HAPPY H/D HOLIDAYS, PINKELEPHANT42!

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Title: Yaun Fen

Pairing(s): Harry/Draco, Ron/Hermione, Pansy/Seamus

Summary: A Christmas Eve drive on a country road in Scotland leads you into another world: One where a celebrity bartender keeps referring to "true love".

Rating: R

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Warning(s): none

Epilogue compliant? no

Word Count: ~14,400

Author's Notes:  pinkelephant42, there's bits of Auror!Harry and Quidditch!Draco and some Christmas magic tossed in along with some sentimental fluff. I hope you enjoy the story; it is the first I've written using second person, present tense. I attempted to change it, but this is the way it wanted to be told. Happy Holidays and thank you for the very fun prompts!

Here's a link to the title's explanation or at least an attempt to explain what it means in English. Yaun Fen.

And finally, thank you to my most wonderful beta, E. You Rock. And major thanks to the extremely patient and supportive mods. You all Rock, too!

( Yaun Fen )

Yaun Fen

The estate home is set back from the country road. With its rock walls, slate roof, and gables piercing the sky, it's the type of home you drive by and wonder what lucky people live there. You want to turn up the driveway, which is lined by naked birch trees covered in new fallen snow. But the formidable wrought-iron gated is closed. You can only dream about parking on the circular brick driveway and stepping out before the grand steps that lead to massive wooden double doors. A water fountain in the middle of the circle suddenly spews water as high as the gables. Small rainbows appear when hit by the rays of the low lying winter sun. The rainbows are your first hint that the home is not normal. There are too many, and the colours are too bright. You suddenly feel homesick, but as you've always lived in a city flat, you can't figure out why.

You want to see more, so you slow the car down to a snail's pace and then come to a complete stop. You spot gargoyles perched on balconies and in alcoves—they move. You rub your eyes, but when you open them you see the cement characters battling over the rooftops. You smile because from here they don't look fierce, but almost playful. You swear you see something streak across the sky. It's too big to be a bird and then a trail of silver and gold stars follow it. It lands on a turret you hadn't noticed before. Then, a few moments later, purple smoke billows out from multiple chimneys. The house begins to shimmer; you rub your eyes again, and then only a pile of rocks and debris are there.

You think of your father and those fantastic stories he used to tell. Mum always told him to tone them down less you became frightened or, worse yet, a believer. Daddy would just laugh and wink at you before giving you one final kiss on the forehead goodnight. There was always a comfort about him, as if with a wave of his hand he could make everything bad go away. Of course, he couldn't and something bad must have happened to him because he never returned home. That was during a spring trip fifteen years ago when you were ten. Your eyes tear up and the windows begin to fog. You press the button, rolling the window down, hoping to catch another glimpse of whatever it was you saw before moving on. Nothing but the rocks remain.

You drive on down the road, confused as to whether you saw what you think you saw. The whole day since you found Father's papers this morning has been surreal. The road winds up and over snow covered hills. You smile to yourself, because the snow which arrived this morning, on Christmas Eve, is truly magical. Your heart twinges as you think about not having someone to share the holiday with. Mum has moved to Switzerland with her new husband. You were invited, but you never gave it a second thought before saying no. Stan is a nice enough bloke but he's not Daddy and you can't understand how Mum could be so happy without Dad, even though so many years have gone by. The sun is now setting, and the sky is magnificent with stratus clouds turning hues of purple, while the remaining daytime sky is

afire with pink and orange. It's going to be clear and cold tonight; at least that is what the news said before you left. The stars will be shining bright.

Up ahead you see a sign saying Hogsmeade 5. You've never heard of the town until this morning. Your stomach growls and you think about stopping for a quick bite to eat. There's no hurry to get to the house, but the excitement to see it since you found the deed in the strong chest hasn't subsided. Mum and you had tried to open the chest many times over the years since Daddy died but finally gave up. Out of sentimentality, you brought it with you whenever you moved. However, this morning, as you finished packing the last remnants of your flat, the intricately carved chest sitting on top of taped boxes flung open. Inside was a single piece of parchment rolled up into a scroll. You untied the yellow ribbon and a map unfurled. You put the ribbon in your purse for safe-keeping; yellow had always been Dad's favourite colour.

The aged paper showed towns in Scotland, which was a lovely surprise. You remembered how Daddy's brown eyes twinkled when he told stories of a castle where youths were taught by wizards and witches. Your mum used to shush him when she caught him telling these particular stories. He'd said that he was sure you'd be seeing an owl on your eleventh birthday. Three months later, on your eleventh birthday, you kept looking out the third-story window of your flat hoping an owl would appear. You didn't know why you wanted it to but mum said it was because you had hoped that Daddy's stories had been true. The owl never appeared, which upset you, but not as much as when you finally accepted that Dad wasn't coming back. It had been two months since he'd disappeared. If he was alive, you knew he wouldn't have missed your eleventh birthday. You glance over to the empty car seat next to you. It's filled with brightly wrapped gifts and perfectly curled ribbons. You shake your head; you don't remember them looking that smart when you left your flat. Mum never wrapped your gifts that well. You hit a bump in the road, and you hear a small jingle from the biggest present on the passenger's seat. You're startled because you know there weren't any jingle bells.

The road climbs over hills and through deep glens. You're driving slow as you're sure ice will soon be forming on the road. You turn up the heat. As you pass another sign: Hogsmeade 1. You realize that you haven't seen another car since you pulled off the highway onto an exit you don't remember seeing before. Suddenly up ahead and almost appearing out of thin air is a forest. The road disappears into its fold. As you enter the woods, the branches from the fir and deciduous trees form a canopy blocking out the last remnants of the winter sun. The road narrows, and you become afraid that the branches will scratch the sides of your car. A sense of claustrophobia creeps in and then without warning a hedge of holly blocks the road. You brake hard and your tires squeal and swerve back and forth before coming to a forceful stop. Your headlights shine on a, eight-foot hedge of shiny prickly green leaves and copious amounts of red berries. It looks newly trimmed. You see an opening to your right. It looks big enough for you to walk through.

You reach for the key to turn off the engine; your hand is shaking. In a split-decision, you decide to go back to the highway, to go back to London. You put the car in reverse, but it doesn't move. You press harder on the gas and the tires start spinning, causing a smell of burnt rubber to fill the air. With hesitation you glance in the rear view mirror: a row of trees has blocked you in. A sound of metal being crushed makes you scream. The hedge has moved forward. Your car is being squeezed. Without pausing, you open the car door, grab your knapsack, the map, and cloak. At the last second you reach in and snatch a present wrapped in silver and gold. You're sure it's a box of chocolates from Switzerland and it may be the only food you have to eat. Out of habit, you try and shut the car door but the automobile frame is now bent. You see the opening in the hedge; it awaits you. If you had any second thoughts about moving through it, they disappear when branches from the trees begin grasping at your cloak.

You run through; the hedge is thick and you find yourself in a tunnel. You want to scream but you're running so hard that you can't catch your breath. Your feet have trouble keeping up with the rest of your body, and you keep stumbling forward. All you see ahead is a small patch of fading daylight. A sharp pain pierces your side, forcing you to slow down. You look behind you. The hedge dematerializes. It's gone but so is the paved road. Your car is parked in the middle of the forest appearing untouched. Slowly, you walk back and inspect it. You open the door and hop in. The key is still in the ignition and you turn it. It rumbles softly but there is nowhere for you to go. The trees are too thick to drive between. You turn the engine off, making a quick decision to head to the town Hogsmeade. You open up the trunk and find your overnight bag and stuff it with the lighter presents. It seems silly, but if you happen to be stuck in a town overnight, waking up with no gifts on Christmas morning would be unbearable.

Before you set out, you open up the map, hoping it will show some clue of how far away the road to the town is. You think you must have veered off somehow. According to the map, you're standing in the middle of the country lane. You shake your head and smile. The map is so much like your father was: unpredictable.

The forest no longer appears frightening. The canopy has thinned and birds that in other parts of the country have long ago flown south chirp happily. You're thankful that snow has not reached this forest; your boots are more stylish than warm. A slight breeze picks up, rustling the branches, and the last of the remaining leaves float down. You pull up the hood of your cloak and wrap the scarf around your neck a little tighter. It strikes you as funny that you resemble Red Riding Hood. Wolves, though, are the least of your worries. But then you quickly think about the previous night: was it close to a full moon? Daddy had told you to always pay attention to such things and never to wander about when the moon was full. Mother would always roll her eyes when Daddy refused to leave the flat even in the city when the moon was full. No, last night the moon was a waning sliver; there would be no moon tonight, which means it

will soon be pitch black. You hurry forward towards a rise.

