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Title: He Was He and I Was Bunny (Part 1 of 4)

Pairing(s): Harry/Draco (minor Blaise/Draco, Charlie/Harry)

Rating: NC-17

Summary: The war is over and “eighth year” is about to begin at Hogwarts. But for Harry and Draco, nothing is quite the same. Harry’s looking for an escape, Draco’s looking for a friend. Does a little black bunny hold the answers for both of our boys?

Warnings (if any): Lots and lots of swearing, mild violence, explicit slashiness.

Total word count: 37,600

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Author's notes (if any): Nothing that should come as a surprise to the h/d crowd. Hope you like it!

Beta(s): Blamebrampton and Naesy – two of the world’s most incredible women, hands down! THANK YOU!!!!!!!!

He Was He and I Was Bunny Part 1 of 4

“If you press me to say why I loved him, I can say no

more than because he was he, and I was I.”

- Michel de Montaigne

1.

It was at Fred's funeral that the idea had first come to him. He had been standing there amongst the Weasleys, Ron on his right, Percy on his left, staring at the casket. It was oddly beautiful, made of deep, shiny mahogany. The wood glowed warmly in the late afternoon sunlight, as though imbued with the life that had left the body inside the box. There were flowers everywhere. The air was full of their heady fragrance. Harry couldn't help thinking they were already dead, their cut stems already shriveling, their petals already wilting, even if you couldn't see it yet. Someone Harry didn't know was speaking about how Fred was a hero, how he was loved, how he would be missed.

Suddenly Harry couldn't take it. He couldn't think about Fred, couldn't watch them lower that impossibly somber box into the ground.

But of course he couldn't leave. He wouldn't. He wouldn't do that to the Weasleys and he owed it to Fred to stay here and witness these final moments. So he remained rooted to the spot. He did not move his eyes from the casket, even as they lowered it into the ground, even as Mrs Weasley tossed her handful of dirt into the grave. But he did allow his mind to wander, giving him a buffer between himself and the gnawing pain of this reality. It was during this wandering that the idea came to him. What might it feel like to be an Animagus? To fly with the wings of a bird? To run with the swift feet of a deer? To swim with the ease of a fish? He lost himself in his musings – the imagined feel of the wind bearing him up without the need of a broom, the smell of the forest as the trees rushed by in a blur, the silkiness of water against slippery flesh.

The idea stayed with him throughout the funeral, throughout the gathering that followed, throughout the night. He lay on his bed in Ron's room, listening to his friend's snores and the muffled sound of Mrs Weasley's sobs in the distance and thought about being an Animagus. The more he thought about it, the more he liked the idea. If his fame had bothered him before Voldemort's fall, in the days since it had become almost unbearable. Everywhere he went he was hounded. Even when he was visiting friends in St. Mungo's, people pressed themselves upon him, wanting to talk to him, to thank him. Even as he walked from the graveyard, the press had been there, taking pictures and shouting questions. He thought of taking on a form no one would even think to look for, one that would take him out of the world of people and into the simpler natural world. It appealed to him greatly. It was privacy. It was

escape.

A few days later, he was standing beside Kingsley Shacklebolt in front of a large crowd. Kingsley had asked him, as a personal favour, to attend the medal ceremony and so he had, letting Kingsley shake his hand and pin a shiny Order of Merlin, First Class to his chest. As he accepted the medal, staring out over the sea of happy faces that had been nowhere to be seen when a group of teenagers was risking their lives for what they believed in, Harry felt a simmering rage threatening to overtake him. Taking a deep breath, he let his eyes lose focus, let the sound of Kinsley's voice fade into the background, let his mind drift. He thought again about being an Animagus. He again imagined the feeling of freedom and peace it would bring. He was going to do it. He needed to do it.

He didn't tell anyone of his plan, not even Ron or Hermione. He couldn't say exactly why but he wanted to keep this just for him, to have just one thing no one else got to have a say in. After being used by Voldemort, used by Dumbledore, used by the government – hell, used by the wizarding world as a whole – he wanted this to be his and his alone.

At the first opportunity, he was off to Diagon Alley. Truth be told, finding the information was harder than he had anticipated. Not so much because the books themselves were hard to come by but because it was difficult for him to get them without notice. People were only too happy to help him get anything he needed, no matter how rare or questionable. But the last thing he needed was for the press to get wind of the fact Harry Potter was going about asking for information on becoming an Animagus. No, the purpose of the thing was that no one would know. So even though it was slower, Harry cast a heavy glamour and went about doing things the hard way. It took a few weeks but eventually he found what he needed.

He was somewhat surprised to discover the magic involved was not as difficult as he had assumed. Oh, it was hard, there was no doubting it. It was some of the most complex magic he had ever seen. It required a lot of power, even more concentration, and a fair wallop of control. But Harry had more training in these things than most wizards his age. And he couldn't help but feel he had inherited a natural tendency towards it from his father. It would take some practice, a lot of practice, but he was pretty sure he was up to the task. No, the magic wasn't the problem. It was finding his animal form that was the problem.

According to the books, many otherwise capable wizards were never able to successfully complete the transformation because they couldn't determine their animal form. The experts were all very clear on this – a wizard could not take on an animal form unless he or she knew beforehand what that form

would be. And it was not a form they chose but rather an innate form, sprung from individual psychology, which they had to somehow discover. The books then went on to describe various meditations, spells, and rituals that could be used to assist in the process. They noted that it could take years or decades even to ascertain one's animal form.

But if Harry Potter was anything, it was an exception to the rule. He was the Boy Who Lived. Twice. He was the youngest seeker in a century. He could throw off the Imperius Curse at fourteen. He had ridden a dragon, defeated a troll, and survived five years of Potions with Snape. He was sure he could find his animal form in less than ten years. And it wasn't as if he had anything else to do.

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The summer went by in a blur of funerals, ceremonies, parties, and people. So many people, always coming and going, all wanting to talk to him. Harry stayed with the Weasleys for the most part. He couldn't yet face Grimmauld Place and its ghosts. He thought about getting his own place, maybe in Godric's Hollow, maybe in London, but he didn't feel ready yet to make a decision. And he wanted the Weasleys around. Along with Hermione, they were his family, all he had really. They were the only ones not pushing him, not asking him for anything. Even still, there were several nights when he took a room in the Leaky Cauldron just to be alone for a bit.

There were moments during the summer, though, that stood out from the blur. Like when Ginny broke up with him, if it could even be called breaking up when they hadn't been together in over a year. Her eyes had been soft when she told him. She had held his hand and her skin had been warm and smooth. It hadn't hurt as much as he would've thought. It felt familiar and expected, like the ending of a book he'd already read. He accepted her hug, her gentle kiss good-bye. Watching her walk back towards the house, he mostly felt relieved. When she showed one day up several weeks later with Dean Thomas in tow, his hand spread possessively on her shoulder, Harry was glad for them.

Testifying on behalf Draco Malfoy was another stand-out moment. Malfoy hadn't asked him to; Harry had seen his upcoming trial announced in the paper. It was strange, but somehow his feelings towards the Slytherin had changed over the last year. Maybe it was seeing him lower his wand, unable to kill Dumbledore. Maybe it was his refusal to identify Harry, Ron and Hermione that day in the Manor. Maybe it was knowing, in many ways, Malfoy's life had been shaped by Voldemort as clearly and indelibly as Harry's own had been. But whatever the reason, when Harry thought about Malfoy, he didn't feel that

old hatred. Instead he thought about Malfoy's pale, terror-stricken face as he was forced to cast the Cruciatus Curse. He thought about Malfoy's arms tight around his waist as they shot out of the Room of Requirement, Fiendfyre on their heels. He thought about Malfoy and his parents on the night of the final battle, a family, however demented and prejudiced they may be.

Harry had quickly dashed off a note to the family lawyers named in the article. Two hours later, he was Flooed to said solicitors' offices. Three days later, he sat in front of the Wizengamot, recounting what he had seen the night of Dumbledore's death and Malfoy's role in Harry's own survival. He stated his belief that Malfoy had acted under duress during his time with the Death Eaters, gave the evidence of his own visions through Voldemort's eyes. He did not stay to hear the verdict. He had done all he could. He would not let himself feel responsible for Draco Malfoy's fate. Whatever happened to Malfoy, it had nothing to do with him.

When he received an owl several hours later detailing the not guilty verdict, he smiled all the same.

But the moment that stood out the most, that burned the brightest against the dark background of duty and mourning, was kissing Charlie Weasley. It had been the night of Harry's eighteenth birthday. Not wanting to deal with the throngs of grateful strangers he was sure to encounter at the local pub, he had opted to have a quiet celebration in the Weasleys' garden. Friends had drifted in and out over the course of the evening. There had been a lot of food, music, and laughter. No one had talked about the war or the dead. No one mentioned Voldemort or the Ministry. They all simply lived in the moment. Of course, part of living in the moment was consuming large amounts of Firewhisky. As the night wore on, the drink began to claim its victims with people limping home, passing out, or seeking out dark corners and warm bodies.

Harry hadn't planned on drinking too much and sitting alone with Charlie under a bright summer moon. It had just happened. To this day, he couldn't really say who initiated that first kiss. He remembered Charlie asking him why he and Ginny hadn't got back together. He remembered saying something about how cool he thought Charlie's job was, that the burn scars on his forearms were sexy. And he remembered Charlie's lips on his, the kiss tentative at first but growing bolder. He remembered climbing drunkenly into Charlie's lap, almost falling over as he did so, being steadied by Charlie's strong arms. He remembered Charlie whispering his name over and over as Harry ran kisses along his jaw, his lips dragging on stubble.

There were other kisses after that, many other kisses. Kisses stolen while crossing paths in the upstairs hallway, cleaning up the brooms after a bit of Quidditch in the garden, late at night when both came to

the kitchen seeking out a midnight snack. Harry had wanted it to be more than just kisses and he sensed, had things been different, Charlie would have liked that too. He could tell by the force of Charlie's grip when he held him, the urgency of his hands on Harry's body. He could tell by the look he caught on Charlie's face every now and again, a strange mix of wistfulness, hunger, and defeat. But things weren't different. Harry was Ron's best mate, Ginny's ex-boyfriend, and Charlie was going back to Romania at the end of August. But they were burned into his memory, each one of their kisses and no one could take that from him.

In between the conversations and the ceremonies, the trials and the kisses, Harry thought about his Animagus form. He practiced the magic. He was certain he could do it. When he whispered the incantation, he felt his magic surge through his body in response, wanting to do his bidding. He was sure he could make the transformation but into what? In his dreams, he saw a shadowy shape, four-footed and fleet. He was so close. He could feel it.

2.

It seemed surreal, to be once again sitting in the Great Hall, watching the first years being sorted into their houses as if it were the most normal thing in the world. All around him was the usual chatter and excitement of the start-of-term banquet, everyone acting as if nothing had changed. As if the school hadn't been at the centre of the war, turned into a site of terror and torture the year previous. As if there weren't still burn marks on the castle walls, damage in the hallways and on the grounds. As if there weren't empty seats, left vacant by students who didn't come back and students who couldn't come back.

It was the strangest Sorting Harry had ever seen. Despite the Sorting Hat's urging towards forgiveness and house unity, it was clear the first years viewed sorting into Slytherin as equivalent to a death sentence. Every single student perched under the hat as it called out "Slytherin!" went pale and trembled. Then, each and every time, wide, panicked eyes flicked toward Harry, as though they feared he would respond to their Sorting with rage, smiting them down in that instant as he had Voldemort. Their ignorance and assumptions made him angry but his glaring just fueled their fears. Watching them, he felt irritated and vaguely nauseated.

It wasn't just the first years who were subdued and anxious. No one clapped for new housemates at the Slytherin table. The older students did not want to draw attention to themselves, to their existence. They barely responded to their new house mates other than to offer a commiserating look or a comforting pat on the arm. It was positively eerie to see Slytherin acting like that. They were a ghost house, barely more than shadows. Adding to this impression was the fact that the students from the other houses refused to look at the Slytherins. Their eyes slid over them or stared past them, determinedly ignoring their presence in the room.

It made Harry angry to see it. It was true that some of the Slytherins had been on Voldemort's side but most hadn't. They were just students, just kids most of them. It was wrong to treat them like that. It was prejudice and when it came right down to it, that was what he had fought against when he fought Voldemort. It was what his friends had died for, what he had been willing to die for.

Surveying the Slytherin table, his eyes fell on Malfoy. He hadn't actually seen him since his trial. He looked somewhat better, not so gaunt and pale. Unlike the other Slytherins, who all had their heads bowed and their eyes carefully trained on their plates in front of them, Draco's head was held high and he met every gaze that came his way. His expression was dangerous and his eyes seemed to burn with a barely contained rage. When he saw Harry looking at him, his glare grew more intense still, accusatory and damning. Harry looked away, confused and annoyed. Fucking Malfoy and his hissy fits. Seemed as though keeping him out of Azkaban wasn't enough to get Harry off his death glare list.

He turned his attention to the food now appearing before them. He pointedly ignored the open stares of the newly sorted Gryffindors. Beside him, Hermione was scolding Ron for talking with his mouth full. Across from him, Seamus was detailing his plans for a party once they got back to Gryffindor Tower, complete with smuggled Firewhisky and Muggle cigarettes. Harry lost himself in the good food and the comfortable chatter of his friends. It felt wonderfully familiar. He was home.

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As the week wore on, it became clear things were not back to normal at Hogwarts. The shadow of the Death Eaters hung heavily in the classrooms. Students who had been able to attend the year previous had information and skills the students who had been barred from attending did not. The teachers often found themselves correcting misinformation and biases that had been taught as fact during the Carrows' tenure. Indeed, McGonagall and Flitwick in particular seemed to have set very thorough and demanding

curricula for the year, as though attempting to eradicate even the memory of substandard education ever having occurred at Hogwarts. And then of course there were the empty seats they all tried not to look at.

