Title: Read my Mind

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Prompt: "A Butterbeer a day keeps the mediwizard away."

Wordcount:~7,100

Rating: PG-13

Warnings:none

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Summary: Harry wakes up one morning with a new voice in his head that opens his heart to some of his own.

Author's Note: Written for the 2009 [info]hd_worldcup, Team EWE. A billion thanks to Hilary for being my sounding board, to [info]xovrall and Lindsey for their betas and additional help, and to [info]tmkline for her support and commentary- I couldn't have done this without them!

"Coffee coffee coffee coffee coffee." Harry awoke to the sleepy chant.

"Ron? Is that you?" he called out, rubbing at his eyes.

"Coffee! Oh, glorious, wonderful coffee."

"Ron?" he said a little louder, trying to ignore the pounding in his head. He thought it was a little strange that Ron was up before him and being so loud about it. They hadn't gotten back to their flat until four. Harry cracked an eye to glance at the clock. It was only seven. Ron never awoke before one or two in the afternoon on a Saturday.

"I should write a song in your favour. Coffee is the best! It beats all the rest. Do not put it to the test, or you will…" The song stopped with a last "Mmm, coffee."

Ron never writes songs. Harry put a pillow over his ears, but he still couldn't drown out the indecent

moans. Ron was not usually this enthusiastic about anything so early. Harry tried to ignore the nearly pornographic sounds, rolling over in bed and pulling the blanket over his head.

"Ooooh, coffee. I don't know what I would do without you. Mmm, you are amazing!" Alright, that's it. Harry could handle coffee- thought it was pretty decent- but there was no reason for Ron to be loudly extolling its virtues so early in the morning. He roughly threw his pillow to the ground before sitting up in bed. Harry grabbed his head in an attempt to stop the aching. They had had too many drinks last night, and he hadn't had a hangover in a long time.

Regardless, he bravely stomped out of his room and over to the kitchen to find that there was no Ron. "Lovely coffee pot, let's clean you out."

Harry turned towards the sink to see no one. It appeared his hangover was causing auditory hallucinations. "Shower time!"

Harry heaved a big sigh and dashed around the flat. No one else was awake. As he approached Ron's door, the snores became louder. "Hello, gorgeous! Ew- what are those dark circles?! Those simply must go."

Harry threw open the door to see Ron sprawled across his bed in nearly the same outfit he had been wearing the night before. His shoes and one sock had been removed. Harry went over to Ron's bed, carefully standing back and reaching out with an errant hanger lying on the floor while his other hand still held his head.

"Ron," he hissed, poking him with the hanger. Ron threw his arm back, hitting the spot where Harry's head would have been. Harry had learned to avoid proximity when it came to waking Ron.

"Ron," he hissed again.

"Mm blagerda?" Ron mumbled.

"RON!" Harry yelled before covering his ears and attempting to console his head. Ron jumped up quickly.

"What the-" he began wildly. "Oh, Harry, it's you. What time is it?"

"Oh, bloody hell!" the voice yelled. Harry winced. "Is that? Oh no, oh no, oh no."

"Do you hear that?" Harry whispered at Ron, pointing his finger around. "I told her those greasy chips were bad for my complexion! 'But, darling, a couple chips won't hurt you.' Stupid wench. I'll get her for this!"

"Hear what, mate?" Ron asked, trying to appear concerned.

"The- the person!" Harry said unhelpfully. "The one talking about chips- I think he's got a spot."

"I don't hear anything, mate. Aside from the evil drums in my head," Ron clarified. "Maybe you're just tired?"

"Right," Harry sighed. "I'll just go back to bed."

"What shall I do today? Let's start with a brisk walk- clear the sinuses. Of course, it would just be a bonus if the sex god 'round the corner is doing garden work again."

Just as he was being lulled to sleep by the creation of a shopping list, the voice picked up interest again. Harry shut his eyes tightly as the virtues of the neighbour's arse were extolled. This was going to be a long morning. Hopefully, he'd wake from this nightmare soon.

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Harry awoke to a glorious silence later that evening. Finally feeling refreshed, he took a quick shower before the loud sounds of his stomach grumbling drove him to the kitchen.

"I'm not crazy, Ron!" Harry called out as he ran into the kitchen.

"Bloody brilliant," Ron scowled. "We'd never have guessed if you hadn't told us."

"What's wrong with you?" Harry stuck his tongue out.

"Nothing," Ron replied. "Hermione's working again tonight. As if the whole research division of the Ministry couldn't survive one Saturday evening without her." Harry nodded as sympathetically and understandingly as he could.