You lose your breath as you climb the last few step of what is actually a small hill. "Oh my God," you say aloud when you reach the top. Before you is a scene you'd only imagined as a child. It's as if your father's stories popped-up in real life. Down and far to your right you can see what could only be castle towers. They pierce through snow covered trees. And then you see, at the forest's edge, train tracks and further on down the edge of a lake. Your breath is now visible but ironically you don't feel chilled anymore. You feel warm; a tingle of familiarity works its way through your body. You look to the left and then there is the town, the town you hoped would be there. It looks like something out of a Dickens novel, and it's fully covered in snow, which appears pink as the sun finally sets. Smoke rises from crooked chimneys, bells ring out Christmas cheer, and then there is laughter and song, which fills the air and echoes up to your ears.

"Daddy," you whisper and start your way down.

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The town has you mesmerized. You can see one main street, too narrow for cars, with shops and the like on each side. Side paths veer off and there seems to be small homes dotting the hillsides. There are so many people bustling about you can barely make your way onto the brick street. You guess that there must be a costume Christmas party the people are going to attend as they're dressed in garb that exquisitely fits the Dickens theme. You want to venture down the path but right on the corner is a pub.

You see people eating at tables, and when the entrance door swings open the scent of roasted lamb and goose wafts past your nose, enticing you to enter. As you cross the threshold, a bell rings overhead. You smell mulled wine that brings back every Christmas memory of childhood when Daddy was alive. It was his special concoction he said because he filled it with Christmas cheer. You see a huge cauldron filled with it by the entrance. It looks the same. A ladle and goblets wait nearby.

"Merry Christmas," a deep voice says from behind the bar. A few people separate, letting you see who it belongs to.

"Ah, let the travelling witch come through," the bartender says with a huge smile. He appears younger than you'd expected from his voice. His white shirt with rolled-up sleeves and black suspenders holding up his baggy black pants makes you grin. But the black bowler with a sprig of holly makes you laugh. An
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empty seat at the bar opens up, and he gestures for you to sit down. You move forward and smile back, but you're not too sure you like being referred to as a witch. As you sit down on the surprising comfortable cushioned stool, a goblet filled with the mulled wine is set before you. Spirals of steam bubble up from the top, but the cup isn't hot to the touch.

"Showing favourites, Potter," a woman says teasingly and strokes the bartender's arm. "I'm going to tell on you," she adds. He reaches across the polished wood and pinches her already rosy cheek.

"Tell all you want, Pans, Draco knows I'm not straying. It's true love, whether you want to believe it or not."

"True love," you say to yourself silently. Like that exists.

"Gawd, Potter, can you get any more sappy?" she says and then blows him a kiss before grabbing her goblet. She toddles away from the bar and teeters through the crowd in her spiked ankle boots. You think that the other customers may be the only thing holding her up.

"Ignore her," the bartender says and adjusts his wire-rimmed spectacles. "Welcome to the Three Broomsticks. If you're hungry, the menu is on the wall," he says and points to a board nailed to the side of the bar. "Here, let me put your belongings back here. With this crowd, they're likely to get stepped on and ruined."

Before you can reply, your purse and bag filled with presents float over and behind the bar.

"How—how did you do that?" you stutter and then reach for the goblet, hoping that there's enough alcohol in it to help your mind stop trying to make sense of the day's events.

"Do what?" the bartender asks as he gives you a quick glance before lining up a row of shot glasses. Bottles from the top shelf zoom down and pour their liquid into the glasses without any physical help.

"That!" you say and point to the bottles suspended in mid-air. You take a big sip of the wine. The liquid fills your mouth and touches off taste buds you didn't know you had. It resembles Daddy's, but it is so much more. From the centre of your stomach, warmth and then shivers of coolness spread out to the tips of your fingers and toes. All you can do is grin. Cheer; yes, that is what you feel. So much like Daddy's Christmas cheer. Tears once again fill your eyes.

"Whoa!" the bartender says and the bottles return to their proper spots. The glasses float by you in a straight line, rise up over the heads of the crowd and then land on tables in the back to great delight. Shouts of appreciation ring out for the bartender. You quickly learn that the bartender's name is Harry. You wipe your eyes with the sleeve of your cloak.

"What's your name?" Harry asks.

"Clare," you respond.

"Well, Clare, I have to say I've never seen anyone cry after drinking Christmas Cheer."

"Christmas Cheer?" you say in disbelief and then tears begin to fall again but this time in earnest.

"Hey, hey, Clare, what's wrong? Where are you headed to tonight? Do you have friends Flooing in or Apparating here to meet you?"

"No!" you say emphatically and then suddenly you can't help yourself as everything comes pouring out. "I'm not meeting anyone here. There's no one in my life, and I got lost on the road following a map given to me by my father, who's dead. And as I was driving, there was a house, an estate that I wanted to live in. It had gargoyles that moved and turrets and then something flew in with stars, but then it disappeared. And then I drove on but the road went into a forest, and a hedge.....and what the hell does Flooing mean?"

Harry's eyes widened. You can't get over how green they are. Green eyes? You know green eyes mean something. You think you remember, and you look at his forehead. There's a lightning bolt scar there, hiding behind black fringe. Holy shit, this is the boy—now a man—your father used to tell you about.

Harry Potter. But Harry Potter wouldn't be a bartender. Oh hell, those were just stories.

"You saw a house with gargoyles?" Harry asks in disbelief. He keeps his focus on you, but his hands are kept busy with bottles of alcohol and muddling fruits and mint leaves.

You nod and then take another large gulp of the Christmas Cheer.

"But you don't know what Flooing is?"

You nod again.

"And you saw Draco arrive home?"

You shook your head. That name is familiar. Your father told you about a boy with that name. "Draco? Oh come on, you can't be talking about Draco Malfoy! Dad used to tell me stories about what a prat he was. But then those were just stories..."

Harry laughs. "Still is," he mutters. "But it's good to know he made it home in time for Christmas Eve. I was afraid the Vratsa Vultures, a Quidditch team, were going to make him stay in Bulgaria and practise."

"Quidditch?" you blurt out. "You mean that game played on brooms? That really exists?"

"Clare?" Harry said hesitantly. "Do you know where you are? And what goes on here?"

"The sign said Hogsmeade, and I'm guessing it's a Christmas Holiday town."

Harry thins his lips. "Clare did an owl come to your house on your eleventh birthday?"

You shake your head. The memory of that day is so painful, and if you don't gain control of your emotions you know you'll be weeping all over the bar again. "No, my Dad hoped one would. I didn't know why, but then he went away a few months before my birthday and never returned. I think he's dead."

Harry's brow furrows. People are yelling at him for their orders from across the room. He raises two fingers and tells them to hold on. The edges of his black hair are damp. He is working hard behind the bar but still finds time to attend to you. He reaches for a stick on a shelf behind him. He waves it a few times in a controlled motion and sparks fly out. He mumbles some words and then he sets it down. To your amazement, the new drinks are followed by platters of food coming from a side door. They float throughout the bar. Once again cheers go up. Harry rolls his eyes and grins at you.

"What was your dad's name, Clare?" Harry asks.

"Shamus Savage," you answer. It feels strange saying his name out loud. You can't remember the last time you spoke it.

"He was an Auror," Harry says.

"What? He was a what?"

"An Auror," Harry repeats, and for the first time his eyes don't meet yours. "A dark wizard catcher...somewhat like the police."

"You said was. Did you know him? Do you know for sure that he's dead?" you ask. Even though you came to that conclusion many years before, you always held out a bit of hope. But now this bartender named Harry Potter is confirming it.

Harry picks up his stick again and says a few more words. Suddenly the din of noise in the pub becomes muffled. It's as if you're in an air bubble. He sets the stick down and then reaches across the bar and

holds your hands. "He was older than me, Clare, but I knew who he was. Once, when I was sixteen, he was stationed here in Hogsmeade to help protect the school, and then during the war, he was killed by the Death Eaters. He died on May 4, 1998. I attended his service a few days later. He was a very brave wizard. I can show you his gravesite if you'd like."