Harry found classes strange for personal reasons as well. There was a new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, a witch by the name of Melinda Honeyweather. Harry had been feeling optimistic about her. Dennis Creevey had her first and reported she was decent, competent and personable. Apparently, though, her competency did not extend to teaching the Boy Who Lived. When Harry walked into the room for his first class with her, her eyes widened at the sight of him. He watched as she took in his scar, gave his body a once-over and then blushed deeply. He quickly noticed that while she was able to guide other students well enough, whenever he asked a question she became flustered and giggled a lot. More than once he had felt eyes on him and had looked up only to find her gazing dreamily at him from behind her desk. It was very disquieting.

Potions was dreadful. Without the Half-Blood Prince to guide him through, Harry was back to his usual abysmal performance. Slughorn, clearly confused by this turn of events, had started to avoid calling on Harry, something which Harry found both relieving and embarrassing. Potions also had Malfoy in it. Malfoy who continued to give Harry his patented glare whenever their eyes happened to meet. Harry was completely baffled by this. They hadn't actually talked after Malfoy's trial, though Malfoy had sent a thank you note the next day, but Harry had assumed, at the very least, they had managed to reach a sort of truce. But there was no sign of a truce in Malfoy's face when he looked at Harry. Harry was surprised to find he felt hurt by this.

He couldn't quite figure out what was going on with Malfoy. While the rest of Slytherin seemed to be trying their best to disappear into the walls, Malfoy stormed around the castle in a temper. He was often with Zabini or Nott and occasionally with the pretty blond Slytherin who's name Harry didn't know but he was just as often alone. Harry frequently saw him working by himself in the library. None of the other Slytherins ever worked in the library, instead checking out books and returning to the safety of their common room as quickly as possible. But Malfoy spent hours there, his work spread out all over the table. Harry also saw him walking about the halls in the evenings, stalking through the corridors with an angry look on his face. He had followed him a couple of times, old habits died hard, but this only led to more confusion as Malfoy had simply roamed the halls for an hour before heading outside and sitting by the lake until well past curfew.

If Harry had to guess, he would say Malfoy was purposely shoving himself in the collective face of the student body, refusing to let them forget that Slytherins lived there too.

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People liked to think Harry had escaped Voldemort so many times because of his innate skill and power. They liked to believe Voldemort had been defeated because Harry righteously wielded the forces of good. They did not like to think Harry's success had come through a combination of hard work, help from others and a lot of sheer dumb luck. But it had. It was the truth and Harry knew it better than anyone. So while others might have been tempted to think Harry discovered his animal form after trying for less than four months because he was inherently gifted, Harry knew it was just because he was lucky.

It was several weeks into term and Harry was going a little bit crazy. Coming back to school, he knew people would be after him, wanting to talk to him, get some time and attention from the Saviour of the Wizarding World. He had resigned himself to it somewhat. What he hadn't counted on was that most of his friends would be getting similar treatment. Ron, Hermione and Neville had all been given Orders of Merlin for their role in the war as well. The members of the DA had also been recognised. After so much darkness and terror, the press had a field day with the uplifting story of a gang of school children who banded together to rebel against the corrupt government, fight the Death Eaters, and ultimately help Harry win the final battle. As a result, most of the Gryffindor upper years were near-celebrities. Gryffindor's table was regularly swarming with students from other houses wanting to talk not just to Harry, but to Ron, Hermione, Neville, and the others. Sometimes Harry could take the crowds, noise and attention all in stride but other days it was just too much.

Today had been one of those 'other days'. He stepped into the Great Hall, took one look at the throng of people hanging about the Gryffindor table and went straight back out again. At the time he hadn't cared about missing dinner. Several hours later, however, his stomach was protesting the situation. He decided to head down to the kitchens to nick a sandwich and some biscuits. He was halfway there when a silvery blur came tearing around the corner. He threw himself aside as it streaked by and then turned to squint after it. There was something very familiar about that silvery blur…

A moment later, Luna drifted around the corner, a dreamy smile on her face. She was trailing her hand along the wall, fingertips bumping over the surface of the stones, humming softly to herself. Her wand was held out in front of her but her grip was loose and it dangled and bobbed. He felt almost instantly cheered by the sight of her. The more things changed, the more Luna stayed the same.

Her smile broadened when she saw him. “Hello, Harry.”

“Hey, Luna,” he replied, returning the smile. “What are you up to?”

“Oh, I was just taking my Patronus out for a run. I find if I don’t let her out once in a while, she starts to pester me.”

“Really?”

“Oh yes. She resents being locked up all the time so I try to give her a chance to stretch her legs every once in a while. It seems to make her happy.” She looked at him curiously. “Don’t you have to do that with yours?”

“Erm, not so much,” Harry said, trying to keep a straight face.

Luna looked thoughtful for a moment. “Well, I suppose you probably use yours more than I use mine. You often seem to be in dangerous situations. Perhaps he is glad to have a rest. Oh, but look, mine’s on the way back now! See? Doesn’t she look content?”

The silvery wisp whisked towards them at top speed before coming to an abrupt stop at Luna’s feet. “Good girl,” she said affectionately.

Harry watched quietly as Luna’s Patronus leapt about the room, only half-listening as Luna detailed an upcoming story in The Quibbler on the mating rituals of the Blibbering Humdinger. There was something, something about her Patronus, he couldn’t quite put his finger on it. It called up half-formed memories, as though from a dream…

And then it hit him. He stared, dumbstruck. Here it was. The answer he’d been looking for for months.

“I’m sorry, Luna,” he said, interrupting her musings on the role of ear folds in attracting a mate. “I have to go.”

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It was bizarre. There was no other word for it. The world looked enormous and strangely flat. It was hard to adjust to having eyes on either side of your head instead of straight in front. And everything was so loud. The wind through the grass, the rustling of leaves, his own heartbeat, thunderous and fast. He would never have guessed it would be like this and he struggled to cope with the deafening onslaught. It took a long time, an hour, maybe more, before it stopped seeming quite so overwhelming.

Once he had a grip on his senses, he decided to try moving around a bit. He tried to move forward, unsure how to work the muscles of this new, furry body. Unused to such powerful legs, he pushed off too hard, launching himself abruptly forward and falling straight onto his face. He tried again with the same results. And again. And again. And again. Fuck. How did his father ever do this? He tried sitting up on his hind legs. He wobbled around a bit while he found his balance but after a moment or two was able to sit steady. He tried to look down at his body but found it difficult with his sideways eyes. He wasn’t sure how to turn his head properly.

After another hour of experimenting with movement, Harry had managed to move forward four feet. He was now at the edge of the lake. The wind had died down and a bright moon had risen, making the lake’s surface almost a perfect mirror. He stared down at the glossy surface, carefully regarding the face that looked back at him. A rabbit’s face. His face. Taking in the long ears, the glossy black fur, the little twitching nose, Harry couldn’t help but laugh. Or rather, he felt as though he was laughing. In reality, it was a bit more of a harsh exhale. The muscles around his nose seemed to jump a little. Still, it had to be a laugh. What else could it be when he felt like this? He had done it. He was an Animagus.

There was no way around it. Slytherin House was depressing as fuck. Draco had known it would be bad – how could it not be after the way things had fallen out? – but he had never imagined this. He thought there would be fighting, name-calling, dueling in the halls. That he could have handled. He could have fought back, rallied his house around him, their spirits raised as they worked to defend their honour. But the silent treatment, the way three-quarters of the school completely ignored the existence of any student in a green and silver tie – he had no idea how to fight against that. Sneers and death glares only worked when people looked at you.

When he first received his letter inviting him to return to repeat his seventh year, he hadn't been sure if he had wanted to go back to Hogwarts. He knew it wouldn't be pleasant for him now that the full truth about his role as a Death Eater had come out. But his mother had been pressuring him to return.

"You must return, darling," she had said, her voice low and urgent. "It is crucial that you complete your education. It will take time for us to rebuild the family name. Until we do, eyes will be on you, Draco. People will be watching, waiting for you to make a mistake. You will have to be better than everyone else just to be seen as the same. If you don't finish your schooling, I fear many will use it as an excuse to block you from employment, from the government, and from many of your other ambitions."

While he wasn't sure he had any 'ambitions' left, he had known his mother was right. A good education was imperative if they were to have any hope of rebuilding the family name. He had also known he really didn't want to go back.

Strangely enough, it was Potter who convinced him to return. Draco had been astounded when his lawyers informed him Potter had offered to testify on his behalf. As he sat in the courtroom watching his former nemesis giving his testimony, Draco had felt strangely hopeful. If Harry Potter of all people could forgive Draco his past actions, then perhaps it wouldn't be as bad as he had feared. Perhaps people were ready to let go of old rivalries and misconceptions, to move towards something better. But then, sitting in the Great Hall during the Sorting, watching Potter's eyes blaze with anger every time a first year was sorted into Slytherin, Draco knew he had been mistaken.

It had always angered him, the way people equated Slytherin with evil. Sure some of them were evil, he was a prime example. But most of them weren't. Most of them weren't future dark lords or the children of Death Eaters or anything remotely sinister. They were just kids who wanted to make something of themselves and had some crafty ideas as to how to go about doing that. He knew what they liked to say

– “There’s not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn’t in Slytherin” – but that was crap. He knew a number of Death Eaters who had been in Ravenclaw or Gryffindor and even one from Hufflepuff. Strange how everyone forgot about them when considering the characters of the houses.

To make matters worse, Slytherin was sadly depleted. Many students had not returned, especially the older ones. In his year, only himself, Blaise, Theodore, Daphne, and Millicent had returned. And Theodore and Millicent were both very subdued. They stuck close to the dorms, avoiding conversation as much as possible, their noses always in their books. It was clear they just wanted to get through the year and get out. Even with Blaise and Daphne, it wasn’t the same. They were both angry at him for the same thing – Daphne’s parents had approached his about the possibility of marriage between their children and Draco had turned them down flat – but for very different reasons. While there were too few of them to let sore feelings keep them from talking, it was still awkward as arse. Everything seemed difficult and dull. The fire was missing from Slytherin House and it made Draco feel sad and resentful.

He missed Pansy so much he ached with it. He hadn’t been surprised when she told him she wasn’t going to come back. How could she really, after standing up in front of everyone and suggesting they turn Potter over to the Dark Lord? His poor, rash Pansy. Her tendency towards self-preservation always was much stronger than her understanding of the political ramifications of her actions. He couldn’t help but admire her a little though. Even though it had clearly been an idiotic move, it took guts to stand up in the middle of a swarm of Potter-lovers high on adrenaline and fear and say, “Take Harry Potter! I want to live!” He shook his head, smiling fondly.

He never would have guessed he would miss Crabbe and Goyle so much. He knew everyone thought they had been little more than thuggish lackeys but they hadn’t been. They had been friends. It was true they had followed him blindly until last year. And it was true that he had abused his power over them horribly. Of course, they had returned the favour when they transferred the responsibility of command from Draco to the Death Eaters and then proceeded to treat him like shit. But he couldn’t really hold that against them. He was the one who had taught them to mindlessly follow the strongest power.

No, whatever else had happened, Draco had cared about them and their loyalty had meant something to him. Whenever he had needed them, when Blaise had been in one of his moods, Pansy occupied with her latest boy-toy, and everyone else boring him to near tears, they had been there, ready to follow him into whatever prank or scheme he had cooked up to amuse himself. But now Crabbe was dead and Goyle was at Durmstrang and Draco wished he had been nicer to them over the years.

Unable to sit in the gloomy common room a moment longer, Draco decided to go stretch his legs. He had

been spending more and more time away from Slytherin House, partly in an attempt to force the rest of the school to deal with his existence, partly just to get away from the oppressively dismal atmosphere. Most nights, he studied in the library or wandered through the halls before finishing up by walking the grounds, often settling by the lake's edge and watching the moon rise over the water. Though he would never admit to liking such things, he found the sparkle of moonlight on the water's surface beautiful and calming.

And he was in need of some calming tonight. Blaise was in a mood, looking for a fight and a fight with Draco in particular. Blaise had been angry with him ever since he found out Draco had turned down the Greengrasses' proposal for marriage. He couldn't really blame him. He and Blaise had been in an on-again, off-again relationship since fifth year though they had kept it secret from everyone, even their dormmates. Pansy was the only one who knew the truth. She was the only one, aside from Blaise, who knew Draco was gay. Blaise had wanted to be open with their relationship but Draco had steadfastly refused.

"You know what's expected of me," he would say time and time again. "I'm a Malfoy. I have to marry, produce an heir, carry on my family name."

"So what?" Blaise would counter. "That's years away. I'm talking about right now. Right now let's be together and then you can marry whoever the hell you want when you leave here."

But they both knew that if Draco came out, it would have consequences in the future. They both knew his marriage was likely to be politically motivated. If it became common knowledge that he was gay, it would make him significantly less attractive to many of the high-status pure-blood families his parents hoped to make a match with.

Draco had accepted this reality. Hell, he had even agreed with the reasoning behind it. But that was before. Before he became a Death Eater and saw first-hand what Voldemort was really about. Before the war and the Malfoys' fall from grace. Draco no longer saw the point of marrying for the sake of the heir. He doubted the Malfoy name would ever hold the prestige it once did. No matter how much money they had, he wasn't sure he would be doing a child of his any favours by saddling it with all that history. More importantly, he wasn't sure he even believed in it anymore. Watching events unfold over the last two years, Draco had been forced into the realisation that everything his father had told him about the world was either wrong or an outright lie. Why condemn himself to a lifetime of unhappiness in a fake marriage for the sake of principles he no longer held to?