"Clubs?" Ron looked hopeful.

"Er- I may sit tonight out. I think I may be getting old," Harry remarked sheepishly.

"Yeah right. The night is young and so are we!" Ron declared, sitting up straighter in his chair.

"I don't know, Ron," Harry sighed. "When I woke up this morning, I could swear I was hearing voices."

"Again?"

"Ron…" Harry scowled.

Ron just shrugged, so Harry continued, "No, these aren't basilisks creeping about the pipes. It was really odd. Perhaps a side effect of a nasty hangover?"

"Never heard of hangovers giving anyone auditory hallucinations," Ron remarked.

"Auditory hallucinations? Those sound like some big words for you- have you been studying up?" Harry quirked an eyebrow.

Ron glared at him. "I asked 'Mione last week if she could hear the whispers on the breeze telling us we should shag, and she told me crude auditory hallucinations were not cute nor becoming. It sounded smart at any rate."

Harry did his best to contain his laughter and be sympathetic for his best mate. "Well, I think I should tone down the partying," Harry told him. "I may just stay in and watch a movie tonight. Want to join?"

"Lame," Ron scrunched up his nose. "I think I'll leave it to you and see where Seamus is going."

Harry finished preparing a sandwich for himself, took it into the sitting room and flipped on the telly. Their flat was a nice blend of magic and Muggle. Ron had been glued to the 'clever Muggle pictures box' for a few weeks when they first got the telly, but once he learned he could record shows of interest, he was easy to lure away from it.

Before heading out, Ron came over. "C'mon, don't be boring- come out with us!"

"We just went out last night, Ron," Harry reminded him.

Ron thought for a minute before changing his tactics, "You know, Harry, these voices could be dangerous. You should pre-empt the visit to the mediwizard with some drinking tonight; after all, a Butterbeer a day

keeps the mediwizard away!"

"Ron, what are you-" Harry sighed and shook his head. "I think I just need to rest. You have fun though."

"Alright, but it's your loss, mate," Ron grinned, rushing out the door. Harry was looking forward to the evening in. After all, there's nothing quite like a quiet Saturday night.

Just as Harry found himself getting sucked into a crime show, he heard a loud, "Naps are the best- well, second to coffee of course! " Harry groaned.

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By Monday, Harry felt as though sanity was a fleeting memory from a blurry past. While he had repeatedly heard the virtues of a certain beverage extolled ad nauseum, he had also heard opinions on just about every aspect of everything that crossed this mysterious voice's path. Not to mention how easily it got side-tracked with random thoughts.

"…I wonder what I should get them. Marriage is a once in a lifetime thing- well, for one of them anyway, poor sod. I need a sleigh- but only for romancing purposes. Do blokes like sleighs?"

It did almost seem like thoughts- well, in larger quantity and much more jumbled and complicated than any Harry had ever had. It was as though there was someone else thinking in his head, if that made any sense.

"…I do like Quidditch. Brooms and blokes and… mmm. If I ever open a shop, I should sell biscuits. And coffee, of course…"

The non-sequiturs this voice made on a regular base were really quite astonishing. When Harry had tried to talk to Ron about it, Ron waved him off and complained about his hangover. At least it was only a 7 am to 9 pm voice- or at least, it had been the last couple days. There was only one thing for it. He would

have to ask Hermione for help. She'd be able to tell or research the problem and figure it all out.

"…One day I am going to be Minister, and all the plebeian people will do my bidding. Could I even get absolute power like that? Oooh, Mr. Round-arse just waved- would it be too forward to wink?"

Surely this was not normal. He might get a few lectures on insanity and the inconvenience of it all, but at least she'd let him know if there was anything to be done for it. He didn't feel insane- aside from the fact that he was hearing a voice that actually was making him feel a bit…

Hermione would know.

That was how Hermione Granger found her office door dramatically flung open and a dishevelled Harry Potter charging in.

"Harry?" Hermione was concerned. "Are you alright?"

"Sit down, Hermione," Harry said, carefully closing her office door behind him. He winced as though hearing something painful before taking a seat himself.

"What is it, Harry?"

"Hermione, I… I'm hearing voices," Harry blurted out. "Well, not voices exactly. Just one voice- a mundane, busy, random voice. My goodness, he can't ever stay on task or think about anything normal. And he's clearly gay. Well, I don't know that it's a man, it just seems like one. All he ever talks about are other blokes and coffee and nonsense!"

"Wait- what?" Hermione looked flabbergasted.

"There's a voice, in my head. Absolutely insane. Right now it's talking about how a Mr. Nosey-toes always

demands too much paperwork first thing in the morning- and of course, how foul the coffee is. And what a travesty that is."