It's so much to take in. You nod, as you'd like to know where he's buried and bring flowers. But then, as you ruminate over what's been said, the word wizard stands out. "Wizard?" you say softly.

Harry smiles and gives your hand a squeeze. "Yes, a wizard. And you, my dear, are what we call a Squib."

You frown. The word doesn't sound pleasant. "And what exactly is a Squib?" you ask showing your distaste for the word.

"A Squib is someone who is not magical, as in being able to perform magic, but has at least one parent who is. Do you think your mum is a witch?" he asks in all seriousness.

You laugh hard. "Many a time I thought so, but no, not in the magical way. But—but I think she knew my father was."

"Yep it's pretty hard to hide if you're living with one. Hey, would you like something to eat?" he asks.

You wonder if he's trying to distract you as you probably appear too emotional. But you are hungry, and it's been ages since you had a proper Christmas goose dinner. Not since Mom's mom, Nana, who passed away soon after your father. Before you utter the selection, a plate heavily laden with Christmas goose is handed to you by the woman whom Harry had spoken to earlier.

"Here you go, love," she says and plops down next to you. "You seem to be distracting our celebrity bartender tonight," she says and then pulls out a stick similar to Harry's, and silverware and napkin make their way over to you.

"Pansy, I'm handling things just fine. Now leave poor Clare alone. She's just discovered our world and that her dad died during the war."

Pansy seems taken aback. Her hand comes out and touches you on the knee. Her nails are long and painted green. Her large brown eyes fill with tears. "I'm sorry, Clare. I lost my parents, too. But welcome to the magical world."

"More like it, Finnigan. Now, Ms Savage tells me she saw Draco arrive at the house, " Harry says and blows Pansy a kiss. Her mood visibly lightens.

"Well, where is he? It's not like he's going to change out of his Quidditch gear before he sees you."

Red rushes to Harry's cheeks, which makes you grin. Pansy gently kicks you with her boot to get your attention. She leans over and whispers in your ear, "Potter has a thing for Draco in his Quidditch leathers."

"Seamus!" Harry yells. "Come get your wife!"

A sandy-haired bloke with kind eyes and a quick smile comes over and pulls Pansy off of her stool. He guides her away, kissing the back of her neck as he does so. The sight of it makes you wince with a tinge of jealousy.

"There was a war then?" you ask.

Harry nods.

"You know my father used to tell stories about this world, and I believed the stories about you. I thought they were just fairy tales, but I wanted them to be real. When that owl didn't show up, I was crushed. I didn't even know what it was for."

Harry continues pouring drinks. Steam rises from some and others have glitter covering the rims. He glances at you and then at the door. You get the feeling he's waiting for someone in particular to come through. From what you've heard so far, you'd guess it was Draco Malfoy. For some reason, you're anxious to see him too. You can't imagine that the boy whose his family you once heard about could now be the man Harry Potter seems to be in love with.

"An owl would have brought you an invitation to attend Hogwarts, which is the school for magical people," Harry says, "but if you can't perform magic then you can't go. I'm sorry it didn't happen for you."

"Oh, then that must be it across the tracks and trees," you say. You can only imagine how wonderful it would have been to go there but then you realize that you can see magic and feel it. That in itself seems like an incredible happening.

"Yes, and now that you know we're here, you have the choice to stay. If you leave, though, you can't tell anyone about us. It's one of our laws."

You nod, letting him know you understand, and then take a bite of the crispy skinned goose with some cranberry stuffing. The thought of living here among these people seems wondrous but could you really fit in? You never fit in before. A small part of you becomes excited about the adventure of it all and that maybe this is where you belong. Maybe this is where you'll find someone who can understand and love you. You almost spit out a cranberry. You promised yourself when you left the flat for the last time that you wouldn't think such thoughts. It's time to move on with life and accept that love is something that you probably won't find. At least the type of love you dream of.

The Three Broomsticks fills up with even more people. Songs of the season become louder and the words more difficult to understand. Everyone seems to be in good cheer. You continue to eat and drink as you observe this strange place you found. It all seems odd but at the same time right. Harry is caught up by others chatting with him. You remember what your father said about him being a normal boy, but back then he seemed bigger than life. You try and reconcile the image you had of him as a child and this real one before you where he's average height, weight, kind of cute and a bit shy if you guess correctly. He doesn't look like a hero, but he does exude a kind of confidence, and you find yourself trusting him. You wonder if he became the hero your father thought he would be. It's definite that the good magical

folks won, though.

His glasses slide down his nose and before he can reach up and fix them, a woman's hand does it for him You look at the woman, who you know now to be a witch. Everyone in the place must be a wizard or witch.

"There's a car in the forest," the witch who has spectacular curly brown hair and sharp brown eyes says.

Harry looks over to you to see if you heard what's been said.

"It's mine," you say. "I was driving on the road and a hedge appeared and then I almost got squashed."

Harry laughs. Again, you find it somewhat inappropriate.

"Draco?" the witch asks.

"I'd bet my last Galleon it was him, Hermione. Sorry, Clare, if you got scared. You really wouldn't have been injured. Draco, I'm sure, was just nervous that you got too close to the house without either of us inviting you."

"It must be nice to have someone care so much about you," you say. You wince as the words come out whiny and almost resentful. The witch named Hermione gives you a soft mile, as if she knows something you don't.

"Do you have a partner?" Harry asks as he fills your goblet with more Cheer.

You shake your head. No, there is no partner, and you doubt anyone will ever fill that spot. The last one left you a week ago, right when the rent was due. He knew you didn't have the money to cover it.

"No, and there won't be. I don't believe in love."

Harry laughs again, which raises your cackles. You expected sympathy, not laughter. It's not like you haven't tried. He shakes his head and then removes his glasses, polishing them with the coattails of his white shirt, which had escaped his pants and suspenders. "Sorry," he says as he puts his spectacles back on. "I don't mean to be insensitive."

"And yet, you are," you respond and watch intently as he processes your words.

"Ah, well, that is me, Clare. Draco and others have often pointed out that I express inappropriate emotions at certain times. Most notably at weddings, funerals, and when people say they don't believe in love."

You clear your throat. "I didn't mean love in general, I meant love for me."

Harry looks at you askance. "You seem like a lovely woman. Is there something I'm missing here?"

You swallow hard. You wouldn't normally discuss this topic with anyone, even your closest friends. It's too deep and too dark. "I don't know," you say as a start.

Harry's brows rise. "Really? I've done enough interroga... interviews to say that you do think you know."

His green eyes show a spark of fierceness that catches you off guard. You don't doubt that he's done interrogations. "You're an Auror, too?" you ask.

"Head Auror," the witch named Hermione says with a touch of pride. You weren't aware that she had returned and was standing behind you. "Youngest ever to be promoted to that position. Harry, Ron would like the usual," she adds with a deep sigh.

That blush you saw earlier on Harry's cheeks returns. The warmth is back when he rolls his eyes at Hermione and then passes her a platter of starters. The savoury scent piques your interest and you raise your head to see what's on it. All seems ordinary with crackers, cheese, and meats; that is until one of the meats hops off the cracker and scuttles across the plate towards you on clattering claws. You release a small and embarrassingly high-pitched scream. Harry reaches across and grabs it, and with cross words admonishes the small critter before setting it back on the cracker.

"It's just a spell," Hermione whispers in your ear. "It's not really alive."

You turn to thank her, but she's vanished from site.

"So what's the issue? Don't think you're going to get out of telling me about it. Remember, I'm the bartender," Harry reminds you. "Everyone tells their woes to the bartender," he adds as he wipes down the counter with a white cloth.

"Seriously? You really want to know?" you ask just before you take another large gulp of the magic wine. You've determined there must be magic in it; nothing in your normal world makes you feel this warm and tingly.

"That's how Draco makes me feel," Harry says.

You shake your head, sure you didn't say anything to him.

"Warm and tingly. Actually more tingly. But it certainly wasn't that way in the beginning."

"How...how did you know what I was thinking?"

Harry winced. Looking like a child who'd been caught doing something wrong. "Um, sometimes I can

read people's thoughts. It took me a long time to learn how to do it, but that thought was just right there ready for the taking."