Shortly after Draco's trial, the Greengrasses had approached his parents about the possibility of marriage between Draco and Daphne. His parents had liked the idea.

"It's the perfect choice," his father had said. "The Greengrasses are an old wizarding family with a proud lineage. You and Daphne have much you can offer each other."

Draco had known what his father was really saying. The Greengrasses supported pure-blood supremacy but had chosen not to support Voldemort. This meant that they were sympathetic to the Malfoys' situation but their own name had not been tarnished by association with the Dark Lord, a rare combination. Draco also knew the Greengrasses had very little money in comparison to the vast Malfoy fortune. Thus it was a marriage that would benefit both sides – Draco's reputation would be improved through his marriage to a Greengrass and Daphne and her future children would have all financial stability and power they could want.

Daphne had apparently been on board with the idea. Draco had not. He hadn't told his parents why. They didn't know he was gay nor were they aware he had experienced a shift in ideology. They were angry, the Greengrasses were angry, and Daphne was angry and deeply embarrassed. Then Blaise had gotten wind of the whole thing and had been furious. Draco had been putting him off for years using marriage as his excuse and then had turned down a highly sensible and profitable proposal. He took it as proof that Draco had been stringing him along the whole time.

He wasn't entirely wrong about that, either. Draco had enjoyed his time with Blaise. He was intelligent, amusing and definitely very attractive. The sex was fantastic. But Draco had always known Blaise was much more emotionally invested in the relationship than he was himself. He had never daydreamed about a future together. He had always assumed when their time at Hogwarts drew to a close, so would their relationship. But marriage had been a more palatable excuse for both of them and so they had never had to deal with the truth of it. Now though, now it had all come to a head and Draco felt a confusing mix of guilt, indignation, and loss. He wished things could just go back to the way they had been before, when he and Blaise could laugh and fuck and not worry about the rest.

Draco sat at the edge of the lake, mulling these things over. Staring out over the water, he realised he was lonely. Though he would never say such a thing out loud, Draco thought it might be nice to have someone to talk to. Sometimes being a cold-hearted bastard wasn't all it was cracked up to be.

4.

Harry would remember that autumn as one of constant discovery. He spent every spare minute in his animal form, learning his new body. After classes he dashed off to any quiet place he could find and practiced his transformation, experimented with moving around as a rabbit, and just generally adjusting to life as this new being. He was almost always late to dinner, where he'd bolt down his food as quickly as possible before dashing back to Gryffindor Tower and ripping through his homework. Once he had done the bare minimum he felt he could get away with, he was off again, sneaking out to the grounds with his Invisibility Cloak.

This was always the best part of his day, out on the pitch, the inky darkness of night hiding him from prying eyes. He could transform and tear around to his heart's content. Hours flew by as he ran and leapt in the moonlight. It was much more exciting than Harry had anticipated. When he had first heard the stories about his father and Sirius, he had assumed the only reason they transformed was to keep Remus company. He hadn't imagined the wild joy that came from spending time as an animal.

When he had first realised his animal form was a rabbit, he had known a moment of disappointment. Part of him had hoped he would be a stag, like his father. Or, if not a stag, at least something large and impressive. He had to admit it was a bit of a blow to the ego that he, Harry Potter, the Boy Who Lived, the Saviour of the Wizarding World, was a fluffy little bunny rabbit. Surely he was meant to be an eagle, a wolf, a dragon? But the more he thought about it, the more it made sense.

Harry had hated the war. He had seen enough violence to last him a lifetime. He didn't want to fight. He didn't want to overpower others, force them to do his will. Unlike his father's stag or Sirius's dog, a rabbit really couldn't be considered a fighting creature; it was not threatening or powerful. Harry also hated being used. He had been manipulated by so many people over the course of the war. He was tired of being seen as an opportunity or a tool. He wanted to be seen as himself, just Harry, a person like any other. A rabbit couldn't really be used. If he had been an insect or a bird he could have perched outside windows like Skeeter, the perfect spy. If he had been a snake he could have slunk along dark corridors, slithered under doorways unnoticed, struck with poisonous fangs, the perfect spy and assassin both. But a rabbit, a rabbit was too big to go unnoticed, too small to be intimidating and its bite was unlikely to even break the skin. In fact, all rabbits were really good for was cuddling. And really, wasn't that what

Harry wanted most of all? To be loved?

A rabbit made good sense for another reason. Rabbits were fast and if there was one thing Harry loved, it was speed. Running as a rabbit was nothing like running in his human body. As a rabbit, his hind legs were powerful and loved to be worked. They propelled him forward with a surge unlike anything he had ever known. It was a lot like flying – everything fell aside until there was nothing but the rushing air and the pure feeling of exhilaration. But unlike flying, there was no need for a broom, no need for anything extra at all. It was Harry and only Harry creating this mad, driving rush. It felt primal and thrilling, just him and his body tearing through the night.

There was a downside to being a rabbit, though, a very crucial one, as Harry learned on his fourth night of running the pitch like a crazed thing. Rabbits were prey. As he dashed under the edge of Hagrid's hut – transforming back into his human form as he did so lest he not make it in time – he cursed himself for forgetting he lived at a school that not only sat next to a forest full of wild creatures but also housed an owlery.

He knew of course that his friends were curious about his long absences from the common room, that it was only a matter of time before they confronted him about it. Sure enough, after a week or so, Ron and Hermione cornered him, wanting to know what was up. He told them he was finding it hard being back at school after everything and that he liked having some time to himself. They accepted the lie readily enough, Hermione's face softening before she pulled him into a tight hug. Harry felt guilty for lying to his friends but not guilty enough to tell them the truth. He wasn't ready to share that yet, not with anyone.

***

Draco was in a dark mood. Granted, most of his moods were dark these days but this one was worse than most.

He had been doing his usual "Slytherins are people, too" tour of the castle when he heard a muffled whimper coming from one of the suits of armour. Investigating, he discovered a first year Slytherin crammed inside, arms bound with a spell, mouth gagged with his own tie. Draco knew the boy. His name was Euan. He was shy and intelligent but quiet. He had a hard time imagining the boy doing anything that would warrant such abuse. Draco had gently helped the frightened child out, biting down his own

outrage. Euan steadfastly refused to name who had done this to him. After arguing about this for a few minutes, Draco led him back to the dungeons and then went outside to cool off.

He felt angry, furiously so. It was disgusting that the other houses were getting away with such behaviour, the way teachers and prefects looked the other way. It made Draco sick that children like Euan were being punished for things they had nothing to do with, discriminated against solely because of their house designation. Thinking how Euan had looked inside the suit of armour, so small and miserable, Draco wanted nothing more than to find whoever had done this and hex them into oblivion.

But along with his rage and indignation, Draco felt guilt. Because really, weren't Euan and the others just paying for his mistakes? He had done more than anyone to foster ill-will towards Slytherin amongst the other houses. After all, he had been the most outspoken about pure-blood supremacy. He had been the one advocating for the removal of Muggle-borns from the school. Despite what others may have planned for after graduation, he was the only one who bore the Dark Mark while still in school. And of course, he was the only one who nearly murdered the Headmaster. Others may have been more favoured by the Carrows during their terrifying tenure, but everyone knew who the Prince of Slytherin was. Draco Malfoy and no one else.

Given the path of his thoughts, perhaps it was not surprising that he ended up standing in front of Dumbledore's tomb. He had never visited it before. He had been in hiding following the Headmaster's death, and last year, with Death Eaters firmly ensconced in Hogwarts' halls, it would not have been prudent to be seen lingering in such a place. But now there was no reason for him not to be here except, perhaps, his own shame. He had a feeling Dumbledore wouldn't have minded, though. In fact, he expected the crazy old codger would have been glad to see him there.

He reached out tentatively, let his fingers brush the cold marble. It was smooth and felt soothing to the touch. He ran his hands along the edge, outlining the shape of the tomb, his mind spinning. How much might have been different if he had accepted Dumbledore's offer that night on the Astronomy Tower? Would they have been able to make it to safety before the other Death Eaters arrived? Before Snape arrived? Draco knew now that the old man had been dying of a curse, but how much longer might he have lived if Snape had not been forced to kill him? Would he have lived long enough to help Draco? To help his family? Would he have helped Potter to bring Voldemort down faster, before so many atrocities were committed? How much could have been different had Draco been stronger? How many lives could have been spared?

Suddenly, he felt as though a boulder had dropped on his chest and he struggled to breathe. How had he

ever been so stupid? It was too much, far too much.

He laid a hand flat on the tomb. “I’m sorry,” he said, his voice barely more than a whisper. “I’m sorry.”

He couldn’t say how long he stayed by Dumbledore’s tomb, lost in thoughts of what might have been. At some point he sat down, his back against the frigid marble, his knees pulled up under his chin. At some point after that, his eyes stung. When he rubbed them, he was surprised to find they were wet. He hadn’t realised he was crying.

He was more surprised still when, after roughly wiping the tears away, he opened his eyes to see a small black bunny sitting in front of him. It was only a few feet away from him, sitting, and, well, staring, its little head slightly cocked to one side, its small nose twitching.

Draco had his wand trained on it in a flash. He had spent too long around Peter Pettigrew not to know that just because an animal seemed small and helpless didn’t mean it wasn’t actually a Death Eater looking to kill you dead. He fiercely whispered the incantation that would force the bunny back into its human shape.

Nothing happened.

Draco frowned. Maybe the bunny wasn’t an Animagus after all. Or maybe he just couldn’t get his stupid wand to work. He tried the spell again. And again. And then one more time, just to be sure.

Still nothing.

With a small shrug, he pocketed his wand. “So, you’re just a bunny after all, huh?”

The bunny hadn’t moved at all. He regarded the small creature curiously. It seemed awfully tame for a wild animal. Maybe it was someone’s pet, escaped from the castle. There was probably some frilly little girl searching around in a blind panic at that very moment. Or perhaps it had been lost during the final

battle and had been living on the grounds since then, waiting for its owner to come and find it. That thought was more than a little depressing and Draco found himself reaching out a hand to the thing.

“Well, come here then.”

For a minute, the bunny didn’t move. Then it hopped forward tentatively, as though trying to decide between approaching and bolting with each step. Eventually though, it was close enough for Draco to pet it. And after a few minutes of that, it allowed him to pick it up, hold it in his lap and stroke its soft fur. God, if Pansy could see him now, sitting at Dumbledore’s grave, crying and cuddling a bunny, she would never let him hear the end of it.

He shook his head, smiling ruefully. “Draco Malfoy, you’re a total Hufflepuff.”

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It was the strangest night of Harry’s life. And given what his life was like, that was saying something. He had been tearing around the grounds in cautious fits and starts, ever mindful of dark shapes winging through the night sky, when he caught sight of a figure moving towards Dumbledore’s tomb. Coming to a halt, he took in the blond hair and recognised Malfoy in the instant.

He would like to say it was compassion or concern or even well-intended suspicion that made him hop into nearby shadows to watch the Slytherin but that would be a lie. It was morbid curiosity and nothing more. He was blatantly eavesdropping on what was surely a very private moment.

Except that there wasn’t much to hear, even with his extra-sensitive rabbit hearing. Malfoy stood quietly for a long time, his hands trailing over the surface of the tomb. Then he whispered a broken apology and sunk to the ground. He sat there for an hour, maybe two. Every now and then he would turn his head a little and the moonlight would catch the tear tracks on his face, silver trails against pale skin. It startled Harry to see them. Just like that day in Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom, it seemed so strange to see Malfoy cry. After a while, Malfoy rubbed his eyes then looked at his hands, confusion clear on his face. As if he hadn’t realised he was crying until he felt the tears.

Looking back at it later, Harry would identify that as the thing that made him reveal himself. The thought of Malfoy sitting there, so lost in misery that he wasn't even aware he was crying. It pulled at Harry in some way that was hard to explain, calling up memories of his own lost, lonely nights when there had been so much pain that nothing made sense any more. And so he had hopped forward. He didn't know what he meant to achieve by it, only that he had to respond somehow to the display of raw hurt in front of him. After all, it wasn't like he hated Malfoy anymore. The time for hatred was long past.

When Malfoy pulled his wand on him, Harry froze. An idiotic reaction, he should have run or transformed or something. He recognised the incantation Draco whispered, knew what it did. He winced and waited to be forced back into his human form. But amazingly, it didn't happen. Malfoy cast the spell several times more but still nothing happened. And then, then, Malfoy actually reached out for him, beckoned him over, cuddled him on his lap. Never in a million years would Harry have pegged Malfoy as a bunny cuddler but there was no denying it. They sat like that for almost half an hour, Malfoy's hands smoothing down Harry's back, gently caressing his long ears, scratching just above his tail.

Strangest night ever.

Part 2hd inspiration for jamie2109 (2)

Author: Anonymous

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Title: He Was He and I Was Bunny (Part 2 of 4)

He Was He and I Was Bunny Part 2 of 4

5.

The next day, Harry tried very hard to convince himself it had all been a dream. What other explanation

was there? Because there was no way he would ever willingly sit in Malfoy's lap. And he certainly wouldn't have sprawled out shamelessly in a blatant appeal for petting. And he most definitely would not have reveled in the sensation of it, the soft, easy pleasure of hands stroking his body, lulling him into a dopey stupor. No, it had to have been a dream. Make that a nightmare. A horrible, terrifying nightmare.