"I-"

"Oh, yes, now he's thinking about suing," Harry added. "For the coffee- in case you didn't get that bit."

"How long have you been hearing this voice?" Hermione questioned.

"Since Saturday morning. And it's off at night, but it wakes up too early in the morning."

"Has it said anything malicious?"

"What would you call malicious? He's getting pretty upset about this coffee-"

"Have you had any coffee today at all?"

"No!" Harry exclaimed. "I didn't bother to do much of anything before coming in to see you."

"So, all the things the voice talks about are unrelated to you?"

"Well- yes, for the most part," Harry puzzled. "Right now he's wondering how he looks so gorgeous in black."

Hermione turned and began digging furiously through a large stack of papers.

"I just read about-" she tried to explain as she glanced over a few pages she had pulled out. Eventually, her lips pursed and Harry knew she hadn't found what she wanted.

"It doesn't sound like insanity, Harry. I think you either had a busy voice implanted to distract or- well, but that seems unlikely. Were you introduced to any strange potions or spells recently?"

"Or what?" Harry asked, ignoring the question.

"Well, it sounds like you could be hearing someone else's thoughts, but it just seems so unlikely… It's much more likely something that fills your awake time with speech to keep you from concentrating on anything."

"Oh. Well, it's working if that is the case."

"So, anything unusual recently?"

"Seriously? Hermione, I'm an Auror. I'm exposed to strange things on missions all the time."

"Hmm, true," Hermione blinked at him. "Doesn't help us much though."

"I don't know if this helps, but a couple months ago when we were tracking some rogue Death Eaters, one of them hit me with a spell that knocked me over, but didn't seem to do anything. The medical staff said I was fine to go when I was checked over upon returning, but the spell had to do something, right?"

"Perhaps, but why did it lay dormant for so long?"

Harry shrugged. "It was something like-"

"I still can't believe albino dolphins are flamboyantly pink. Maybe I should buy a couple, but I wouldn't know where to keep them. I should run to the store after work…"

"I- I know what it was. I just can't think with this voice in my head!"

"Well, be careful and let me know if you think of it. Take it easy- no reason to put yourself in danger," Hermione looked concerned. She was always a bit worried about the whole Auror profession though. "I think you ought to see a mediwizard again; I'll be worrying about you."

"You're always worried," Harry grinned at her. "I'd worry if you weren't."

Hermione jabbed him. "Be careful, Harry. Really. Think about seeing someone. I'll try to see what I can find."

"Thanks, 'Mione." Harry relaxed, giving her a hug before leaving.

"…I'm clearly the only one capable of filing anything properly around here. You might think someone else could learn their alphabet, but apparently, that's outside the realm of current teaching…" It was going to be a long day.

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A week later, Harry and Ron were camped out on their latest mission. Someone had spotted something suspicious in this awful forest, and when magical registration tests were done, it appeared there was some irrational magic being cast. It was likely another rogue Death Eater.

Three Auror teams had been sent out, Harry and Ron included of course. Each pair had been set up in different areas, hoping to cover more ground and divide the large forest. Trips and monitors had been

set up all around to notify when a human crossed them.

"This brings back memories," Ron said simply.

"Yeah," Harry agreed quietly.

"At least this time there are snacks!"

"Not to mention we're much better trained for all this."

"There's that too," Ron acquiesced.

Harry rubbed at his temples. The voice had been wearing him down. It was hard to concentrate on anything with the constant noise. Thank goodness it had stopped for now- it was after its bedtime or something.

Ron looked concerned. "You really ought to see a mediwizard, mate."

"Ron…" Harry warned.

"Hey, I know, but it seems to be causing you a lot of pain. They might be able to help…"

"No, thanks," Harry said with finality.

Ron look concerned but changed the subject. "I hate that we're out here in the woods trying to find some minor Death Eater when the real trouble makers got off scot-free!"

"Look, if you're going to talk about Malfoy and his family again- well, you know what they did for me," Harry shrugged.

"Not bloody much!"

"Ron, he was trying to make amends in his own way. We could be dead if he hadn't told Crabbe and Goyle not to kill us- not to mention that his mother literally (and ironically) saved my life by declaring me dead. The world would be a completely different place if she hadn't."

"They're still an awful brood," Ron remarked petulantly.

"Regardless, they played a critical role in the outcome of it all. Look- can we just not talk about this tonight?" Harry begged.

"Fine," Ron sighed.

"Thanks," Harry released the air accumulating in his lungs and relaxed. Moving on to some small talk, the two eventually decided on shifts and Harry went to sleep.