You contemplate his answer as you take another bite of the goose. There's so many questions you have about this world and magic but right now what sticks out was his saying it wasn't that way in the beginning. "How was it in the beginning? How did it change?" you ask.

"Ah ha, being clever again. I'll tell you, but, first you tell me why you don't believe love is for you."

"Why do you care?" you ask, trying not to sound snide but genuinely curious as to why.

"Because, I do," Harry says and then focuses his attention on a ginger-haired man approaching the bar wearing robes that are askew and trainers peeking out from underneath. The thought of what wizards wear under their robes strikes you as funny. Harry and this man seem like very good friends. You grimace as Harry gives him another plate of meat bugs. With a flick of Harry's wand, you assume that is what they call it here, the brown meat comes alive. Ron laughs hysterically as they clamber off the plate and up his arm. He opens his mouth and they line up to enter.

"Ronald!" Hermione says as she returns and rolls her eyes at the scene.

Ron takes a meat bug off his robe sleeve and brings it to Hermione's mouth. She accepts it with a smile. Harry snickers. "See, Clare, true love once again. Of course, most don't understand these two." You're not sure you want true love if it means eating bugs. "It's just a matter of balance," Harry continues on as the two lovers walk away laughing. A large sprig of mistletoe appears over their heads and then they kiss. You look over to Harry questioningly. "Balance between the warm stuff and the tingly stuff."

You think back and you do remember warmth and tingles, but it never really lasted.

"Now some people need more warmth...more connections...more things in common. It makes them feel secure and comfortable, while others need more tingly...attraction...or as Draco says, sex, pure I-want-you-now-on-all-fours sex, which fulfils their need to be wanted and needed."

The last part catches you by surprise. Harry seems to say it with ease. Your brain is still cycling through your exes, remembering who was warm and who was more tingly. Is it that simple, you ask yourself? Was Cliff just comfortable and that's why you stayed together so long? Was Simon too far the other way? You smile inside. You can't even admit that all you wanted from him was sex. You put up with all the hurt just for his touch.

"They all seem like love at the time, don't they?" Harry asks with a knowing grin. He takes away your plate, which is now empty and your stomach full. Okay, not that full you think as a small plate with a doily appears before you.

"There's always room for Christmas pudding," he says and you agree as you eye the triple layered chocolate cake with sprinkles that spark, making small pops.

Chocolate has always been the food you turned to when overly sad or frightened. Your dad had given it to you for every scraped knee and heartache. You take a bite, and your mouth is flooded with thick dark chocolate. In all honesty you're not sure you can finish the whole piece as it is so overwhelmingly rich. A feeling of being satiated and content makes you smile.

A new group of patrons wearing scarlet robes enters the establishment. They immediately crowd the bar and yell out alcohol concoctions you've never heard of. They're laughing and cajoling with Harry and you quickly learn that they don't work with him, but that he is their boss. His distraction gives you a moment to gather your wits and observe your surroundings again.

Canes, top hats, bowlers, muffs and fur trimmed cloaks adorn the customers. Drinks in goblets with steam and others with snowflakes rising are clinked together and wishes of a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year are given. It's easy to believe that living in this world must be easy and continually wonderful. But then you remember that Aurors are necessary and that maybe your father had a good reason not go out during a full moon. But still you can't imagine that this adorable and kind Harry is the same boy your father spoke of.

A gust of frigid air blows in as the door opens and the patrons step aside to form an aisle for a tall man to walk through. Cheers and friendly boos fill the Three Broomsticks. You look to see who's approaching that would cause such a commotion. He's tall and blond and that's all you can see. Out of nowhere,

reporters pop in and crowd around him. Blinding flashes from old fashioned cameras fill the space before him as he advances towards the bar. He's dressed in bright orange.

"How long is the contract for, Draco?"

"How much did you sign for?"

"Will you be the starting Seeker, Draco?"

Draco stops in mid step and glares down at the reporter who asked the last question. He then releases a mischievous grin.

"Of course I'll be starting; they can't afford another one now."

The room erupts with laughter.

Ron, the red-haired wizard, approaches Draco, shaking his head.

"Malfoy, you bastard, how can I cheer for the Cannons now?"

Draco laughs and puts his hand in a pocket of the well-fitted trousers. He withdraws two tickets and waves them in front of Ron's face. Ron's eyes widen.

"Top Box seats for the season, Weasley. You want them?"

"Uh...uh."

"Yes, of course he does," Harry says and takes them from Draco and hands them to Ron. You didn't even see Harry leave from behind the bar.

"Merry Christmas, Weasley," Draco says with a wink and then turns to Harry.

"You signed with the Cannons," Harry says with a smile he can't hide. You can see how pleased he is.

"Yeh, figured I should be home more, you know, now that we're going to do that permanent thing," he says as he lift a chain from around his neck. It holds a ring.

"Thank you," Harry whispers. Before he can say more, Draco lifts Harry's chin with a fingerless gloved hand, bends slightly down, and kisses him.

Flashbulbs explode to a strobe effect.

You gasp. The kiss continues longer than you expect, given it's in public. Harry seems unaware of anything around him. His hand reaches up to Draco's fine blond hair and pulls Draco further into the kiss. Hoots and hollers abound until they break apart.

"Don't leave for that long again, Malfoy," Harry says as he makes his way back behind the bar.

"Let's go home," Draco responds, leaning across it.

Harry is about to say something else but then notices that the reporters are still there and trying to listen to their private conversation. Draco picks up on Harry's observance and sneers at them. It's not effective; they press in closer.

"When do you start practice?"

"Harry, will you make all of the games now?"

"That's enough!" Draco says. "Leave Harry out of it. He'll make it when he can. I think we all know his job is more important than any of ours."

You glance over to Harry to see his cheeks turn rosy again.

"Look, I'll give you an interview right here at the Three Broomsticks on Boxing Day," Draco says. "Just let Potter and me have an uninterrupted Christmas Eve and Day," he asks pleadingly.

"Yes, go away, you pests," Pansy says flicking her wand at them, releasing small sparks. "Some of Draco's friends would like to talk to him without you around."

"Pansy, are you working here tonight?" Draco asks in disbelief.

"Of course, darling; I'm the celebrity waitress. Potter and I make quite the team, don't we, Potter?"

"Yes, quite the team, Finnigan," Harry answers and blows her a kiss. Red and gold lip marks appear on her cheek.

The reporters take another picture.

Out of thin air, a flock of golden birds appear high up in the beamed ceiling.

"Oppugno!" Hermione says fiercely.

Without warning the birds dive bomb the reporters and cameramen. Pops in the air occur in quick repetition and they are gone.

"Good one, Granger!" Draco yells across the pub.

"Weasley, Malfoy; it's Weasley. And she did it for Harry," Ron yells back.

"Can we go home soon?" Draco asks Harry again.

He's standing right next to you. The uniform is more intricate and exotic than anything your father ever described. You can see why Harry would like it so much. The leather gloves and boots look worn and soft. The orange cape and shirt you can tell are brand new. CC is emblazoned across the front and Malfoy on the back. The trousers are brown. They don't match Draco's colouring, but he looks strong and athletic in them.

"I need to get Clare settled," Harry responds. Your head jerks back his direction. What does he mean, 'settled,' you wonder and then you realize you don't have a way to get to your father's home or even know where it is.

"Clare?"

Harry points at you and does the introduction. "Clare, Draco...Draco, Clare. Clare happens to be the person you sent off into the forest."

Draco's eyes widen. You originally thought they were blue, but now under the candle flame and gas lights you see they are grey. You also suddenly realize that there is no electricity running in the place.

"Can't you stay here?" Draco asks.

You look up directly at him and words get stuck in your throat. He's good looking in a aristocratic way with his sharp boned features, but there's something else about him. Something almost ethereal or non-human. "I...I don't...."

"Yes, she can. Clare, Susan, who's the owner, has a few rooms in the back. You're more than welcome to stay. How about tomorrow I help you find your father's place?"

You're not sure what to say. Draco and Harry are whispering to each other. You don't try to hear what they're talking about. Staying here isn't what you had planned on. You had wanted to wake up on Christmas morning in your father's home, but it wasn't plausible that you could find it tonight on your own.