But then he brushed by Malfoy on the way into Potions and the smell of the other boy hit him, that particularly Malfoyish blend of expensive body products, cologne, and boy skin. The sensory memory of the night before crashed down over Harry so hard and so vivid it was like he had fallen into a Pensieve. There was no denying it. It had really happened. He stared at Malfoy dumbly.

Malfoy stared back, clearly unimpressed. "First, Potter, watch where you're going. Not only did you touch my person, which I do not appreciate, but in your pathetic stumbling you rumpled my robes. You might not mind going around looking like you found your clothes in a bin, but I happen to care about my appearance. Second, you are blocking the door. Stop gaping like a moron and move the fuck along."

"Shut up, Malfoy," a voice snarled from behind them.

Ron. Right. He was with his friends. He was in class and with his friends and he had to stop acting like a complete prat. He shook his head clear and made his way to his seat.

"Malfoy's such a shit," Ron grumbled as they pulled out their books. "You would've thought he'd have learned something from last year but I guess his head is so thick nothing can get through, eh?"

Harry nodded, only half listening. He had his eyes on Malfoy. He was confused. If it hadn't been a dream, if it had really happened, then why hadn't Malfoy's spell forced Harry back into his human form? He knew Malfoy was powerful enough to cast that spell. What had gone wrong?

He watched Malfoy all class, trying to figure it out. After about an hour, Malfoy's cauldron exploded and Harry got his answer.

"Malfoy!" Slughorn blustered. "An exploded cauldron? I would expect that from a first year, not from one

of my NEWT students. What happened?"

"Sorry, sir. It's my wand. It just doesn't work right."

Harry's eyes dropped to Malfoy's wand. He didn't recognise it.

"My new one will be coming soon," Malfoy continued. "It won't happen again."

Harry could see Slughorn mulling over what to do. He was caught in a tight spot this year. Slughorn was someone who liked to attach himself to power and status, to collect students whom he thought could be useful to him in the future. These days, there were very few Slytherins on that list. At the same time, he was the Head of Slytherin house. He couldn't exactly ignore his own students. He seemed to have settled for dealing with them as little as possible while still maintaining the general appearance of supportiveness. It was so self-serving and callous, it made Harry sick to see it.

"Hmmm, well, I suppose no real harm was done. We don't have too many potions involving wandwork this term so I expect you'll be okay until your new wand arrives. But perhaps you should just sit this one out."

Harry waited until Slughorn had moved off and then, under the guise of needing more hellebore, crossed the room, stopping in front of Malfoy's table.

Malfoy looked up at him and sneered. "You get lost, Potter? I know it's terribly confusing for someone of such low intelligence but this is actually not the supply cupboard."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Where's your wand?"

"Maybe you need to get your prescription checked, scarhead. It's right here in my hand."

“No, I mean your wand. Your hawthorn wand. I sent it to the Manor in June. Didn’t you get it?”

Malfoy dropped his gaze, suddenly busy cleaning up the remains of his potion. “Yeah, I got it.”

Harry frowned, confused. “I don’t understand. Why aren’t you using it? Was something wrong with it?”

“You could say that,” Malfoy muttered, still not looking up.

“What was it?”

“What was what?”

“What was wrong with the wand?”

“Nothing was wrong with it.”

“But you just said –”

Now Malfoy did look up, his eyes hard and icy. “Look, Potter. I got the wand. It was fine. Just leave it.”

“Then why aren’t you –”

“I said, leave it. Now fuck off. I don’t want to talk to you anymore.”

Harry went back to his table, forgetting to pick up the ingredients he had supposedly gone to get. Ron

and Hermione stared at him.

“What was all that about?” Hermione asked.

“Nothing. Just Malfoy.”

She gave him a doubtful look but said nothing. Harry didn’t look at Malfoy again for the rest of the class.

***

Hours later, Harry was taking a hop around the lake when he heard it.

“Fucking Potter.”

He froze. There was only one person who said his name like that, spat it out like it was something rotten. He moved towards the voice, over a small hill and around a tree. Sure enough, there was Malfoy. He was sitting with his back against the tree, a thick cloak wrapped around him. He had a scowl on his face and appeared to be tearing at bits of grass in a rather agitated manner. Apparently catching Harry’s approach out of the corner of his eye, his head whipped around and his hand fell to his wand. When he saw Harry’s small rabbit form, he visibly relaxed and leaned back against the tree.

“Oh, it’s you again, is it?” he said, a small smile on his face.

He held out a hand and Harry hopped forward. Not because he was hoping for more petting from the prat. Definitely not. He only wanted to hear more about what Malfoy had been saying about him. While he no longer suspected Malfoy of evil, he wouldn’t it put it past him to devise some malicious prank designed solely to make Harry look incredibly foolish and possibly land him in the hospital wing. It was therefore very important that Harry seize this opportunity to investigate the matter. And if Malfoy

happened to pet him while he detailed his plans, well, there was nothing Harry could do about that.

Malfoy picked Harry up, placed him in his lap and began to softly stroke his fur. “Back for more then, eh? Shameless. And foolish. How do you know I’m not going to take you straight to the kitchen and have the house-elves make you into stew for me? Or take you down into the dungeons and practice horrible curses on you? Don’t you know who I am? I’m Draco Malfoy. I’m a Death Eater. I’m Evil Incarnate. I scorn all things pure and good. I kick puppies and steal sweets from babies. I eat little bunnies like you for breakfast.”

Harry blinked at him, only vaguely listening to his ramblings. He was too distracted by the glorious feeling of Malfoy’s long fingers gliding over his fur. He was beginning to understand why Fang’s eyes seemed to drop shut the second Hagrid started rubbing his belly. He sank into a state of lazy bliss, almost falling asleep in Malfoy’s lap.

“Going to take your chances, hmmm? Good for you. I like that in a bunny.”

Malfoy’s fingers gently pulled at Harry’s long ears before brushing up over Harry’s nose, between his eyes, and over his forehead. If he could have figured out how to do it with his rabbit’s mouth, Harry would have hummed in contentment. He should probably be worried about why he was allowing this (seeking this out, a small voice in the back of his head countered) but at the moment, he couldn’t seem to be bothered thinking about much of anything.

“You’re not scared of me in the least, are you? It’s a nice change. At least you can see me for who I really am. Not like some people. Some speccy, horribly disfigured people who apparently don’t understand the basics of hygiene or how to behave in a remotely human manner. Honestly. “Where’s your wand, Malfoy? Why aren’t you using it?” Just when I thought he couldn’t get any thicker. As if I would ever use that wand again. I’d rather fail out of Hogwarts than touch it. The things I did with that wand … I won’t tell you all the gory details. No need to give you nightmares. I have nightmares enough for the both of us, I’m sure. But let’s just say I’ll be happy never to see it again. My great-aunt’s wand may not work that well, but at least it’s never been used to torture someone until they vomited blood.”

He sighed heavily then and his hand stilled on Harry’s back.

“Maybe Potter’s right. Maybe I am just an evil bastard.”

***

Harry went back to the lake’s edge the next night, and the next, and the next. He sat in Malfoy’s lap, letting Malfoy’s fingers stroke him into a dreamy trance-state and listening to the other boy’s rambling musings. He didn’t let himself think too much about why he was doing this, why he kept seeking out Malfoy instead of finding some other nicer student to pet him. One who didn’t hate him, who wouldn’t kill him without hesitation were he ever to figure out exactly who the little black bunny was. He just showed up at the lake’s edge, night after night, looking for the gleam of blond hair in the moonlight.

Days turned into weeks. The weather got colder but still Malfoy sat by the lake. He wore his winter cloak and cast warming charms to keep them cosy. He never seemed in any rush to get back to the castle. And his face always broke into a smile when he saw Harry’s little black bunny approach.

Some nights Malfoy would tease him, chase him around, trying to catch him. He never succeeded; Harry was much too fast. Eventually, Malfoy would give up, fall breathlessly onto the lawn, laughing, his cheeks flushed and his eyes bright. Some nights Malfoy would drape Harry over his shoulder and they would stroll around the lake, Malfoy’s hand occasionally coming up to stroke Harry’s ears. Most nights though, they just sat under the tree, Malfoy talking and Harry listening.

Malfoy talked about the people in his life. He talked about his parents, his mum in particular. He was scared for her, worried that her actions on the night of the final battle might have some rather dire consequences. “Don’t get me wrong, Bunny. I’m glad my mother saved Potter that night. If she hadn’t, who knows where we’d be. Slaves to that slit-nosed freak show, most likely, and what a fucking nightmare that would be. No, she did the right thing, she’s just in so much danger. I mean, we all are – the Malfoys are blood traitors, don’t you know – but her most of all. As far as the remaining Death Eaters are concerned, she’s the reason they’re sitting in Azkaban instead of feasting on the bones of their enemies.”

Malfoy talked about his childhood, growing up at the Manor. It was different than Harry would have thought. While his father had been strict and sometimes cruel, his mother had been gentle and loving, going out of her way to ensure Draco’s early life was full of joy and laughter. Listening to the stories,

Narcissa's actions during the final battle made much more sense. It was clear that she had never loved anything, not power, not wealth, not the Dark Lord, not even Lucius, nearly as much as she loved her son.

Malfoy talked about Pansy. "I wish you could have known her, Bunny. She's the most amazing girl I've ever met. Sexy and playful but fuck, dangerous when she wants to be. She protects what's hers, she'll fight you to the death before she lets you hurt someone she loves. I think she's the only girl I could marry and not slit my wrists in the first year. Of course my mother would be outranged, Pansy's a horrendous slag but personally, I think that's part of her charm. And coincidentally, also makes her a wonderful source for blackmail material."

Sometimes Malfoy talked about Blaise but it seemed to be painful for him. From what he said, Harry gathered they were friends, best friends even, but had recently had a falling out over Malfoy refusing to marry Daphne Greengrass (Daphne Greengrass! The pretty blond girl whose name he didn't know. That was it!). Harry didn't quite understand why they were fighting about this but since he wasn't exactly able to ask questions, he just followed along the best he could.

And Malfoy talked about Harry. A lot. At first Harry was surprised at how much he seemed to be in the Slytherin's thoughts. Malfoy was angry at him. He apparently felt Harry should be doing more to help the younger Slytherins, who were being bullied and ostracised by the rest of the school. "He's such a selfish bastard. If he'd turn away from the adoring throngs for just two seconds, he'd see what's happening to the little ones. He could change that! People would listen to him, they'd follow him. I mean, for fuck's sake! They're just little kids! Isn't he supposed to be Mr Noble Do The Right Thing? Isn't he the fucking Saviour of the Wizarding World? Guess it's too much to ask him to look in Slytherin's direction long enough to see how the first years are hurting. Saviour my arse. Fucking wanker."

Listening to Malfoy talk night after night, Harry slowly came to realize that Malfoy was disappointed about more than just Harry's failure to support Slytherin. Malfoy seemed to want more from Harry in general. Reading in between the lines, or rather, listening in between the rants, Harry came to understand that Malfoy wanted Harry's friendship. That he had always wanted Harry's friendship. Malfoy talked about growing up hearing stories of Harry Potter, the Boy Who Lived. He had daydreamed about going to school together, being best friends. Harry's rejection that day on the Hogwarts Express had been crushing for Malfoy. It was the first time anyone had ever rejected him, the first time anyone aside from his father had ever made him feel like he wasn't good enough.

As Malfoy talked on, it became clear that much of their rivalry had been fueled by Malfoy's need to

prove that he was, in fact, good enough. Though Harry wasn't sure Malfoy was fully conscious of it, he seemed to need Harry to know that he was every bit as good as Harry was, that he was worth Harry's time and attention, that Harry had been wrong to cast him aside so quickly. This realisation was astonishing. Harry had never guessed that Malfoy's behaviour was motivated by anything other than pure malice. He had never guessed that all that simmering resentment was a cover for a deep hurt.

Sitting in Malfoy's lap, feeling gentle hands caress his fur with careful tenderness, Harry wondered what else he had been missing where Malfoy was concerned.

6.

October rolled into November and (rabbit) Harry and Malfoy continued to meet each other out by the lake. Not every night. There were times when Harry had too much homework, was too tired, or simply wanted to spend some time with his friends. And there were times when Malfoy didn't show, probably for much the same reasons. But more often then not, evening found them together under the tree, Harry in Malfoy's lap, Malfoy having no idea who it really was he was petting.

It was like Malfoy was two different people. There was the Malfoy he had always known, the one he saw every day in classes or in the corridors. That Malfoy was sarcastic, rude, and vindictive. He always had some comment at the ready, some hex up his sleeve. Then there was the Malfoy who sat by the lake. He was witty and perceptive and had a surprising generous side. He was gentle and affectionate, always petting Harry with soft, loving strokes and bringing him bits of vegetables he nicked from the dinner table. Whereas Everyday-Malfoy only knew how to smirk, Lake-Malfoy knew how to smile, a lovely, broad smile that reached his eyes and transformed his whole face into something quite nice.

It was baffling. How could Malfoy be so different? Had he always had this soft side? Which one was the real Malfoy or were they both? It certainly went a long way to explain why the Slytherins had always seemed to worship him. Harry had never understood how they could follow the smarmy bastard no matter how rich and powerful his father was. But if this was the Malfoy they knew, this funny, vibrant Malfoy who was passionate and who cared, well, that would explain everything then, wouldn't it?

As November wore on, the weather got colder and Harry started to worry. Snow would be coming any day now. What would happen then? Warming charms were nice and all but they didn't do much to help you in a blizzard. Would Malfoy stop coming? It was a surprisingly distressing thought and one that would not leave him alone. It distracted him from his school work, from conversations with his friends, even kept him up at night.