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"…coffee, coffee, coffee- the drink of the gods. Mmm…" Harry awoke to the familiar chant. It was beginning to be almost endearing. Beyond the large part where it was extremely annoying, that is.

He went out to where Ron was sitting in the crisp morning air, taking his third shift of the night. "Hey mate," he greeted. "I can take over now."

"You sure?" Ron asked.

"Yeah," Harry pointed to his head. "He's up, and I certainly won't be able to get anymore sleep now."

"Alright," Ron patted his shoulder before heading into the tent. "Thanks, Harry."

After a while, Harry became lost in the amusing drabble of thoughts running through his head. Although it was often difficult to keep up with the connections between them, he could ignore some of the extraneous thoughts and complete a story about this person and their work. He must be a gem at parties. He had nicknames and snarky ideas about everyone he worked with.

"It's an intercom for Merlin's sake, not a toy. You can't just get on it whenever you feel like it… Oh bloody fuck, here he is again. He sounds like he's about to die on there- can't he wait until he's done coughing to start it up? Oh good lord, now she's getting on too, and they are having a conversation over it. Don't they realise that is what Floos and owls are for? Who taught our idiot boss the spell for it? They should be fired for their incompetence. I hope someone puts me out of my misery long before I get that obnoxious…"

Harry chuckled. The modification of the Sonorus charm to mimic Muggle intercoms had graced the Ministry recently too. He completely understood how obnoxious it could be.

As he was musing over the newest thoughts about one of the co-worker's outdated clothing choices, he felt the alarm trip to the South. He Apparated quickly after casting a quick spell into the tent to wake and bring Ron along.

Ron was quickly alert and together, so they silently signalled a plan and began to circle the area, keeping themselves hidden but within easy distance of each other. Harry was having a difficult time suppressing the voice inside his head. He never had many thoughts of his own, and it was exhausting to have so many things running in it- even without the added pressure of his current situation.

It shouldn't have been such a surprise that when they happened upon the rogue Death Eater, Harry's mind froze, the criminal Stupefied him, and Ron had to both save Harry and catch the criminal. Luckily,

Ron was more than well qualified to handle it and easily captured him. The man's worst crime was that he had been on the run- he hadn't been anywhere in the ranks that mattered and so hadn't had the opportunity to do anything seriously wrong- hadn't even been there the day of the last battle.

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At their debriefing, it was strongly suggested that Harry take some of his overdue vacation time until this 'voice mess' was sorted out. When Harry argued the point, it became clear that it was not a suggestion after all. He had become a liability.

On the way out of the meeting room, Ron tentatively asked, "Well, mediwizard now? Or later?"

Harry sighed. "Never? Is that an option?"

"Afraid not, mate."

"I can't believe they're giving me the boot!"

"They aren't, and you know it. This thing is… well, you know…"

"I guess we'll just go home. I think I'd like to wallow in my misery before He wakes up again and prevents me from doing so." Somehow, over time, the voice had earned the seemingly imaginary person behind it a capital first letter.

Ron turned to him with a glint in his eye. "Later. Want to hit the pubs?"

"Ron…"

"You know what they say, Harry," Ron smirked.

"What is it they say, Ron?" Harry asked, Ron's grin becoming contagious.

"A Butterbeer a day keeps the mediwizard away!"

"I could be wrong, but I just don't think that's how it goes…" Harry laughed. "But sure, I could use a drink. It's been a long few days anyhow."

They went to the Witch's Cauldron around the corner from their flat, Harry almost forgetting about his problem- until Ron brought it up again.

"So, Harry, you are going to have to get this all cleared up soon. I don't want any partner but you!" Ron draped his arm around Harry's shoulder loyally. He was a bit of an affectionate drunk.

Harry sunk down on the stool, beginning to wallow until a thought occurred to him. "I've got it!" he exclaimed, standing up too quickly and losing his balance a bit.

"Yes!" Ron pumped his fist into the air before looking slightly confused. "What do you have?"

"Hermione! She's the answer to my problems! She'll be my saviour!"

"But, Harry, she's already mine," Ron looked a bit hurt.

"Of course she's yours, Ron," Harry chuckled. "I simply think she can help me figure out what's going on. She is the most brilliant witch of our era!"

"That she is, Harry," Ron grinned.

So that was it. He'd go talk to Hermione again in the morning.

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"Well, Harry, do you remember that spell?" Hermione asked him, eagerly looking for a clearer place to begin.

"I- no, Hermione. Not yet. I'm not sure if it's even tied in," Harry sighed.