You're drawn out of your thoughts by Draco's hand on your shoulder. There's a stunning silver bracelet on his. It looks like serpent formed in the letter M. He bends down and whispers, "I think you should stay. I think you need to stay." You look up and Harry's waving his wand is small intricate movements. Warmth spreads from Draco's hand on your shoulder down into your neck and back. The image of soft feather bed, numerous fluffy pillows and a warm quilt fills your thoughts.

Pansy appears by your side. "Come with me, dear," she says and guides you off the stool.

"Merry Christmas, Clare," Harry says and leans over giving you a kiss on the cheek. "I promise you things will be clearer tomorrow morning."

You nod and yawn. You can't remember being this tired before. You just want to crawl into bed and nestle into warm covers.

Pansy leads you out of the pub through a back door and into a dark panelled hallway. At the end are two doors, one on each side. The left side opens and then immediately closes after you and Pansy enter. The noise from the pub is gone. There's only silence, like when snow is falling and muffles the world's outside sounds. The room is dark. Pansy holds onto you and then waves her wand with her other hand. A fire sparks to life in a fireplace appropriately sized for the room. The room holds a maple four-poster bed and

patchwork quilt. The covers have been turned down and large pillows await your tired head.

"You can put your clothes over there," Pansy says, pointing to a highboy and then to a door. "And there's a loo. You can close the curtains if you prefer the complete dark or you can watch the goings on in Hogsmeade. They can't see you, so don't worry."

You nod, not really understanding half of what she just said. You shuffle towards the bed.

"Oh hells bells! Draco and Harry really doused you. I'm sure they didn't think it would affect a Squib so much. I hope your dreams are sweet love and that their horrors don't intrude." With those words spoken, your travelling clothes are replaced with your dressing gown. Drawers on the highboy are opened, and your clothes fly into them neatly folded. You crawl up onto the bed with its high, over stuffed mattresses. The last thing you see before you close your eyes is a Christmas tree in front of the window with moving lights...or maybe it's just your spinning head. You hear a cat meow and then feel a weight next to your side. A purr lulls you into a deep sleep.

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It's not visions of sugar plums that appear in your dreams, but images of Harry. He's so young, really young. You want to bend down and pick him up as his eyes well with tears. You see a woman who you can tell is not his mother. No true mother would act like that. You don't know how, but you can sense what he feels, and all he wants is to be touched, to be held, to be paid attention to with a genuine smile. He stands in his crib with his arms held up.

It's all a blur but moments of importance in Harry's life become known to you. You want to slow down in places, but you hear Pansy's voice. No, not the horrors. You decide to let the dream take you where it wants and go along for the ride. Harry is obviously the conductor.

Pictures are put before you to observe. You can tell there are stories with more than a thousand words behind them. But they all seem to have to do with love and affection. Harry being hugged by Ron's mother. Friends hugging him. A first crush, a first kiss. A broken heart. Another love, Ron's younger sister, and this time things go much further.
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But then time stops. You sense Harry wants to rush over scenes, but the importance of what happens next can't be hurried. You see the war; you see Draco as Harry did. You see Draco deny it's Harry and then Harry saving him. You cannot believe they lived through it. But then your attention is caught by fighting and yelling in the castle. Wands are casting spells and you jump as a green light goes through you.

Harry is running in one direction. You go to follow him but then you see someone you know. It's your father. He's fighting with a wand. He's fighting people in dark robes and masks. You're being pulled away from the scene, but you see your father struck by red bolts of light. One from the back and another from the front. You rush towards him. He's bleeding from wide open slices. You place his head on your lap. His eyes search yours. "Clare," he whispers. "Be happy, my love, be happy. I love you."

You lean down and kiss his wet cheek. "I love you, too, Daddy. Thank you," you whisper back.

The world goes black. You don't feel panicked. You feel sorrow and joy. Your father loved you. He died so you could live and be happy. But there's a competing emotion, and you let it win: your father died knowing he was loved.

You open your eyes and now you're in a forest clearing. It's much more frightful than the one you were in earlier. You stand transfixed as you watch Harry die. You cannot fathom his bravery even though you know somehow he must come back to life. You mourn his loss with the others as he's carried out of the forest by a sobbing giant.

You can't understand everything, but the wizard name Voldemort reeks with evil. He's worse than any nightmare you've ever had. You don't quite understand how Harry came back from life but he does and there are more deaths and more tears and then a standoff between the two. Harry wins.

The world stops and takes a breath. So do you, even though it's just a dream.

When the adventure begins again, the feeling is different. Harry is different. It's months later, maybe even a few years, but you see Harry and Ginny moving their relationship along. They are so sweet together, and you can see that Harry would be happy with this family, with this choice of love. They have so much in common, but there's something else, something so small you almost miss it. For everything

they have in common, including passion that could possibly sustain a lifetime together, there's something not right.

It's a few nights before Christmas. Harry is in his office finishing paperwork. He glances at a clock and puts the work away. He calls for his cloak and hat and puts them on. Of all things, a paper airplane flies into his office and lands on his desk. You can read the message on it. He's needed by the Minister right now. Harry scrawls a note to Ginny saying he'll be a little late and ties it to an owl's leg.

The meeting goes long by over two hours. You follow Harry in his Apparation to Hogsmeade. He lands right above the town where you were earlier in the night. As he walks towards the Three Broomsticks, he stops. You see Ginny in the window. She's looking out but it's obvious she can't see Harry. A scowl is across her face. You move closer, and you can tell she's furious. Harry takes a deep swallow and heads into the pub. Ginny jumps up and they kiss.

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"I can't explain it, Luna," Harry says, talking to a young woman with long, flowing blond hair. They're sitting in her kitchen drinking tea. "Ron and Hermione say they're okay, but I can tell they don't get it. Ginny certainly doesn't, and the rest of the family doesn't know what to say."

"It's okay, Harry. You're allowed to fall out of love."

"But so quickly. Over something so small. Luna, this is Ginny. Ginny who I thought of all through the war."

"Small?" Luna says with widened eyes. "I don't think so, Harry Potter. Maybe small now, but you know that it would grow to be large later on."

Harry sighs. "You're right; it would have grown. It was a look, Luna, just a stupid, simple look. But I knew it was for me. I knew I couldn't live my life seeing that blaming look ever again. It reminded me of my aunt."
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"Ah, the Wizengamot look."

Harry looks at Luna and laughs. "The what?"

"It just means that your love will be judged."

Harry takes another deep sigh and nods.

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"Really, Robards, you're assigning me to be Draco Malfoy's bodyguard because he's being stalked and threatened? You do know I could probably be a likely suspect for the threatening part."

The older Auror shakes his head. "Potter, you two are over that or should be by now. Grow up and go protect the reformed Death Eater. Who knows, you might enjoy yourself at those Quidditch games."

The visions that follow are unlike the previous part of the dream. It's as if it's happening in real time. Every look, every moment seems to be important. There's more to it than Harry looking for a clue as to who wants to harm Draco Malfoy. This is a Harry trying to figure out Draco Malfoy and how he relates to Harry's life.

Harry follows the Vultures all over Europe. Draco basically ignores Harry's presence and only acknowledges him in certain matters. Owls with threatening messages to Draco are tracked, mysterious gifts of poisoned chocolates are analysed, and so on, but Harry's real interest lies in what Draco does after the games. Every night, it's a different town and a different club. Men and women alike fawn over Draco and the other players. It's the men, though, that Draco favours, which doesn't surprise Harry. His own reaction to watching Draco and these men doesn't either, but his fantasies afterwards, late at night, do.

Harry isn't being rude or perverted in watching. He doesn't look when Draco and others disappear behind a closed loo stall or backroom door. But he does watch the dancing, and kissing and the fondling. And, of course, he tracks each man as a potential threat. He has to sharpen his Legilimency skills. This
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time it is much more pleasant.

It's a month later, around Christmas, when Harry finds the culprit. It's not a former Death Eater, or a Death Eater hater, or even a Death Eater sympathizer, but a medium ranked Quidditch player who wasn't signed and feels Draco had bought his way onto the team. Harry catches the man in the locker room during a game,, placing an explosive in Draco's locker. It's the most aggressive move to date.

Draco isn't notified until the game has been won and he and the team have showered and dressed. Draco seems stunned. Press interviews are given and then Draco asks Harry to stay and maybe go out and get a drink. Harry agrees.