As it turned out, Harry needn't have worried. One frosty evening, as he and Malfoy were sitting under the tree, the first fat snowflakes of winter started to drift slowly down. Harry's heart sunk at the sight of them but Malfoy smiled a slow, wide smile, turning his face up to meet them. Harry could see snowflakes gathering on his eyelashes and felt something loosen in his chest at the sight. Before he had time to process this, Malfoy stood abruptly, Harry still in his arms.

"Right then, Bunny," Malfoy said. "It is winter. It is snowing. You, my shameless cuddle-whore, have clearly been a kept bunny up until very recently and likely have no idea how to survive a Scottish winter. Thus, you are coming with me. I know you like to think yourself a savage creature of the wilds but you'll just have to make do with terrorizing Slytherin House for the next few months until I can trust you to be on your own without freezing to death."

Malfoy took him to the Slytherin common room. Several girls came rushing over the second they saw Harry in his arms.

"Ooooo! Draco, is that your rabbit? I didn't know you had a pet!"

"Oh, he's so cute! Look at those ears. And that little tail! Can I hold him?"

Malfoy curled Harry into his chest and held out a warding hand. "Back, my lovely maidens. I know he looks an adorable ragamuffin but he is in fact a wild beast. He is not a pet, but a feral creature I have brought to protect us from ne'er-do-wells and scallywags who seek to harm Slytherin. Of course, he'll be staying in my room but you know, he'll protect you the best he can from there."

The girls rolled their eyes, apparently used to Malfoy's antics.

“What’s his name, Draco?” one of the younger girls asked.

“Calliope, weren’t you listening? He is a wild creature. He has no name, no anthropomorphic affectation. His name is the rushing of the wind. His name is the cry of the eagle echoing off the mountaintops. His name is the lapping of waves upon the shore. But, for convenience’s sake, I call him Bunny.”

After letting everyone coo over him for a while, Malfoy took Harry upstairs and transfigured an old T-shirt into a squashy little pet bed. Then he conjured a bowl and filled it with water, placing it alongside the bed. Once he had everything set up to his satisfaction, Malfoy pulled Harry up onto his own bed and curled around him.

“You’ll see, Bunny. You’ll like it here.”

And strangely, Harry did. Cuddled up in Malfoy’s bed, he felt oddly content. Of course, he knew it couldn’t last. He couldn’t actually stay in Malfoy’s room. He had to go to classes, eat meals, see his friends. Even though Voldemort was dead, Harry had a feeling if he failed to turn up a few days in a row all hell would break loose. In fact, he had to be back in his own bed in a few hours. What would Malfoy think when his new pet went missing the very first night?

As it turned out, Malfoy was not at all fazed by Harry’s comings and goings. “I know you are a creature of nature, Bunny. You must run free, caged by no man. Just know if I haven’t seen you in a couple of days, I’ll come looking for you. This castle has a way of swallowing people and bunnies up if you don’t keep an eye on them.”

Even though Malfoy wasn’t overly concerned regarding Harry’s whereabouts, Harry found he wanted to spend most of his free time in Slytherin anyway. Malfoy hadn’t been exaggerating when he described the profound unhappiness that seemed to plague the house. Harry loved to see smiles break over the faces of the younger students when Harry hopped into the common room. He loved to hear them laugh when Malfoy levitated him about the room doing his ‘Super Bunny’ routine. And he liked it when Malfoy cuddled him in his lap afterwards, his fingers gentle in Harry’s fur. He didn’t know what it was, but Malfoy seemed to be better at petting him than almost anyone else, his fingers quickly soothing Harry into a dreamy stupor each and every time. Harry also did his best to help Slytherin in his human form too, stepping in when he saw the younger students being bullied, breaking up the odd fight in the corridors.

Harry expected to have his increased absence from the Gryffindor common room scrutinized by his friends. As it turned out, however, Hermione and Ron had apparently taken their relationship to the next level and were also often mysteriously absent from Gryffindor Tower. He suspected they thought he was having a romance himself, sneaking off in the evenings to meet a secret girlfriend. The first time Harry failed to return to his own bed for the night, neither of his friends said anything about it, though Ron dropped him a sly wink at breakfast the next day. The three of them seemed to have a silent agreement not to talk about their shifting whereabouts too much, though Hermione made a point of them all spending at least a couple nights a week hanging out together in the common room, playing Exploding Snap, doing homework, or just chatting as they sat by the fire.

***

Draco had to admit he rather liked having Bunny around. Not that Bunny was there all the time. He had a habit of wandering off, sometimes not coming back for several days at a time. But sooner or later, Draco would find him in one of the hallways or back in his little rabbit bed. He had no idea how Bunny was managing to get in and out of the common room by himself but he supposed animals were just like that.

The others seemed to like having Bunny around too. Draco would often come back from class to find Bunny shamelessly sprawled in the lap of some giggling first year whose face was shining with delight. It was nice to see. He knew full well that life at Hogwarts these days wasn't what the younger ones had expected.

This particular Saturday afternoon though, Draco had Bunny all to himself. They were on Draco's bed, Bunny snuggled up against his stomach while Draco read his Transfiguration text and petted him absentmindedly.

He heard the sound of someone coming into the room and knew without looking it was Blaise.

"You and that rabbit," Blaise said, shaking his head as he flopped onto his own bed.

“Me and Bunny what?” Draco asked, not looking up.

“I never knew you to be much of a cuddler is all. If I had known that was what you wanted, I would have made a point of sticking around for a bit of snuggling.”

Draco’s head snapped up in surprise. Blaise had a tone in his voice that Draco knew all too well. That tone meant Draco was about to get fucked within an inch of his life and love every minute of it. He hadn’t heard it since their fight in the summer. Given how angry Blaise had been lately, he hadn’t really expected to ever hear it again. Hearing it now though, he realised how much he missed it. It ran through him like fire, a flush already starting to spread up his neck. But it was a bad idea. A very bad idea.

Draco affected boredom, turning back to his textbook. “What makes you think I’d want to cuddle you? You’re not nearly as soft.”

Blaise gave a low chuckle as he crossed the room to stand in front of Draco. “No, you’re right. I’m not soft. In fact, I’m rather hard right now.”

Which was true. With Blaise only a few inches away, it was very difficult to ignore the erection pushing visibly against his trousers.

“Was that supposed to be some kind of line? Because really, I’ve heard better from a Hufflepuff.”

“I don’t need a line. I’ve already got you in my bedroom.” Blaise gently took the bunny from underneath Draco’s hand and set him on his little rabbit bed. “There. Now Bunny is all comfy and cosy. Let’s find something else for you to pet.”

He crawled onto Draco’s bed, moving around to sit behind him, being sure to brush against him as he did so. Draco felt a hot mouth against the back of his neck, strong hands wrapping around his shoulders, pulling him against Blaise’s chest.

“Blaise,” Draco said, a warning in his voice.

“Draco,” Blaise mimicked back, his mouth still on Draco’s skin.

“We’ve been over this. You know I don’t –”

“Yeah, I know you don’t. But that doesn’t mean we can’t still fuck, does it?”

Draco’s head fell forward as Blaise’s mouth found the spot on his neck that never failed to make him shiver. He could feel desire uncoiling in his belly. “I can’t believe you are putting me in the position of having to do the right thing. Me, Draco Malfoy, selfish bastard and unrepentant hedonist. It’s absurd.”

“So don’t do the right thing,” Blaise said huskily. “Come on, Draco. I’m a big boy. I can handle myself. But I’d rather handle you right now.”

Draco knew it was a mistake. Blaise had feelings for him that Draco didn’t return, wanted things that Draco wasn’t prepared to give. Whatever else was between them, Blaise was one of Draco’s best friends and he had no desire to fuck him over like that. But Blaise’s mouth was burning a trail down his neck and his hands were sliding underneath Draco’s shirt, setting his skin on fire. Blaise sunk his teeth into the curve of his neck and Draco moaned low in his throat and knew, mistake or no, neither one of them was going to stop now.

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Harry was in shock. One moment he and Malfoy were snuggled together on the bed. The next he was on the floor and Malfoy had Zabini’s tongue down his throat. By the time Harry had processed that “Holy fuck, Malfoy’s gay? and “Shit, he’s fucking Zabini?” Malfoy had something else entirely down his throat. He knew he should turn away, there was no way Malfoy would want Harry seeing this. Hell, he probably wouldn’t even want Bunny seeing this. But he couldn’t. There was no force on earth that could have

made him tear his eyes away from the two young men rolling around on the bed in front of him.

Zabini was gorgeous. Even before Harry had admitted to himself that he might kinda like boys maybe a little, he had known Zabini was gorgeous. There was simply no denying it. And Zabini without his clothes was something else entirely. Harry knew there wasn't a girl in Hogwarts who wouldn't kill to be where he was right then. But despite the fact that the hottest bloke in school had his naked arse on display for Harry's enjoyment, it was Malfoy he couldn't take his eyes off of.

Malfoy was good-looking, quite good-looking even, it was true. But unlike Zabini, who was a near-perfect physical specimen, Malfoy had his flaws. He was a little too skinny, his hipbones a little too sharp, his ribs a little too pronounced. His face was still a tad on the pointy side. He just didn't have enough meat on him to soften all the sharp angles. And good god was he pale. Like he hadn't seen the sun for the last ten years. His toes were kind of strange, his ankles were kind of knobbly. He had a long scar across his back and another down his torso (Harry cringed to see it), and a fading Dark Mark on his left forearm.

And even though Harry could see these things very plainly, could have described them in detail to anyone who asked, somehow all he saw when he looked at Malfoy was that he was beautiful.

He was beautiful. How had this happened? When had the sneering, spoilt brat he had always known turned into this?

It was like he was seeing Malfoy for the first time. And perhaps he was. Malfoy was not the same person he had been at eleven or even at sixteen. This Malfoy, this was a person who had tried to do the right thing in the last few months of the war. Sure there were others who would have done much more and been much braver, but Malfoy had prevented Harry from being killed more than once and that meant something. And he knew this Malfoy, now, today, was a person trying to atone for past mistakes. This Malfoy cared about others, trying his best to cheer his miserable housemates, to protect them from prejudice and cruelty. This Malfoy understood loyalty, generosity and compassion. This Malfoy was someone Harry could admire. Perhaps even someone he did admire.

Zabini's shouted orgasm jarred Harry from his thoughts. Malfoy's head fell forward and he started to moan with increased urgency. Suddenly Harry wished quite desperately to be somewhere else. He did not want to see Malfoy come with Zabini wrapped around him like that, didn't want to hear him call Zabini's name. Trembling a little, Harry crawled under the nearest bed and waited for it to be over.

Later on, after Zabini had gone down to dinner, Malfoy searched out his Bunny, finding Harry under one of the beds. Harry let himself be coaxed out with bits of carrot, let Malfoy carry him back to his bed and curl up with him again as they had been before Zabini's arrival. Despite the cleaning spells Draco had cast, the bed still stunk of sex. Harry tried his best to ignore it.

"Got an eyeful, did you, Bunny?" Malfoy asked softly as he stroked Harry's ears. "Sorry about that. I hope you weren't too traumatised. I think it's too late for Blaise though. I'm pretty sure I fucked him over quite thoroughly and not in the good way."

Malfoy was quiet for a long time, just petting Harry and staring off into space. Then he gave a heavy sigh.

"To tell you the absolute truth, Bunny, I never thought it would really matter. For a long time, I thought we were just messing around, having some fun. By the time I knew he wanted it to be more than just that, it was sixth year and the war was in full swing, well for me anyway. I never thought I'd survive the war. After that whole thing with Dumbledore, I figured I was just living on borrowed time. And, I'd never say this to anyone but you Bunny, but I was so fucking scared. Every single day I was so scared. I never knew what was going to happen. Was I going to die? Were my parents going to die? My friends? Was I going to have to torture someone? Would I know them? Would it be someone I cared about? With Blaise, I could just escape everything for a little while. I know I took advantage of him. I know I'm a complete bastard but I needed it. I just needed it."

Malfoy gave another heavy sigh. Harry had noticed his fondness for them, even when alone. "I don't know, Bunny. Maybe I should take up with Blaise. He's fit enough and god knows the sex is hot. And he's reasonable company. Besides, it's not like the person I really want will ever have me. Waiting around for him to notice me is a sure way to spend my life alone."

That night Harry stayed with Malfoy, falling asleep in the crook of the Slytherin's arm, Malfoy's warm breath teasing at his ears.

7.

Harry saw Zabini and Malfoy fuck four more times over the course of the next month. He was quite sure it happened more than that but there were only four times where he was trapped in the room with them. Each time he watched, astounded, unable to pull his eyes away. Each time he felt a strange mix of anger and arousal that he didn't quite understand, the feeling growing stronger and stronger until he couldn't take it any more and hid under the bed. Malfoy found this endlessly funny. He would pull Harry out from under the bed once Zabini had left and snuggle him and tickle him and plant soft kisses on his forehead.

"My innocent little Bunny. You must have belonged to a Hufflepuff in your former life."

The week before Christmas holiday, Harry witnessed Blaise and Malfoy having a spectacular row about their relationship, or more precisely, lack thereof. There was much shouting and even some hexing and by the end of it, both Slytherins were panting and bloody. There was a stony silence between them for the next several days and then Blaise left early for the holidays. Harry also steered clear of Malfoy for the last few days of school just in case Malfoy had any plans to bring Bunny home to the Manor for Christmas. Harry was quite sure Ron and Hermione's "don't ask, don't tell" policy wouldn't extend to Harry missing Christmas at the Burrow. But he thought of Malfoy often and wondered how he was doing.