"I've a feeling it is," Hermione nodded. "I'll start researching this as much as I can. I haven't found much of anything so far, but I will certainly expand my efforts. Try to come up with that spell for me, alright?"

"I will," Harry told her. "Thanks, 'Mione. Oh, by the way, Ron said to give you his undying love- and to tell you something about some candles and a bath?"

Hermione laughed, pushing him towards the door. "See you later, Harry."

Harry walked slowly home. It felt odd to not be at work. "I can't believe I haven't had a date in over a week- and before that… well, it was too long. Are there no decent men left? Actually, I know there are- there's at least me…"

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The epiphany came just as he was stepping out of the shower two days later.

"Harry!" Hermione jumped, startled as Harry stumbled out of the Floo into her office. "You're… wet."

"I've got it, Hermione!" he exclaimed.

"Got what? A towel?" Hermione blushed. "I can see that much for myself."

Harry was undeterred. "It was 'Men Orexis' or something like that."

"What?" Hermione was confused, her eyes diverted to the ground.

"The spell, Hermione!" Harry proclaimed.

Hermione's eyes widened as realisation hit her. "Could it be 'Mens Orexis'?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes, I think that's it!" Harry affirmed.

"Oh, Harry, that's wonderful- just what we needed!" she excitedly grabbed his wrist. "Come with me!"

As they arrived in the Ministry's library and Hermione scuttled off towards some books, Harry suddenly remembered that he was naked save for a towel and quickly told Hermione goodbye before hurrying out. She barely waved him off in her determined quest.

A full day and a few hours later, Hermione owled him to come to her office immediately. When Harry arrived, he could see that she had not slept a wink or even left the building since he had been there the day before.

"Harry, I think I've got it!" she exclaimed proudly. "It's right here- I can't believe I didn't notice it before!"

He watched her, waiting for her to continue. "Mens Orexis. It roughly translates to 'mind of desire' in Latin. It is an old spell, long out of use. Wives would often use it on their husbands when they thought they were unfaithful. Basically, it would create a one-way mind link. The person it was cast upon would be subject to all the thoughts of the person they desired most, often driving them to insanity. No matter how much someone might love another person- listening to another's thoughts can be… exhausting."

"I'd concur with that."

"It was outlawed a number of years ago for obvious reasons. It says that after the spell is cast, it requires seeing the object of one's desire for it to be activated. This was to ensure that the person was only punished if they were taking steps to act upon their desire, I suppose."

"So… I saw this man?"

"You must have. What were you doing that night?"

"Ron and I had gone out to dinner with some friends and then to a few clubs. I saw so many people… I have no idea…" Harry sighed.

Hermione touched his arm in sympathy. "It's okay, Harry. Anyone you desire?"

"I- I didn't think so. I've been so busy with work that I haven't even had time to think about any of that," Harry puzzled. "Does it say how to get rid of it?"

"Not in this book, no. I'll keep researching it though," Hermione offered.

"Thanks, 'Mione; you are far too good to me," Harry attempted to smile. "You know, I wish I knew who it

was. His voice is almost comforting; it's almost nice to have it there now."

"I thought he was driving you completely crazy?" Hermione quirked an eyebrow.

"He was, at first. I couldn't stand it," Harry reflected, nodding. "I'm getting used to it now. I'm starting to enjoy His company." He let out an uncomfortable chuckle. "Maybe I am really losing my sanity."

"Nah, you'll be fine, Harry. We'll figure this out," Hermione comforted.

Harry almost believed her.

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A week later, Harry was at home, listening to a mental diatribe on the injustices of forced socialization (otherwise known as work parties). He had been trying to figure out who this man was, who it could be. Apparently, magic still knew more about him than he knew about himself.

The man was infuriatingly vague. Now that Harry knew he existed somewhere, he had been trying to figure out where that somewhere was. He had no real names for anything. The facts that the secretary was a fat, nosey broad and that the boss was old and coughed into the intercom too much did not help in the least. At least life wouldn't be dull at this rate.

Harry decided to make his daily trip to see Hermione. He felt terribly that she was working almost around the clock to find a cure to his ailment. He felt almost worse that he wasn't sure he wanted one.

"Hi, Harry," Hermione looked up from her book as he entered her office. "How are you holding up?"

"Not too badly. Still wish they would let me work," Harry frowned. "Found anything new?"

"Not yet," Hermione sighed.

"Hermione…" Harry began. "I really appreciate this, but… I don't think we're getting anywhere. You can give up; I'd understand."

"It's alright, Harry. We'll figure this out eventually," Hermione tried to reassure him with a feeble smile.