It's a dive of a bar, not like the fancy clubs Draco usually attends. Harry wonders if it's because Draco thinks so little of him and is offended. As they sit at table in the back of the bar with no windows and only the front door as an entrance and exit, Draco does the unexpected. He orders shots of whiskey, and as they toast the sixth time to Harry finding the criminal, Draco leans over kisses Harry. Both seem shocked. Both seem pleased.

You giggle because by now you know what an Apparation is, and the next scene you aren't sure the two meant for you to see. They appear in the entryway of Draco's parents' home.

"Potter, I swear my parents aren't here," Draco mumbles as they stumble and then trip on the fringe of a thick rug. They crash to the floor. Harry doesn't have to hear more, his mouth is on Draco's and Draco's hands are on his belt, unfastening it quicker than Harry ever could. Within moments they are both naked and their hands are wrapped around each other's cocks. They both come quickly and then roll over on their backs, laughing. The Manor has beams decorated for the holidays, with sprigs of mistletoe hanging from the centre of each. Again, it is Draco that moves over to Harry, turns on his side and begins to kiss him. Harry responds in kind.

You begin to wonder if they'll stay the night on the floor, but soon Draco stands up and holds out his hand to Harry; they walk up the grand staircase together.

You expect the scene to change to another day or another year, but instead, you remain at the bottom of the stairs. The manor is silent and it grows cold with its stone walls and empty fireplaces. This part of the

dream feels different from the rest. You can't decipher what it is, but it's not like you're seeing things from Harry's mind or memories.

You hear a loud meow and see a very large grey cat pacing the top step. It stops, looks down at you and then releases a pathetic howl. It appears larger the farther you climb up, and you expect the cat or whatever the beast is to run away. It stays put and continues to release small encouraging meows. The stairwell is wide, and tapestries of animals and landscapes that you've only seen in fairy tale books hang down. You now wonder if they depict real places and creatures. You finally reach the cat and you can scratch its head without having to hardly bend down. It purrs as you do so. A small bell tinkles as it begins to rub your legs. You notice its collar made of braided yellow and black ribbons with a silver bell hanging down. It's engraved. You bend down further to take look: Kismet.

The cat pads away from you across the landing and down a hallway on the left. It stops and meows for you to follow. The wide hallway has heavy wooden doors sporadically spaced. The one furthest down on the right is ajar.

The cat enters and you peek in. The large wooden panelled room is warmly lit by a single candle in a brass holder on a bedside table. The massive bed against the centre wall faces a bank of windows draped in blue and gold. There are no curtains on the four-poster bed. It instantly becomes clear why the dream is different. Harry is on his back asleep, softly snoring. It is Draco's input into your dream. Not warm but fresh and cool...tingly. You step further into the room; even knowing you can't be seen, you still try to be quiet and unobtrusive.

Draco is lying on his side facing Harry. He's far from looking tired. His free hand is touching Harry, stroking him.

For some reason, a memory comes forward. One of yours from when your mother gave you the box of ornaments that had been in the family for generations. They'd survived bombing raids, moves to grand houses and moves to flats where doors had multiple locks. The ornaments are silver with coloured stripes and a few with star-like indentations. To anyone else they would appear worn. But they are beautiful to you. You remember them on your grandmother's tree, and you've seen pictures of them on her mother's too. Your own mother put them up every year and now they are yours. You handle each one with reverence.

That's it...Draco eyes followed his fingers as they touch Harry as if in disbelief. They trail down his chest, his arms and over his open lips with complete reverence.

"Oh Merlin," Draco whispers. "I want you, Potter. I fucking need you."

A single tear drips from his cheek, landing on Harry's chest. Harry stirs and then moves his arm around Draco, bringing him in close—so Draco's head rests on his chest. "You okay, Malfoy?" he says softly and kisses Draco on the top of the head. Draco looked up to see if green eyes are staring at him. They aren't. Harry has returned to his snoring.

Even in the dream you feel your heart clench.

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The setting is familiar but the house is not. The birch trees lining the driveway are young and twiggy, the house a simple two story with a steep pitched roof and one chimney. Harry and Draco are outside of it, walking the property. You notice the for sale sign dangling from the gate, which is open.

They go inside, you follow. Kismet greets you at the door and rubs against your legs. You can't imagine how this simple home transformed into the large estate you saw on the drive. But dreams are like that, adding things on to homes so you can discover new rooms that you previously didn't know existed. You guess, though, they that must have added onto it with magic.

The interior is simple. Light woods for the cabinetry and worn out carpet on the floor. Draco goes up the stairs while Harry stays down. He's drawn to a door under the stairwell; you guess it is a storage cupboard. You're wrong. Inside is a room that you know logically cannot fit into the house's blueprint. Harry stands in the middle. It has a large open peaked ceiling with timbers running across. The room is bare and has no windows.

"This is mine," Harry whispers.

You feel a sense of sorrow as you watch him walk around the room. Why would he want this room? Does
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it make him feel safe that no one can see in? You want to hug him and tell him not to hide away. Then you remember you had the same feeling before, at the beginning of your adventuresome dream, when Harry was young and raised his arms to be hugged.

Draco finds Harry in the room, sitting on the floor.

"I want this house, and I want this room."

"Potter, we can afford better. Even with magic, it will take us years to get it into shape."

Harry chuckles. "It's close to fine as is, but if you want to make it grand, you know I'll help. Just don't touch this room.

"Okay, but we should go and make the offer. The office in Hogsmeade will be closing for Christmas Eve soon," Draco says and holds out his hand for Harry to take.

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Time speeds up and you guess a few years have gone by. Images of Harry and Draco in their house making it a home and making their life together work come fast. Interspersed are visions of Harry at work and Draco travelling afar. Harry is alone in the home more often than not. Draco's arrivals are always welcome but never long enough.

The argument catches you off guard. Draco has arrived home, and it's Christmas Eve. Harry had been working on some murder cases for the previous month, which you're thankful you didn't see images of. From what you can tell, a family of vampires had moved nearby in Hogsmeade and drained the life from non-magical people living in the countryside. Harry hadn't had time to focus on getting ready for the holiday. Draco is upset and disappointed.

"I should've stayed in Paris," Draco snipes.
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"Fine, leave and don 't come back!" Harry yells.

The words appear to hit Draco like a slap. "Is that what you want?" he asks in a softer voice.

Harry bites his lower lip and sighs. "Draco, you always leave. The only difference is that you won't return."

"Fuck you!" Draco says, grabbing his broom. "Fuck you, Potter! I really thought we had it. That we were true lovers."

"What?" Harry snaps. "True lovers as in true love? You're fucking insane, Malfoy. True love, if there is such a thing, I doubt would consist of you coming home upset about Christmas and not asking what the hell is wrong with me. Instead you seem to believe I didn't rise to the occasion on purpose."

Draco's eyes widen. "You don't believe in true love?" he whispers.

Harry snorts and walks away towards the door leading to his room. "No, Malfoy, I guess I don't. I think that probably went the same way as young love and everlasting love."

Draco winces at the words. "I—I'm going to go, Harry," he says and calls for his broom. "I can't be here right now. I really thought you loved me."

Harry turns around. "Love you? Draco, I say it all the time. But you never do. I don't believe you love me. You just say you need me, which I highly doubt, by the way."

"Good bye, Harry, I have to go. And by the way, Ginny Weasley was not your true love."

You know that somehow they end up back together, but with such hurtful words and Draco flying away on Christmas Eve as it begins to snow, you wonder how they'll put it back together.

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"How long has he been in there?" Hermione asks Luna. Her concerned tone comes across the green flames her head floats upon. You've never seen such a thing.

"An hour or so. Draco sent a note to Pansy saying they broke up. She let Seamus know, who told Neville, who told me. He won't let me in. He's got nargles blocking the way."

You look at the door and don't see anything in front of it except Kismet, who's reaching up to the door knob.

"Luna, I appreciate you asking me, but honestly, Harry won't listen to me. He knows that Ron and I never quite felt good about the two of them together."

"Oh that's silly, Hermione. Everyone knows they are true loves."

Hermione, you can tell, tries not to laugh.

"She's telling the truth," another voice says, coming through the front door. You recognise it as Pansy's though she looks quite different without being made up. "Come on, Luna, we can get in there if we try," Pansy adds. "Hermione, we'll let you know how he is later. Bye for now."