***

This year's Malfoy Christmas party was the smallest he could remember. The Malfoys were currently in social limbo. They had been Death Eaters, yes, but they had been sort of half-arsed about it at the end of things and Harry Potter himself had testified that Narcissa saved his life on the night of the final battle. Which meant those still miffed about the whole defeat of the Dark Lord thing weren't about to come within twenty feet of the Malfoys unless it was to kill them. And those who were pretty glad about the tromping of He Who Must Not Be Named Except Now That He's Dead I've Decided To Grow A Pair And Call Him Voldemort were still too suspicious of the matching tattoos on the Malfoys' left forearms to willingly be in their presence. So the only people at the party were those whose friendships with the Malfoys were stronger than the press of politics and those who were in similarly precarious social standing in the wizarding community.

Pansy was there, thank god, or Draco would have had to drink himself into a stupor just to get through the night and likely would have ended up causing some sort of embarrassing scene. He usually did when he was drunk. The Greengrasses were there, of course. Much to Draco's horror and Daphne's humiliation, they had started shoving their younger daughter, Astoria, at him in hopes that he might be more amenable to a match with her. The Zabinis were also there. Blaise's mother had lost her latest husband to the war and was now apparently shopping about for a new one. Draco suspected she wouldn't be staying long. The pickings were rather slim. Blaise was making the most of the time he had by glaring at Draco while posing seductively against the wall or the sofa or wherever he happened to be at the moment. Draco was pointedly ignoring this. Pansy, however, was not.

"Fuck me. Has Blaise gotten hotter since I've been away?" she asked, staring openly at her former classmate. "I mean, I remember him being good looking, but did his arse always look like that? And his shoulders, were they always that broad? And, mmm, he's been practicing his glare. I don't remember it being quite so smouldering."

"He's the same," Draco said with an indifferent shrug. "You just haven't been laid in a while."

"I'll have you know I got laid last night, thank you very much."

He raised his eyebrows. "You don't say? Who was the unfortunate bloke?"

"Brat." Pansy pushed him, laughing. "Met him at a party, a real party mind you, not like this social nightmare. Honestly, what was your mother thinking? This is going to do more harm than good to your family, just you watch. But yes, his name was James or John, something boring that started with a J anyway. He was very pretty. Big blue eyes, messy brown hair, strong forearms. You know how I love strong forearms."

"Mmm."

"Took him home and shagged him all night long. He looked better than he performed but he wasn't too bad. Anyway, it was just a bit of fun. I doubt I'll see him again."

“Yes, well, it will be rather hard to ring him up if you don’t remember his name,” Draco said with a smirk.

“What about you? I take it from the daggers shooting your way that you and Blaise have been making things complicated again?”

Draco sighed. This really wasn’t a conversation he felt like having. “A little bit, I guess. But it’s over now.”

Pansy rolled her eyes. “Sure it is. Just like it was the last twenty-five times you two had a falling out.”

“No, I mean it. It’s got to be. It was one thing during the war when everything was so crazy. But it’s different now. Now there’s a future to think about. And he’s just not in mine.”

Pansy fixed him with a scrutinizing look. “Are you so sure about that, Draco? He’d be good for you, I think.”

“Maybe. But I just don’t want him that way.”

“Yes, well, we both know there’s only one person you’ve ever wanted that way.”

“Pans, come on. Don’t start.” He had heard this lecture before. Many times.

“I’m just saying, hon. It’s time to get over your crush on the Boy Who Lived. He’s never going to let go of the past long enough to see you for who you are.”

“I know.”

“And in the meantime, you’re letting a perfectly good man get away from you.”

Draco could tell Pansy was warming up to a full-on intervention. As much as he loved her, he had no intention of getting into a shouting match about Harry Potter in the middle of his parents' Christmas party. "Look, I know you mean well, but can we just not do this tonight?"

Pansy sniffed and look away. "Fine, but at least think about it. Before you blow your last chance with Blaise."

"I promise, I will think about it."

Just then Draco caught sight of his mother deep in conversation with Mrs Greengrass. Daphne's mother was gesturing broadly, apparently worked up about something. His mother was nodding slowly, her hand under her chin, a sure sign she was deep in thought. This couldn't bode well.

He caught Pansy's hand and turned imploring eyes on her. "Are you positive you won't marry me? I'd make it so good for you. You know I would. I'll buy you all the clothes and jewellery you could ever want. We'll have a townhouse in London, a summer home in Spain, maybe a chalet in the Alps. You can host the most fabulous parties the wizarding world has ever seen. And you can fuck all the men you want on the side. I won't even make you have an heir if you don't want to."

Pansy smiled and patted his cheek. "It's tempting, darling, but no. I refuse to compete for lovers with my husband. Especially since you're prettier than I am. Now let's go find a drink or ten and see what scandalous behaviour we can get out of you tonight."

***

Christmas at the Burrow wasn't quite what Harry had been hoping for. Despite Ginny's copious decorations and Molly's mountains of food, a grim shadow hung over the house that no amount of mistletoe and shortbread could lift. It was their first Christmas without Fred and his absence was felt everywhere.

At times everything would seem perfectly normal. They'd all be crowded around the kitchen table, talking and laughing, just like always. Then one of them would say something or maybe just get a certain look on their face and everyone would suddenly remember Fred was missing. The laugher would die, voices would grow low and careful. Eyes would flick to Molly, who was often seen blinking back tears at such times, or to George, whose eyes were red-rimmed and flat. Then they'd awkwardly try to recover, pretending nothing had happened.

Harry couldn't help but notice that George seemed to be drinking rather heavily. More than once, he saw Mr Weasley take a bottle of Firewhisky out of George's hands with a gentle pat on the shoulder. And he often saw George staring blankly into space, his eyes far away, his lips pressed thin. It was difficult to watch. Harry wanted to reach out to him, help in some way, but he didn't know what to say. Even with as much loss as Harry had experienced in his life, he knew he couldn't understand the loss of a twin.

Harry was also a bit perplexed as to what to do with himself. It was still a little awkward being alone with Ginny, though their friendship would definitely recover from their failed attempt at a relationship. She was also gone a fair amount, visiting Dean or other friends from school. Ron and Hermione were as wrapped up in each other as they had been all term. Even though they made a point of including Harry, he couldn't help feeling like a third wheel. With no Horcruxes to find, no pressing need to learn obscure spells or practice defensive magic, no research and no secret meetings, Harry found himself sitting around a lot reading old Quidditch magazines.

For the first time in his life, Harry felt he would rather have spent Christmas at Hogwarts than with the Weasleys. It wasn't just that he was bored stiff and felt a bit left out. He missed his Hogwarts life. He missed spending time in his rabbit form. He missed Slytherin house, with its giggling first year girls who would take turns holding him in their laps and petting him. He missed hearing the sharp-barbed banter of the older students. Though he was still sometimes surprised by how far they would go, he had come to appreciate their acerbic wit. And he missed Malfoy. He was stunned to realise it and he didn't quite know why he missed the pointy-faced git, but there it was.

Then Charlie came home and Harry fervently wished he could go back to sitting around reading magazines and idly wondering about why exactly he missed Draco Malfoy.

They hadn't talked since the summer. Charlie had written to him a few times but Harry hadn't written back. He hadn't known what to say. Now of course, that seemed like a glaringly rude thing to do and he

hoped Charlie wasn't mad about it. But he didn't seem to be. He gave Harry a hug along with the rest of the family, dropping him a quick wink as he pulled back. His smile was open and easy, just like it had always been. Harry's heart raced a little at the sight of it.

Somehow, despite the fact that he had been short on company for days, once Charlie came back, Harry was almost always surrounded by the rest of the Weasley family. There always seemed to someone coming into the room at just the wrong moment, someone calling Charlie to help with something or other or asking Harry if he fancied a game of Exploding Snap. Harry's stomach was constantly in knots, wondering if they would ever be alone together, if Charlie even wanted that, and what might happen between them once they finally were.

Three days passed before it happened. Harry was up late reading, the rest of the family long since gone to bed. He had assumed Charlie was sleeping, too, and so was surprised when he saw his face appear around the corner. Harry felt his pulse jump suddenly.

"Hey, Harry. You're up late."

Harry shrugged, trying to pretend his heart wasn't about to leap out of his mouth for nerves. He somehow doubted Charlie was falling for it. "Not sleepy, I guess."

"Mind if I join you?"

"Course not."

Charlie sat beside him on the sofa. They looked at each other for a moment, each grinning a goofy grin. Then Charlie's hand was cupping the back of Harry's neck, fingers winding in his hair, pulling him closer. Their lips met and Harry sank into the kiss with a hum of contentment. Finally, something about the Christmas holidays was exactly the way it was supposed to be. Kissing Charlie was so easy, so wonderful, so… wrong.

Charlie's arms were warm around him, but they were powerful and heavily muscled where they should be graceful and lean. He smelled of leather and trees and fresh night air when he should smell like

French cologne and wildflower shampoo. His tanned skin looked like burnished gold in the firelight but it should have been pale, like the snow under a full moon. It was wrong, all wrong. And with sudden, shocking clarity, Harry realised it wasn't Charlie he wanted to be kissing. It was Malfoy.

He was going to be sick.

Harry pulled out of the kiss abruptly. He could feel that he was wild-eyed, knew his face had gone pale.

No, it couldn't be. He couldn't want Malfoy.

"What is it, Harry? What's wrong?" Charlie's voice was filled with concern.

Harry looked at him. Charlie. Sweet, sexy Charlie who kissed so softly and held him so tightly. What was he doing? What was he doing? He needed to say something but he couldn't seem to find his voice. Malfoy. It wasn't possible.

"Harry?"

"I'm sorry, Charlie," he managed to choke out. "I can't do this. I –"

Charlie cut him off with a shake of his head. "No. Don't apologise. Shit. I'm the one who should be sorry."

Harry stared, confused.

"Ron mentioned he thought you were seeing someone but I guess I hoped he was wrong or that maybe it wasn't that serious. And I never heard you talking about anyone, so …" he drifted off, his hands spreading in a soft gesture of defeat. "Is it serious?"

Harry took a deep breath and tried to get himself under control. “I, I don’t know. I don’t know what he thinks but I suspect maybe I am. Serious, I mean.”

Charlie gave him a look that was far too knowing. “Yeah, well, kissing the wrong person can clear that sort of thing up pretty quickly, can’t it?”

Harry gave him a pained look. He felt like an arse.

“Look, Harry, it’s okay. I’m glad you’ve found someone. I won’t say I’m not disappointed but really, it’s okay. You deserve to have some happiness in your life, you know?”

Harry snorted, thinking of his recent encounters with Malfoy when Harry had been in his human form. “I don’t know if it’s exactly happiness. He makes me kind of mental.”

Charlie smiled. “The best ones do. But let me give you one piece of advice. Don’t hide this new boyfriend of yours forever. At least tell your Ron and Hermione. Keeping things secret can be fun at first but it has a way of ruining even the best relationship. And really, I don’t think you have anything to worry about. You know Hermione’s not going to care and Ron’s never hassled me about be gay. I know my brother can be a bit dense but he’s a good guy. He’s not going to care that you’re dating a bloke. Unless of course he’s a Slytherin, and then I can’t help you.”

Harry choked and Charlie laughed.

“He’s a Slytherin? Merlin, no wonder you’ve been keeping a low profile. Well, just make sure you take Ron’s wand before you tell him.” He put a comforting hand on Harry’s shoulder. “It’ll all be okay, Harry. You’ll see.”

“Maybe,” Harry said, doubtful.

“And if things don’t work out with this Slytherin fellow, you know where to find me,” Charlie quipped, dropping a wink and ruffling Harry’s hair.

***

Harry was preoccupied to the point of near madness for the rest of the holiday. It wasn’t possible. He just couldn’t have a thing for Malfoy. He just couldn’t. Sure, Malfoy wasn’t as bad as he had once been. He no longer believed in all that pure-blood bullshit and he seemed genuinely sorry that he had ever thrown in with Voldemort. And yeah, underneath that sneering exterior he seemed to be an okay sort of bloke, good to his friends, funny and smart. And yes, Harry supposed he was fairly easy on the eyes, what with the soft blond hair, the stormy grey eyes, the pale pink mouth that just begged to be kissed, not to mention all that creamy skin…

Okay, fine. Maybe it was possible that he might be attracted to Malfoy but that certainly didn’t mean he had any kind of feelings for him. Because he didn’t. That would just be too ridiculous for words. And Harry was not a ridiculous sort of person. He was a very serious person who did very serious things like fighting corrupt authority and saving the world. He most definitely did not do utterly idiotic things like falling in love with someone who had hated him with a passion for more than seven years.

Which did very little to explain why, a week later, he was in his rabbit form, sitting on his little bed in Malfoy’s room, anxiously awaiting the Slytherin’s return, his heart racing at the sound of footsteps on the dormitory stairs.

The door flew open with a bang.

“Bunny!”

Arms were scooping him up, pulling him close. Malfoy’s scent washed over him as he snuggled Harry against his chest, his fingers in Harry’s fur, his lips against Harry’s head. Harry felt everything within him let go as he sunk into Malfoy’s embrace. It felt so good, so safe and good and right. It felt like coming

home. As he nestled against Malfoy's body, he knew there was no denying it. This was not just attraction. He was in love with Draco sodding Malfoy.

He was so completely fucked.

8.

Harry spent the first week back from holidays in kind of a numb haze. He was in love with Malfoy. He, Harry Potter, was in love with Draco Malfoy. He puzzled over it, thought about it constantly. It was the first thing he thought about when he woke up in the morning and the last thing he thought about when he went to bed at night. He thought about it while he was in class, while he was eating his meals, while Ron was killing him at chess, while Malfoy zoomed him around the Slytherin common room to the delight of his housemates. And he thought about it while he was in the shower. In fact, he thought about it when he was in the shower a lot, especially the part about what it might be like to kiss Malfoy, to touch him. Yes, the shower was the ideal place for such musings.

