion.” She gave him a gentle shove towards their booth and Harry stumbled into his seat.

“Took you long enough,” Draco said with an arched eyebrow. “Your drink’s likely cold.”

Harry took a long, slow sip of his drink. It wasn’t hot, but it was still enjoyable. “We are going to finish our drinks. And then we are going to have a little talk about the evening.”

“You’re not still angry about that wandless spell, are you?”

He was, actually, but that was a discussion for later. “That’s not exactly what I was talking about.”

“If you’re referring to the fact that I corrected that girl when she made an inadequate cappuccino, I think you’re overreacting. She doesn’t seem upset anymore. Wished me a pleasant evening and said she’d see me again soon. Nice girl. Makes a decent drink, now. All it took was a little conversation.”

Harry was going to argue, but the girl in question walked by them then, no longer wearing her cap or apron. “Draco, isn’t it?” When Draco nodded, she smiled. “I just wanted to say you were right about the

foam trick. I'll use your way from now on. Thanks."

"You're welcome, dear. If I came across a bit too strong, I'm sorry."

She waved him off much the same way she had waved off Harry's attempt at a large tip. "No worries. I'll see you next time. Enjoy your cappuccino. And your drink," she said, with a small smile at Harry. "Goodnight, gentlemen."

And with that she was off. Harry wondered if the entire world had gone mad, or if it was just him.

"You were saying?" Draco nudged Harry's knee under the table with his own.

Harry sighed and took another sip of his drink. "I don't even know anymore."

Draco smirked. "You look tired, Harry. Perhaps another coffee?"