You jump as the green fire pops out and takes Hermione's head with it.

Pansy and Luna wave their wands at the closed door; they have no effect. You walk over to it, turn the glass knob and it opens. You slide in and Pansy and Luna follow.
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"Glad you decided to let us in, Potter," Pansy says as she flops down on the couch next to him. They're facing a fireplace, which is new since the last time you saw the house.

The room seems cold even though the fire is lit. It's bare compared to the rest of the house. There's a desk on the far end of the room and the walls are covered by two-story bookshelves with ladders on rails. The dark panelled wall surrounding the large fireplace is filled with their awards and memorabilia. Draco's first SilverQuest broom from when he signed with the Vultures, pictures of Harry shaking hands with dignitaries Magical and non-magical from around the world, and then an accommodation called the First Order of Merlin. You surmise that these things were displayed because Draco had insisted upon it.

"I didn't," he states and then pulls a tartan blanket lying over the back of the couch around him.

Luna sits down on the other side of him. "It was the nargles. I think you have an infestation."

"Figures," Harry replies.

"So where do you think Draco went?" Pansy asks as she wavs her wand in the direction of the open door.

"Probably to his parents. He knows I'm not likely to go there. Lucius and I can barely tolerate each other."

"And, yet, he lives here with you," Luna says. "Another sign of true love."

Harry coughs. "Oh Merlin, don't tell me you believe in it too."

"You don't?" Pansy asks. She reaches for glasses and a bottle of wine which has floated in from another room. "God, I hope you didn't mention that to Draco...Oh shit, you did. Potter, you arse. No wonder he left."

Harry pulls on the blanket tighter. "So what if I did. It's not like he ever mentioned the word love to me. His thing was that he needed me," Harry says sarcastically and rolls his eyes.

"Needed you?" Pansy says, flabbergasted. She drinks down a considerable amount of the red wine. "That's better than love, Potter, you shithead."

Harry glances over to her. "Needing someone trumps loving them?"

"Not trumps, Harry," Luna says. "It's included. There are all kinds of love, but true love is part of needing someone."

Harry releases the blanket and leans over, taking a glass of wine. "And what class did I miss where we learned this?"

"There wasn't a class, Harry. It's just what we know, what we grew up knowing."

Harry sighs. "Hello! Remember: boy under the stairs, raised in cupboard. Did anyone think to tell me about this hierarchy? And by the way, I still don't get it. Needy sounds desperate and pathetic."

"You think Draco is desperate and pathetic?" Pansy asks.

Harry's head jerks back to look at her. "No...God, no. Didn't mean that. No I didn't mean it that way. I just don't understand why he says it. He's seems pretty capable of leading his life very well without me. He doesn't need me at all."

"Harry," Luna says, getting back his attention. "It's not a financial, physical, or even emotional need. It's deeper than that. You're right, Draco could survive without you, but, Harry, he only does so well because you are with him."

"Stop. Stop, right there. I can't be responsible for someone's happiness like that."

"OUCH!"

You cover your mouth even though they can't hear you laugh. Pansy just changed a pillow into a frying pan and hit Harry over the head.

"You idiot. God, Potter, what he sees in you, I don't know. But what Luna is saying is right. You can live without Draco, but for you to be the best person you can be, the happiest, the most content, the most fulfilled, then you need Draco. It's not saying you couldn't be with someone else and have a perfectly lovely life, but it will not be what you could have with Draco."

"And if I die in my job, his life goes to shit?"

"Oh no, Harry. No. He'd mourn you, but he'd move on. You see, he'd be fulfilled and content with the knowledge that you died a very happy man and that you were loved. It actually makes it easier to move on. There are no what ifs or should haves. No regrets"

"Oh," Harry whispers.

You feel like saying the same thing. You know that feeling; you experienced it earlier when you held your father as he died. There was closure and there was peace. You were loved and your father was loved. It wasn't romantic, but it was love. And now you understand how your mother was able to move on and be happy. You quickly make a promise to go visit her and Stan.

"I told Draco that Ginny was my true love," Harry states. "OUCH! Damn it, Pansy, you're going to give me a concussion with that thing."

"Well you deserve it, Harry Potter," Luna says. "Ginny was the love you needed during the war. It was young love. Love untouched by hurt words or actions. It was fate that you were together. That type of perfect love sustains you through war. And sometimes young love can be true love, but most of the time it's not."

"So do you love him?" Pansy asks. "I mean truly love him."

Harry grins. "Yes, and I also think I need his skinny arse. But I'm not sure he'll forgive me."

Pansy sighs. "Of course he will, Potter; it's true love. It's destiny for you to be together. Just don't do it again. You see, the major part of true love is that you never hurt each other intentionally. You have to know that Draco may fuck up, but it's not meant intentionally to hurt you."

Harry sits back and sips his wine. You can tell he's thinking hard about something. He turns to Luna. "Remember when I told you about that look from Ginny."

Luna nods. You remember too.

"That was it. It was because she thought I was intentionally late even though I sent her a note. I thought she would always know I wouldn't hurt her like that....but if it is true love between Draco and I, then wouldn't he have known that my not decorating for Christmas had nothing to do with him and everything to do with the fact that I was overworked?"

Pansy laughs. "Are you telling me that this fight started over you not decorating for Christmas? Well, couldn't you have just swished and flicked your wand? God, Potter, you're a fucking wizard, remember? But it's more than that. He needs his home safe and inviting. No horrors."

Harry glares at her but you can tell he knows she's right. He should have apologized to Draco, and they could've had the place decorated in a matter of minutes.

"I'm sorry," Harry whispers as he takes another sip of wine. His eyes narrow as green boughs of pine suddenly appear and wrap around the exposed beams overhead. Long red ribbons unfurl from the green boughs and twist into large bows.

The room suddenly feels warmer.

All three of them look at each other, seeing if one of them is doing this magic.

Sleigh bells jingle and red belts with silver bells wrap around the highly polished columns in the room.

Pansy stands up and leaves the room. "It's not Draco! He's not here," she yells from the kitchen.

"It has to be him," Harry says as Pansy comes back in.

"No, Harry, I don't think it's Draco. I think it's you," Luna says.

"What?"

"It feels like you, Harry, like your magic."

Harry obviously isn't going to argue with her about whether a person can really tell the difference between a wizard's and witches magic.

"Why would my magic be decorating my library without me casting the spells?"

Luna puts her hand on Harry's arm, squeezing it. "Because the room has changed, just like you have, Harry Potter. Neither you nor the room look so sad or empty anymore.

Harry laughs quietly. "Draco, whether you believe it or not, is very sentimental."

"I believe it," Pansy says.

"And you're not?" Luna asks.

"Oh, I am, but I guess not in the traditional sense. I think I'm more practical about it. Yes, I'm more practical about love too."

"There's nothing practical about love, Harry. It can and usually does get quite messy."

"We do get messy," Harry says and snickers.

"That's nice," Luna responds without indulging him in his juvenile thoughts. But to all of their surprise, a black cast iron pot appears on the rotisserie handle in the fireplace. The air soon fills with the scent of cranberries and spice.

"Oh, Harry, you have a sentient house. That's what's going on. How exciting!"

"What does that mean?" he asks.

"It means the house, and especially this room, is feeding off your magic. It likes you, Harry; it wants to reflect your likes. Like Hogwarts did for the Founders and then for the students and teachers."

"So you're saying that I'm doing this?"

Luna smiles and nods. "Of course, and it has strands of Draco's magic interwoven with it too."

You can tell that something stirs deep inside Harry. You've never seen him look so relaxed and almost joyful. The house likes him, though; the house likes both of them. You now understand how the house expanded.

"What part do you think is Draco?" Harry asks as he looks around. Silver and gold garlands zoom across the room and attach to the rafters hanging down. Enormous ornaments coloured in red and green hang from each end. Snowy cotton forms on the mantle, and nutcrackers and snow globes manoeuvre for position in the fluff. Stockings hang underneath.

Pansy begins to giggle, and Harry sips away at his wine, watching the show. The room is no longer barren. It's glorious.

"I'd say Draco's magic is responsible for the tree," Luna says as she sets down her glass and then moves up on her knees. She turns and places her hands on the back of the couch to watch a giant fir manoeuvre into the room. Harry and Pansy do the same there are so many fairy lights the little creatures fight for space. The tree plants itself in the middle of the room. Its top almost touches the ceiling peak.