Then Harry stopped puzzling about it and just accepted it. The how and why of it didn't matter. He was in love with Malfoy and that was that. All that mattered now was what he was going to do about it.

The main problem as he saw it was, while Harry had come to see Malfoy in a whole new light, for Malfoy, Harry was exactly who he had always been – the enemy. If Harry hoped for anything to really change between them, he needed to spend time with Malfoy as Harry and not as a rabbit. This was complicated somewhat by the fact that he had very few legitimate reasons to be around Malfoy. Not to mention that Malfoy still shot death glares at Harry every time their eyes happened to meet.

Well, he'd just have to start small. Really small. Like maybe saying hello.

Harry put the plan into motion the next day. Walking into the Great Hall, he slowed as he passed the Slytherin table, hoping to catch Malfoy's eye. Sure enough, the other boy looked up.

And scowled.

“What the fuck do you want, Potter?”

Hmmm. Not a promising start. “Erm, nothing. Just, you know, on my way to have some breakfast.”

“Well then, by all means, don’t let me stop you,” Malfoy sneered and turned back to his toast, waving Harry away as if he were a nuisance he didn’t want to deal with. Which he probably was, frankly.

Harry nodded but didn’t move.

After a moment, Malfoy gave an irritated huff and glared up at Harry. “Potter.”

“Yes?”

“Gryffindor table’s that way,” he said, pointing.

“Right. Right.” Harry nodded again and then once more and then went to take a seat at his own table.

Ron and Hermione looked at him with stunned expressions.

“What was all that about?”

“What?” Harry asked innocently, hoping to just gloss over the whole thing.

Ron gave him an incredulous look. “Um, you talking to the ferret?”

“Oh, that. It was nothing.”

“Harry, is something going on?” Hermione asked gently.

Harry felt panic swoop up from his stomach. “What! What would be going on?”

“I don’t know. You haven’t seemed yourself since we came back from holiday.”

“No, I’m fine.”

“She’s right, mate. You’ve seemed a little distracted.”

“Really? Oh.” Harry cast around for a something to explain his behaviour other than being in love with Malfoy. “Um, well, I guess, I, um. I guess I’ve just been thinking that this is our last year here and it’s half over and I’ll, um, really be sad to leave Hogwarts. You know. It’s been my only real home.”

Hermione’s eyes went big and soft at his words and then she threw her arms around his neck. “Oh, Harry. We’ll help you make a real home. One you’ll never have to leave. It will be warm and full of love and everything you ever wanted. You’ll see.”

He pat her back awkwardly, feeling guilty at all the lies. Through the brown fuzz of Hermione’s hair, he caught sight of Malfoy. The blond boy seemed to be watching him, his lip curled in distaste. No, best not to tell them the truth. Not just yet anyway. Best not to tell anyone the truth for a while.

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Part 3

hd inspiration for jamie2109 (3)

Author: Anonymous

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Title: He Was He and I Was Bunny (Part 3 of 4)

He Was He and I Was Bunny Part 3 of 4

A few weeks and several dozen attempts at conversation later, Harry was getting nowhere. In fact, judging by the content of his rantings to Bunny, Malfoy seemed more annoyed with Harry than ever.

“I’m telling you, Bunny, I think something happened to Potter during the final battle. Dark Lord scrambled his brains or something before he snuffed it. Today he actually asked me if he could borrow a quill. Borrow a quill! What the fuck is that? Did he actually think I was going to give him my property, like we’re friends or something? Besides which, it’s not as if Granger doesn’t go around with a spare quill or fifty. I swear, he’s very disturbed. Probably dangerously so. They should really put out a bulletin about it or something, make people aware of the threat.”

Harry felt the pressure of time. It was already February. He only had a few months to get Draco to warm up to him and with the way things were going, even a few years wouldn’t be long enough. No, he needed to step up his game. He had to find some way to get Malfoy to spend time with him, entice him with something he wanted, something he couldn’t say no to. He wracked his brain, trying to think of something he had that Malfoy wanted.

And then he had it. It was perfect. It was something Malfoy wanted, and what was more, it was something Harry wanted too. So even if things didn’t work out with Malfoy, he’d still feel really good

about it. But if it did work out…

Now all he had to do was get Malfoy to talk to him long enough to pitch the idea.

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Draco had barely had a chance to put a slice of toast on his plate before he felt someone standing over him, radiating impatience and anxiety. This seemed to be happening more and more lately and frankly, it was starting to put him off breakfast.

“Potter,” he said without looking up from his toast, “I know it’s challenging for you but it’s actually quite easy to tell our tables apart. Yours is the one crowded by a hundred fawning idiots, drooling all over themselves in an attempt to be noticed by one of Gryffindor’s many heroes. Ours is the table people avoid as though we were serving the plague for breakfast. Though really, if you find it so confusing, I’m sure one of your many admirers would gladly escort you to all your meals.”

“I need to talk to you,” Potter said in that blunt, urgent way he had. Honestly, Draco’s wit was completely lost on the idiot.

“You are talking to me.”

“No, I mean, I need to talk to you about something.”

Draco shook his head and turned to face the other boy. As usual, Potter looked like he had just wrestled a kneazle. He had to do it on purpose. No one could go about looking that bad by accident. “Potter, do you even understand the concept of a conversation?

“Look, just, meet me in the library after class.”

“Why? Just because you say so?”

“Come on, Malfoy.”

“Really, Potter. I know you’re used to the whole world following you around blindly, pissing themselves every time you deign to look at them but you can’t just demand that people meet you places without an explanation.”

“I just gave you an explanation. I need to talk to you.”

“And I’ll say it again: We are talking.”

“God! Why do you have to be so – Look, I just, I would like to talk to you and I would like to do it someplace private. I have an idea I think you’re really going to like.”

“The improbability of that is so huge it borders on infinite.”

“Please, Malfoy.”

Draco made the mistake of looking Potter right in the eyes. Those wide green eyes, hopeful but a little guarded as though anticipating rejection. Draco felt himself melt just a little. Fuck.

“Fine. I’ll give you ten minutes. But not in the library. I don’t want anyone seeing us together.”

Potter rolled his eyes but looked pleased nonetheless. “Fine. Where then?”

“You know the empty classroom on the third floor? Beside the tapestry with the woodland nymphs and the deer? I’ll meet you there. Not tonight though. Tonight I’m busy. I’ll meet you tomorrow night. Be there at eight. Sharp, I won’t wait around for you. And I can’t promise not to hex you if whatever you have to tell me isn’t worth my time.”

Of course Draco wasn’t busy at all. He just had no intention of making anything easy on Potter.

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Draco made a point of arriving fifteen minutes late. He pushed open the door to the empty classroom to find Potter pacing nervously, chewing on his thumbnail.

“That’s a dirty habit, you know.”

Potter looked up, startled. For a split second he looked relieved to see Draco but almost immediately panic flitted across his face. Then he visibly struggled to push it down and plastered a grotesque, half-manic grin on his face.

“Merlin, Potter. Are you having some sort of attack or something?”

“What? No, I’m fine. I’m… fine.”

“Eloquent as ever I see.” Draco hopped up on an old table. “So, I haven’t got all night. Out with it. What do you want?”

Potter was quiet for a minute. Then he took a deep breath and crossed the room to sit on a desk opposite Draco. He seemed to have another brief burst of panic and settled. Draco waited, too fascinated by Potter’s wildly fluctuating emotions to snark about the delay. He was used to seeing Potter

emotional, the bloody prat wore his heart on his sleeve with an abundance of Gryffindor pride, but he wasn't used to seeing Potter so nervous and out of control. It was quite peculiar.

"So," Potter began at last, his voice surprisingly steady, though his gaze was locked on his hands, which were twisting nervously in his lap. "I've been thinking a lot about Slytherin and the way you guys are being treated this year."

Draco wasn't sure what he expected Potter to say but it definitely hadn't been that.

"Oh?"

"Yes. I'm not blind. I can see the way the rest of the school is basically shutting you out, either ignoring you or bullying you."

"And you expect me to believe you care about this?"

"Of course I care!" Potter said, his head snapping up, green eyes blazing. "It's just blind prejudice. Voldemort was able to rise to power because of prejudice, playing on it, bending people's biases to his own purposes. This is just the same thing all over again."

"Let me get this straight. You think that by the rest of the school hating Slytherin, they're paving the way for another Dark Lord?"

"In a way, I guess. I mean, it's dangerous to let hatred fester. It starts off as childish grudges but it turns into something much more dangerous along the way. I would have thought you of all people would understand that."

He wasn't sure whether Potter was referring to the time in sixth year when Potter had nearly killed him or Draco's own miserable stint as a Death Eater. Since he had no desire to talk about either, however, he let the remark go. "So this is a Potter the Hero thing? Saving the wizarding world once wasn't enough for

you?”

“No! I mean, no, it’s not like that.” He sighed heavily, pushing a hand through his hair. “It’s just not right. And if we can do something to make it right, we should.”

“We?”

“Well, I thought you might be willing to help me.”

“And why would you think that?”

Potter gave an exasperated sigh, which pleased Draco immensely. He really did enjoy getting under Potter’s skin. “Because they’re your house. And I’ve seen you around them. I know you care.”

“Let’s say for a moment that you’re right, that I do care. What is it you’re proposing we do about it?”

“Well, I think it’s time we make a visible attempt at reintegrating Slytherin back into Hogwarts. I figured the best way to start was for us to be seen spending time together.”

“Us? Like me and you?”

“Yeah. I mean, everyone knows we hated each other.”

“Hate, Potter. Active tense. I hate you.”

“Fine, you hate me. The point is, I think if the school sees we’ve gotten over it, maybe some of the others will follow our example.”

“You mean follow the example of the Boy Who Lived.”

“Well, yes. I suppose that is what I mean. But is that such a bad thing? If my reputation can help, why not use it, right?

“Well, what did you have in mind then?”

“Breakfast.”

“Breakfast,” Draco repeated doubtfully.

“Yes, breakfast. You and me, tomorrow morning, Slytherin table.”

“Potter, people aren’t going to buy it. They aren’t going to believe we’re best mates just because we sit together at a meal.”

“They don’t have to. It’s not like we’re trying to trick everyone into thinking we’re friends. We just need them to see us working on it. If people ask, we’ll just tell them we’re trying to put past prejudices behind us. Of course, it will work better if you at least look like you’re open to the idea. You might want to work on not looking like you want to vomit or stab something every time you look at me.”

“I make no promises. I’ll sit beside you. I’ll do my best to look like I’m not hating every second of it but there are limits to even my considerable acting skills. But I promise to at least try.”

“Well, what more can I ask?” Harry said wryly, but Draco noticed he was grinning just the same.

That night Draco curled up with Bunny and mulled over the situation. Really, it was a good plan. Actions

spoke louder than words; Potter's company would do much more for Slytherin than flowery speeches or admonishments to all get along would. The only downside Draco could see was that he had to spend time with the moron. He had no idea what they would talk about. He was quite certain they had nothing in common. Of course, if there was one thing Draco had learned during the war, it was how to feign interest. He could nod along and laugh at appropriate times with the best of them. He was sure he could make it look convincing from the outside and that was all that mattered as far as the plan was concerned.

And of course he would have to be very careful about how much he actually looked at Potter. It would be no good for the prat to find out Draco had a crush on him.

"If only he didn't look like that, Bunny," Draco said with a heavy sigh. "If he didn't look like that then everything would be so much simpler."

9.

As it turned out, spending time with Potter wasn't nearly as horrible as Draco thought it would be. They met at the entrance to the Great Hall as planned, entering together and sitting at the Slytherin table. Whispers broke out almost immediately, an escalating hum as though a swarm of angry bees had suddenly infested the room. They ignored it, focusing on appearing to enjoy each other's company.

At first it was awkward as all fuck. Whereas all the other tables were buzzing with conversation, almost everyone at the Slytherin table had fallen silent when Potter took his seat. The younger ones were staring openly, mouths agape and eyes wide. Draco's year-mates were less shocked – he had given them a heads-up about Potter joining them for breakfast. Needless to say, they had been less than pleased with the prospect of breakfasting with the Boy Who Lived. Despite the advance warning, however, most of his friends seemed incapable of carrying on as normal with Potter in their midst. Bulstrode and Nott were both attacking their food with vigour, apparently having decided eating was the safest course of action. Daphne, who was usually quite chatty in the mornings, was drinking her tea slowly and watching Draco with narrowed eyes. Blaise was glancing through the Daily Prophet as he always did, giving every appearance of ignoring the whole situation.

Potter was uncomfortable, if the way he was mangling his eggs on his plate was any indication. “So, er, you’re a quiet bunch,” the Gryffindor said with a lame attempt at a smile.

“Not usually,” Draco grumbled.

“Oh,” Harry said before lapsing into silence for several minutes. Then, “What do you lot usually talk about at breakfast?”

Draco opened his mouth to reply but Blaise beat him to it.

“Well,” Blaise said, casually reaching across Draco for a piece of toast. “I usually read the Prophet and discuss the day’s news with Theo and Daphne here. They’re both sharp as hell when it comes to politics and current events. Millicent isn’t much for conversation until after she’s eaten and had several cups of tea so the wise leave her alone. This one, though,” he nodded towards Draco, “usually starts his day by ranting about you. You know, how ugly your clothes are, how stupid your face is, and how much he hates you in general.”

For a moment Potter looked stunned. Draco groaned. Fuck, what a start. No more than ten minutes into the plan and they had blown it; the whole school seeing Potter screaming at him was unlikely to sway current opinions of Slytherin. He looked expectantly at Potter, waiting for the inevitable explosion of Gryffindor indignation.