He watched her reading for a little while, listening to Him. "This coffee is lethal. This whole place reeks of the putrid waste of time. Work is so… plebeian, and yet, here I am, day after day, drinking this… filth and burning away the precious hours of my life. Each tick of the clock reminds me of the wasted seconds, giving way to minutes and then to hours. I am much too lovely for all this."

"Are you going to Ministry's gala this Friday?" Hermione asked without looking up from the book she was perusing. "Is tomorrow Friday already?" she suddenly commented, startled by how time had gotten away from her.

"I- I hadn't given it much thought, but I never enjoy those events," Harry sighed.

"You ought to go. It would be a good idea to remove yourself from the house once in a while, you know," Hermione chastised him.

"I suppose. Did Ron ask you yet?" Hermione's blush was all the answer he needed.

He smiled, debating about whether to go or not. "Stupid wench, asking me to go to the big function tomorrow with her. As if I would ever degrade myself by attending a social event in her presence. I wonder if Mr. Round-arse is available. Would it be too late to ask? Eh, he's not really my type anyway; he's more of a cute one-time." Harry suddenly got an odd idea. What if this was the 'forced social' He had been talking about? Why shouldn't he attend, just in case?

"Alright, Hermione. I'll go," Harry said suddenly.

"Er- alright," Hermione replied, clearly startled. "That's unusual for you."

"But you asked all the same," he commented.

"I did," she agreed, trying to hide her smile.

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Harry nearly immediately regretted his decision to attend. While he was still hopeful that He would come, it was clear by the direction of thoughts that He was still getting ready. In the meantime, he was making polite small talk with people who admired his name but knew nothing about him. Hermione and Ron had abandoned him without realising it to dance. He couldn't begrudge them their time, as they created a personal universe just the two of them in which he, and everyone else, had ceased to exist.

Harry sighed, ignoring the people around him to focus on His thoughts. Harry found that if he merely nodded every few minutes, conversation could easily carry on without him. "One more stroke and my hair should be shiny enough. Oh, you are too gorgeous. Alright, just need to put on my shoes and leave. I only have to do a few minutes of socialising and then I can return home…" He seemed to be talking himself into attending the party; Harry understood the feeling completely.

A few minutes later, Harry knew that He had arrived at his destination. Harry poured all his hope into the thought that this was His destination. Harry paid as much attention as he could to find a discernable hint as to where He was or whom He was talking to. Most of the descriptions were vague and His mind wandered so often away from the events of the party.

"Oh, dear Merlin, what is that horrid pink, feathered contraption atop that woman's head? Please don't let her… of course she wants to say hi."

Harry looked around eagerly, trying to spot an ugly and flamboyant woman's hat. This was the hint that he had been waiting for. The people currently trying to attract the attention of the Boy who Lived Twice looked rather put off. Harry couldn't care less as he spotted something large and pink out of the corner of his eye.

He slowly slipped away and over in that general direction, trying not to be too obvious. He worked to crane his neck around her to see who she was talking to. "Dreadfully boring crone. As if I could care about… last month's drought?! Please… How would she react if I just came out with it and told her that her hat was an atrocity, an abomination to heads and fashion everywhere?"

He caught a glimpse around her, but it couldn't be. It couldn't possibly… he wasn't Him. Harry frantically glanced around the room. There was no one else there with such an obvious accessory. Perhaps He was at a different party. "I'll yawn and see if she can take the hint…"

Oh no, it had to be a coincidence. That he yawned when He did. Harry turned heel and grabbed Hermione from the dance floor.

"Hermione…"

"Harry?" Hermione broke out of her trance. "You look so pale! Are you alright?"

"I- I found Him," Harry gulped.

"And?"

"It's Malfoy."

Hermione looked him up and down. "Is that such a bad thing?" she asked simply.

"Really, mate, I thought we were past all this war stuff. Wasn't he on our side in the end?" Ron chimed in. Harry looked at him disbelievingly. "Well, I mean, he's still a git, but…" Ron shrugged.

"Ron?!" Harry asked, completely astonished. "Is that really you?"

"Yeah, it's me," Ron blushed. "I did some thinking after our last talk, and you were right. He's not so bad, I suppose."

Harry thought about it. He tried to reconcile Him and what he knew of Malfoy. The truth was that he didn't know Malfoy, but… Malfoy had always been trapped on the wrong side. Harry hadn't given him a chance that first day and their arguments had been petty. Yet, somehow, he felt tied intimately to him. He had really wanted to save him that day amidst the Fiendfyre, and not just because he was Harry Potter and the hero. Malfoy had always meant something to him- he was important.