With their mouths open in awe, boxes of ornaments float by them. Lids pop off and glass and silvered balls make their way onto the tree as if each of their placements were known beforehand. Popcorn and cranberry strands swoop between the branches. Candy canes and snowman cookies fill any remaining bare spots.

"Definitely Draco," Pansy says unique silver Snitches fly in and push the other ornaments around until they have prime spots of being viewed. Luna and Harry both laugh as a small golden lion prances into the room and over to the tree. Everything shakes as it climbs the trunk and finally appears at the top where it sits, regally observing everything below.

To your delight, Kismet enters the room, looks at the tree, meows at you and then curls up underneath it.

"Nice touch," Luna comments. "It's too bad Draco isn't here to see this."

The warm feeling diminishes as quickly as it had come. "I know," Harry says sadly. "I need to apologize."

"Well then, start grovelling, Potter."

Harry startles and his wine crests over the glass edge. "Draco."

"Oh, I should go," Luna says and without waiting for a response, she vanishes. Pansy looks up at Draco and, without waiting for a response, disappears, too.

Draco's in full uniform. He places his broom against the black marble framing the fireplace.

"You had practise?" Harry asks in disbelief. "I—I thought you left because you were mad."

Draco snorts as he walks over to Harry on the couch. His brown leather Quidditch boots barely make a sound on the floor. "I was furious, Potter, but I also had practise, you idiot. Didn't you look at the schedule?"

Harry shakes his head, not saying a word. Draco is standing over him. Harry's jaw twitches as Draco joins him on the couch, placing his knees on either side of Harry's thighs.

"Did you know we're destined to be together?" Harry says softly as Draco takes Harry's chin into his hand and holds it firm.

Draco nods.

"Did you know need encompasses true love?"

Draco nods again as he lowers his face to meet Harry's. Gently, he brushes his lips over Harry's.

"Did you know I need you?" Harry asks and then surrenders to Draco's kiss.

You glance around the room, trying not to look. But you can't resist.

Clothes are carefully removed and then hands stroke each other almost as if it is their first time. You notice Draco has kept his leather gloves on. Harry kisses each covered knuckle. Draco stops him and joins their lips together again. The kisses become noisy with soft moans.

The two gently tumble over and lay side by side on the couch. You have a full shot of Draco's back and bum. You ponder that he may not be human or that you need to get a broom and sit on it for exercise. You walk away and look at the many books on the wall. Again, you're not sure you were meant to see this. This is too private. Sex is one thing to be voyeuristic about but making love is another. And you have no doubts that they're making love.

Christmas choir music begins to play, and from your position near Harry's desk you can see that they're close to becoming joined. From the back of the couch, you can see that Harry's legs are draped over Draco's shoulders. Draco's jaw suddenly tightens and he grimaces. It's not with pain, you're sure, but with patience and pleasure.

"Love me," Harry whispers and then Draco moves, thrusting forward.

Draco's gloved hands hold onto Harry's legs. He's slow in his movement. "I do love you, Harry," Draco says with a whimper and then you hear Harry groan as Draco's movements quicken. The sounds of sex always embarrassed you before, but now you can see that it's just being human. They seem oblivious.

"Do you want me?" Harry asks in gasping breaths.

"All the time, Potter. All the fucking time."

"Draco!" Harry cries out, and you know he's coming.

"That's right, Potter. You come, and then I'm going to fill you up again and again."

Harry mewls and then is silent as Draco pounds into him at a ferocious pace. The sight has you excited, but even more you know that this is what true love is. It's more than sex but getting off on giving what the other person needs and craves. It's not always easy but takes loving dedication.

You're not sure when they will finish but you believe you've seen enough. Kismet has woken up and is standing by the door leading outside of the room. You follow him out. But before you shut the door, you turn and take a final look. They're lying on the couch panting, kissing, and laughing.

The rest of the house has transformed. Ceilings are higher, windows have multiplied and stairwells have been added. Christmas decorations cover almost every inch. The house is happy; it's now a home filled with love.

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"Don't wake her up," you hear a voice say from another room. You recognise it as Harry's.

"But I want to see her," a very deep voice responds. "I've waited fifteen years, Harry. I've kept this house under Fidelius, waiting until she found us."

You know you should get up and see what the commotion is about, but the bed is so warm and comfortable and a big cat is next to you purring.....a big cat. You open your eyes and see that he's grey, and he has a collar like from the dream. "Kismet," you say and the cat meows and bats your cheek with
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his large paw. You give him a scratch on the ears and then look around the room you stumbled into last night.

It's not the same room. Even as sleepy as you are, you can tell. This room is painted a soft lavender and the furniture and trim is white. Just like you wanted when you were a young girl. It's daylight and the window is not facing a street, but bare twigged bushes with red berries. They are getting covered with snow. Snow. Snow on Christmas Day. You look around for the tree you saw last night, but it's gone. You do see a fuzzy white robe and purple slippers on a chair next to the bed. You make your way out of bed and put them on. You see another door which you hope leads to a loo.

As you exit the loo you see that a steaming cup of cocoa is waiting for you on the bedside table. You take it and decide it's time to meet your guests.

You open the door and enter a living room, and off to the side you see a small but nice kitchen. A tall black man rises off a couch in the living room. A roaring fire is going, and a Christmas tree is centred in front of the room's windows. You see your present and many more added to it. You wonder whose they are.

"You are Shamus Savage's daughter?" the man asks as he reaches for your free hand and takes it in both of his.

"Yes," you say and then look over at Harry. He gives you a quick smile.

"Clare, this is Kingsley Shacklebolt, our Minister for Magic."

You're not sure what you should do given the man's title. He appears very friendly.

"Ah, enough with the Minister title today, Harry. Today, I'm just Kingsley, Shamus Savage's best friend and Clare's godfather." You gasp. Harry gives you a warm smile with just a hint of sadness, which seems odd but you put it down as one of his strange emotional reactions.

"And you, my dear," Kingsley says squeezing your hand a little tighter, "are even more beautiful than Shamus said you would be." Now it is your turn to blush. No one has said you were beautiful, or at least meant it. You believe this man, though. His warm brown eyes are dancing with delight at seeing you.

"Please sit," he says and leads you over to the couch opposite from Harry. "Would you like some breakfast?"

"Um, sure, but I can help," you say as he heads towards the kitchen.

"Oh, yes, well actually, I'd be helping you," he says. "You do know that this is your house, don't you?"

You suspected it might be, but the reality of it being so hits hard. You crumple onto a kitchen chair. Kismet runs over and rubs your leg and purrs. You hear Harry snicker. "The cat comes with the house we're guessing."

You pet the cat and then look over at Harry. "Shouldn't you be with Draco this morning?" you ask.

Harry's eyes widen. "Um, well, yeah, but..."

"He felt responsible for you, Clare," Kingsley says as he sets a skillet on the stove top.

"Responsible for me? Harry Potter, get your arse home! I'm not sure what happened to me last night but I do know that it's important for Draco to have you home, especially today."

Harry smiled. "It worked then?"

You nod. "Yes, if you mean did I learn about true love, then, yes, it worked."

Harry rises from the couch and steps over to the kitchen. His jacket and scarf fly into his arms. "Well then my work is done," he says with a grin. "Though I do still want to hear about why you didn't think love was for you. I'm assuming you've changed your mind."

"Yes, of course, you prat," you respond and stand. You reach up on your toes and give him a kiss on the cheek.

"Will I be seeing you around?" he asks.

"I don't know, is there something I can do here? Will others accept me? I think I'd like to stay."

"Potter, go home," Kingsley says. "I'll fill her in on the details of our little world. I can't think of a better way to spend this Christmas than with my goddaughter."

Your heart warms, hearing that someone wants to spend time with you and wants you in their world. It may not be romantic love, but it is destiny. You will be okay. You have loved and you've been loved.

You take a sip of the hot chocolate and sit back down at the kitchen table. You watch the Minister for Magic, your godfather, make you breakfast. Kismet rubs his cheeks against your legs. You look around the cottage and smile. You have a home in a magical village, a warm grey cat and presents under the tree. Life is good.

The end

Happy H/D Holidays!