Harry's head was spinning. Even when they had been enemies, well, Malfoy was there for him, never coddling, always pushing him to be the best. Their enmity was not as severe as it appeared. Their confrontations in later years were a series of misfortunate circumstances- the bathroom incident in sixth year, all throughout the war. They had provided something the other always needed- someone to cast away pity and be a constant. They knew what to expect from the other. In the end, neither wanted the other to die- perhaps he had come to mean something more to Draco too.

Maybe it was time to start anew. Besides, who is Harry Potter, if not one to charge bravely, albeit foolishly, into the unknown? Harry turned on his heel without another thought, heading straight for Malfoy. "Please get me away from this… anything but more of her!" Malfoy turned his head and met Harry's glance. "Oh no, it's Potter. How does my hair look? Stay calm. What does he want?" Harry was startled to hear his name in Draco's mind, especially since Draco never thought in names. It certainly was not the reaction he was expecting.

"Excuse me," Harry said to the woman in the pink atrocity. "Hullo, Draco."

"Hullo, Potter," Draco replied dazedly. The woman looked between the two and seemed to debate about

staying to watch the legendary rivalry as it unravelled in front of her; it would be best to leave.

Harry was suddenly shocked as he realised Draco's mind was silent- was it possible he had managed to take away His ability to think? "Would you like to get a coffee?" Harry asked him with a smirk.

"I would adore a coffee," Draco replied with a smile. "Mmm, coffee!" Harry chuckled.

He cautiously led Draco out of the gala, trying to ignore the flood of Draco's thoughts. "What does Potter want? I haven't seen him since the trial- and he still can't dress. It's so unfortunate with that arse. I adore autumn and the way the air feels so crisp. Even if Potter's a bore, it's nice to be outside."

"Er, so, how about this one?" Harry asked, pointing to the first coffee shop he saw.

"That's fine," Draco replied. "That party was dreadful. I think Potter just unwittingly saved me from a horrid evening, which is always a true misfortune. Oooh, I love the smell of coffee. I could breathe this all day."

"How have you been?" Harry asked after they got some coffees and were seated.

"Alright," Malfoy responded. "Just last week, I got to try a new grocery store. Potter probably wouldn't be interested though. They did have much better fresh vegetables. Maybe I should make a casserole tomorrow."

Harry winced and rubbed at his head. "Thinking too difficult for you, Potter?" Draco smirked. "I hope he's alright…"

"I'm fine- just having trouble concentrating," Harry admitted. "What have you been up to recently?"

"Just this and that," Draco said with a sweep of his hands. "You know, work and the like."

"Where do you work?" Harry puzzled.

"What on earth is he getting at? Why would he care where I work? If he laughs, I swear I will wound him…"

"I'm in the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office; I'm just a paper pusher, really," Draco answered. Harry's head swam. He knew the head of the department- he would be the type to misuse the intercom. Harry chuckled; things were clicking into place.

Draco looked affronted. "It's a noble department, and we do all sorts of important things."

"Oh, I have no doubt," Harry hurried to assure him, trying to ignore the offended outbursts in his head. "I was just-"

"Just what, Potter?"

"Harry. Call me Harry, please."

"Alright, Harry. Why do you find my job so amusing?" Draco asked petulantly. His mind was beginning to list the reasons it was the best department ever. "Fourth of all, Muggles are completely daft and will flip out if they see a glorious coffee maker dancing with the blender. They'd probably injure the poor thing, and then where would we be? Coffee-less? I think not. Not while I'm on the job. Fifth of all…"

"It's not amusing. It's very important, Draco," Harry looked uncomfortable. "Do you like me, Draco?"

"What?" "What?!"

"Do you like me?" Harry blushed.

"What are you getting at?"

"I like you!" Harry blurted. "Bollocks. I can't concentrate- but do you?"

"Er, I suppose so," Draco replied. "I've always liked you, Harry. You never liked me- refusing my hand, my friendship… Alright, so I was petulant about it, but still…"

"Can you stop thinking? For a little bit? Please?" Harry begged him.

Draco look affronted. "Beg pardon?"

He looked as though he was about to leave, so Harry reached out and put a hand on his arm. "Look, Draco, I've got a confession to make."

Draco raised an eyebrow.

"A while ago, a spell was cast on me- and well, the short of it is… I can hear your thoughts in my head."

"What are you on about, Potter?"

"Harry. At first it was absolutely obnoxious, but now- well, Draco, yours is the only voice I could ever want in my head."

"Can you hear this?"

"Yes, I can."

"Lucky guess. You are the dumbest git on the planet. Of course you would get yourself into this mess, and drag me into it with you."

"I know, I know," Harry conceded.

"You're agreeing with me?" Draco quirked an eyebrow. "What did I just think?"

"Basically, you think I'm an idiot for getting myself into this predicament and dragging you into it with me."

"Bloody hell!" Draco looked shocked. "So you really can hear my thoughts?"

"Yes, I can," Harry sighed.

"Have you been to see a mediwizard?"

"No," Harry admitted sheepishly. "Hermione's been researching it for me. We know which spell it is, but not how to fix it."

"Which spell is it?"

"I-" Harry hesitated to tell him.

"Harry, this involves me too," Draco reminded him.

"Mens Orexis," Harry mumbled.

"What?"

"Mens Orexis," he repeated a bit louder.

"There's no way! That means- he… me… impossible!"

"It is possible," Harry shook his head. "I'm sorry, Draco."

"Don't listen to my thoughts; it's rude," Draco scolded.

"I can't help it!" Harry exclaimed. They sat in silence for a few minutes, Draco clearly trying to keep his mind blank.

"This is easy to fix, Harry," Draco finally said.

"No, it's not. Hermione's been researching it for weeks and hasn't figured it out at all!" Harry proclaimed sadly.

"Because clearly Granger is the end all, be all of all knowledge and skill on the planet," Draco commented sarcastically.

"Hermione is-"

"I know, Harry," Draco cut off his defence. "I am merely pointing out that some of the rest of us have some skill too."

"So you know how to remove this spell?" Harry asked hopefully.

"Yes, I do," Draco told him simply.

"How?" Harry questioned disbelievingly.

"There was a small movement in the Death Eater camp to use outdated spells instead of the Unforgivables. They'd be harder to trace and the cures had long been lost," Draco told him. "It was quickly ruled out. Waiting for insanity to hit your enemies is just foolish. It takes far too long and you could be dead or imprisoned by then. To be on the safe side, we all learned the counter-spells; you never know when your allies might turn on you. 'Mens Orexis' was a favourite of one of the following."

Harry was left speechless.

"Would you like me to cast it now?"

"I-" Harry stuttered, still amazed that the solution was so simple. "Yes! Absolutely."

He'd finally be free of that voice in his head, driving him to the point of distraction. Now that he had found Draco, he didn't need that link anymore, did he?

Draco lifted his wand, and Harry caught his wrist. "Draco…" he began.

"Yes?"

"If you cast this," Harry halted. He thought for a few moments. "Can you still talk to me? In person?"

"I don't see why not," Draco smiled. "After all, you've got a lot of pent up desire we need to work out."

Harry nodded his head, blushing.

Draco lifted his wand again and seeing no resistance, he cast "Silens Mens."

"That was it?"

"Rather simple, isn't it?" Draco mused.

Harry laughed, sitting back to take in the silence. "You are thinking right now, aren't you?"

"Yes," Draco nodded.

After a few more moments of silence, Harry commented, "I miss you."

Draco smiled at him. "But now you've got something even better," he said.

"Do I?"

"Yes," Draco replied. "We both do…"

"Oh, yeah?"

Draco shrugged. "How do you figure?" Harry asked.

"Well, now I know you won't shove me away if I try this," Draco stated simply before leaning over to lightly place his lips over Harry's.

Harry was startled at first, but then relaxed into the feather-light kisses. He wound his arms around Draco's neck, pulling him closer and letting out a contented sigh.

"I've wanted to do that for a long time," Draco said, pulling back the barest amount.

"So have I, I suppose," Harry laughed.

"Ever the oblivious one, eh, Potter?"

"Harry."

"Harry…" Draco breathed. Harry took the opportunity to recapture Draco's mouth and deepen the kiss. Everything about Draco felt perfect- how had he not noticed before? His lips applied just the right pressure, his arms wrapped perfectly around him, his tongue was doing deliciously wicked things to his own, and he was- well, he was the voice inside his head.

Harry pulled back, clearing his throat. "I think- would you like to get a drink?"

"But we already have coffee," Draco replied confused.

"I mean a real drink. Butterbeer or something."

"Butterbeer?" Draco scoffed. "A real drink? Are you crazy?"

"Well, you know what they say," Harry replied.

"No?" Draco looked confused.

"A Butterbeer a day keeps the mediwizard away."

"I don't think that's what they…" Draco said. "Nevermind, Potter." Draco laughed, shaking his head.

"Harry."

"Are you asking me on a date, Harry?" Draco responded coyly.

"I do believe that I am," Harry grinned.

Fin.