It never came. Instead a huge smile broke over Potter’s face. He threw his head back and laughed and laughed. Draco had never seen Potter laugh like that before. He had only ever seen sardonic chuckles and snorts of contempt. This was a full, joyful laugh that flushed Potter’s face and shook his body. It was remarkable. And apparently contagious. A moment later, Blaise had joined in, followed shortly by Daphne and Nott. Several long moments passed before the laughter stopped. But by the time it did, everyone seemed much more comfortable. At the other end of the table, Draco saw the younger kids relax a little and return to their breakfasts, quiet chatter picking up again.

“Oh, shit,” Potter said, wiping tears from his eyes and sighing contentedly. “I needed that.” He dug into

his breakfast with relish. “C’mon, M’foy,” he mumbled around a mouthful of egg. “Don’t let me stop you. Let’s hear more about what you hate about me.”

Draco couldn’t help grinning. Potter grinned back, green eyes bright with amusement.

Spending time with Potter might not be so bad after all.

***

They had breakfast together every day for the next two weeks. They also had half a dozen study sessions in the library and spent five evenings walking around Hogwarts together being sure to frequent all the places where they would be seen by lots of students. As they had hoped, their new friendship had garnered lots of attention. Everywhere they went, heads turned. The hiss of whispers followed them through the corridors and into classrooms. Draco had encountered more than one scrap of parchment on the floor covered with scribbled speculations as to what was going on.

Amazingly enough, the plan was also starting to work in terms of improving the lives of his fellow Slytherins. Though the other students still weren’t talking to them or acknowledging them much, the number of pranks and fights seemed to be diminishing. Draco could already see a difference in the younger students. They seemed a bit more relaxed as they moved through the school, less like they expected to be attacked at any moment. And even though they still fought to cuddle Bunny in the common room every night, they seemed to cling to him less desperately, less in need of the solid, silent comfort of an animal friend.

No, the only problem with the way things were going was that Draco’s crush on the Potter was growing to rather alarming proportions.

The crush had started at the end of fourth year, his father’s fault actually, if truth be told. He had been sitting in his father’s study, listening with rapt attention as the man recounted how Harry Potter had spoiled what should have been the triumphant return of their Lord. Though his father reported Harry’s actions using less than glowing terms, Draco could see through to the truth of it. Harry Potter had stood

up against the Dark Lord when it had seemed hopeless, had refused to give in, fighting to the very end. And he had had ultimately bested Voldemort. At fourteen.

It didn't stop Draco from hating Potter. Stupid, gets-away-with-everything, too-good-to-brush-his-hair, has-Dumbledore-in-his-pocket Potter. But he could no longer deny that Potter was courageous and powerful and, Merlin help him, a little bit heroic. And the part of Draco that had grown up hero-worshipping Harry Potter right along with every other child in the wizarding world, the part of him that had shut down after Potter rejected his friendship on the Hogwarts Express, surged back to life.

It didn't help matters when Potter came back in fifth year surly and prone to fits of temper. Draco liked his boys with a bit fire in them. And it didn't help when Potter rebelled against Umbridge and her petty reign of terror. Draco liked his boys a little bit bad. And even though he hated Potter for getting his father landed in Azkaban, hated him for putting such a stain on the Malfoy name, he couldn't help but be impressed when he heard what had happened in the Department of Mysteries, how Potter had fought off the strongest of the Death Eaters, not to mention the Dark Lord himself. Again.

And it certainly didn't help when Potter came back for sixth year looking like sex on legs. Oh he had the same bird's nest of hair he always had, but somehow now it gave him that "just shagged" look rather than that "I have an intense brush phobia" look. His slight, spare frame had stretched and grown into a long, lean body that Draco was quite sure would feel hard and hot beneath his fingers. His eyes hadn't changed much. They had always been green and far too intense. But now they were focused on Draco constantly, angry and demanding, as though Potter were trying to rip answers from him by his look alone. No, it certainly didn't help anything, Potter walking around looking like that.

But Draco had still hated him. You could have a bit of a crush on someone for being hot and powerful without actually liking them. You could want someone to pound you through the mattress without wanting to actually talk to them. You could fantasize about someone while having sex with someone else without it meaning anything. They were just fantasies. It was just a crush. He hated Potter. Potter was dull and boring and too caught up in being good and righteous and irritating to be any fun at all, no matter what he looked like.

Except, as it turned out, he wasn't. Potter was sly and funny and could be quite charming with his unique blend of confidence, sincerity, and occasional naiveté. He was able to be wickedly sarcastic and ruthless in his humour, though he tended towards self-deprecation more than targeting others. He was slowly learning to turn that around. Slytherin camaraderie was based in (marginally) amiable attack, after all. He was also quite kind. Not that Draco found that sort of thing attractive, of course, but he couldn't help

noticing how well Harry got on with the younger Slytherins. He knew almost all of them by name after only two weeks and was going out of his way to make sure they felt comfortable around him.

And this Potter, who was witty and sharp, kind and attentive, powerful and confident and sexy as all fuck, well, this was a Potter who might well do him in. Because even though they might be working towards a common goal, even though they might be on friendlier terms than they had ever been before, even though he could sometimes swear Potter was flirting with him, if there was one thing Draco would stake his life on, it was that no Potter would ever want a Malfoy. Especially when that Potter was Harry and that Malfoy was him.

***

February gave way to March and March rolled into April. Harry's plan was going better than he ever could have dreamed possible. He and Malfoy were spending time together almost every day. While they still made a point of studying together and roaming the halls, more and more, they were just hanging out in the Slytherin common room. Often they didn't even plan it. Harry would just follow Malfoy back after dinner, sometimes bringing his homework, sometimes not, often staying until well past curfew. They would sit together on the long low sofa, sometimes with first years crawling all over them, sometimes with Zabini or Greengrass (both of whom radiated resentment and watched Harry with narrowed, suspicious eyes, clearly displeased by his presence in their lives), sometimes just by themselves.

The only tricky thing, of course, was Bunny. Where Harry was, Bunny couldn't be, obviously. And vice versa. And as much as Harry tried to spend time with the Slytherins in his animal form, Bunny's increasing absences were not going unnoticed.

"Draaaaaco," whined Calliope as she flopped down on the couch between Harry and Malfoy. "Where's Bunny?"

Malfoy made a show of being annoyed at her presence but Harry knew better. He had confessed to Bunny that he was rather fond of the diminutive Slytherin. Apparently, she reminded him quite strongly of Pansy Parkinson at that age. "I don't know. Maybe he's up in my room."

“He’s not. I already looked.”

Malfoy gave her a stern look. “Calli, you know you’re not allowed in the boys’ dorm.”

She pouted prettily and looked up at him with doe eyes. Bloody Slytherins learned to manipulate early, Harry thought with a grin. “I know, but I had to go look. I miss him.”

“Good try but that’s not going to work on me. If I hear about you going up there again, there’ll be detention.”

“But Draco –”

“No buts. If Bunny’s up there, it’s because he needs a break from you lot, anyway. Malicious little ankle-biters.” Calliope stuck her tongue out at him. Malfoy rolled his eyes. “In fact, I think that sounds like a good idea. Come on, Potter. Let’s take our leave of the nursery crowd here.”

Calliope threw herself into Harry’s lap, winding her arms around his neck and giving Draco a glare that would have made Salazar himself proud. “No! It’s bad enough that Bunny’s not here. Don’t take Harry, too! You’re so mean, Draco!”

“Yeah, Draco,” Harry laughed. “You’re so mean.”

Malfoy calmly removed the girl from Harry’s lap, a clear look of disappointment on his face. “Calli, I know it may be difficult to tell from how things are going this year, but Slytherin is a proud and noble house. We are blessed with many admirable qualities. We are clever, we are ruthless, we are devilishly good-looking and, above all else, we do not like Harry Potter. True, we are no longer actively trying to kill him but we do not like him and we certainly do not drape ourselves all over him as though we were of the pathetic, mewling masses who worship him for being disfigured and not dying.”

Calliope ignored most of his words, cutting through to the contradiction underneath. “But you’re friends with him.”

She looked over at Harry then and Malfoy dropped him a quick wink over her head. “No, I only appear to be friends with him in order to bolster Slytherin’s reputation amongst the other houses.” Calliope turned to give Malfoy a doubtful look. “You don’t believe me? Ask Potter then. He’ll tell you. We’re only pretend friends, aren’t we, Potter?”

“Is that true? You’re just pretending to be friends with us? Don’t you like us?” She seemed to be playing along but Harry thought he caught a note of honest worry in her voice.

He smiled warmly at her. “Well, it’s true I’m only pretending to be friends with Malfoy here. Really, who could like someone who is that taken with his own hair? But the rest of you, no, that’s the real deal. And you especially. I’m mad for you.”

At that, Calliope launched herself at Harry, almost knocking him over with her hug. Malfoy sighed as he pulled the girl off Harry again and set her on the floor. Then he was tugging on Harry’s arm, pulling him off the sofa and leading him across the common room.

It was different being in the Slytherin dorm in his human form. He had never really noticed how similar it was to the Gryffindor dorm. From Bunny’s perspective, he had always been overwhelmed by the green bedding. But seeing it now, Draco’s room looked almost identical to Harry’s room. Same beds, same cupboards, same linens and hangings, only the colours were different. After the drama of the common room, it seemed a little anticlimactic. Just a dorm like any other. Harry found he rather liked it, though. It reminded him that the Slytherins weren’t really so different after all. They were just students at a school, like everybody else.

Harry noticed Zabini seated on what was presumably his own bed, reading a book. His presence quickly cut off the pleasant daydreams Harry had been entertaining about being in Malfoy’s room. Malfoy had been talking to Bunny quite a bit about how displeased Zabini was with his new friendship with Harry. Not that Harry needed to be told this. It was quite plain from the way Zabini glared at him every time he walked into the room.

As if on cue, Zabini looked up, took in Harry's presence and scowled. Then he turned to Malfoy and glared. Malfoy didn't see it, however. He had dropped to his knees and was currently looking under his bed. Harry was quite sure he was looking for Bunny.

"Bringing your new friend to your bedroom now, Draco?" Blaise's voice dripped with innuendo and he continued to glower in their direction.

"Whatever," Malfoy replied in a bored tone. "We're just taking a break from the amateurish machinations of Calliope Jones. I hope her mother has the sense to teach her some good contraception charms because in a couple of years, that one's going to be all kinds of trouble. You mark my words." He stood up, frowning. "You haven't seen Bunny have you? Potter still hasn't met him. I swear, Potter, it's like he knows you're coming and runs away. Fuck, I love that bunny. Best pet ever, hands down."

Harry rolled his eyes.

"So Potter's here to see your rabbit," Zabini drawled. "Is that what you kids are calling it these days?"

Zabini's tone was not playful. As far as either of the Slytherins was aware, Harry had no knowledge of Malfoy's sexual preference. If Zabini kept this up, it was bound to cause tension and possibly raise some questions Harry was sure Malfoy didn't want to answer.

Harry glanced nervously at Malfoy but Malfoy just rolled his eyes, playing Zabini's comments off as a weak attempt at humour.

Zabini, however, was not so easily deterred. "Perhaps I should leave you two alone then. I mean, I know how this routine goes after all." He leered obviously at Malfoy.

That made Malfoy's mouth tighten into a grim line. Seeming pleased that he had finally gotten under his friend's skin, Zabini smiled wolfishly. With a slow stretch, he rose from his bed and sauntered over to

where Harry and Malfoy stood.

“Come on, Draco,” he continued. “Everyone knows you only bring people back to the dorm to fuck. We’ve seen you do it a hundred times at least. We all know your pattern. Me better than anyone.”

Malfoy’s eyes shot to Harry, nervous, before turning back to glare at Zabini. “Shut up, Blaise.”

“Though I have to say, I’m a little surprised. Harry Potter? How very common. Though I suppose, given the current political climate, he is quite a catch. Fucking the Saviour of the Wizarding World will go a long way toward rebuilding the Malfoy name. Perhaps your parents will be so pleased they won’t care their only child and sole heir is bent.”

It felt as though all the air was sucked out of the room with those words. A deafening silence crashed down over them. Malfoy went very still, his body rigid with anger. Harry watched as the muscles in his jaw clenched and his hands curled into fists. Zabini’s eyes gleamed with triumph.

“What?” Zabini asked, all exaggerated innocence. “Didn’t your boy wonder here know you liked cock?”

Zabini looked at Harry, who carefully kept his expression blank, and smirked.

“Oh my. I’m sorry, Draco.” Zabini was clearly enjoying himself now. “You two have been so close lately, naturally I assumed he knew everything. How very awkward for you.”

Malfoy was trembling now. Harry had a feeling he was a hair’s breadth away from losing control. He didn’t even look at his friend as he spoke, his eyes closed tight. “Get out, Blaise. Now.”

“But I haven’t finished my book.”

Then Malfoy’s eyes snapped open, flashing dangerously. “Get the fuck out now or I swear I will rip off

your balls and shove them down your throat. And that will just be to start."

Zabini smirked again, but Harry noticed he moved towards the door just the same, his eyes never leaving Malfoy. "No need to get testy. I'll go. Leave you boys to talk things over, hmmm?"

The door closed with a click. Malfoy sat heavily on his bed, his face very pale, his hands shaking slightly. Slowly, Harry sat next to him, careful to watch for any signs his presence wasn't welcome. When none came, he shifted a bit closer. He could hear Malfoy's breathing, shaky and shallow.

"It's okay, Malfoy. I'm not going to tell anyone. Not if you don't want me to."

Malfoy said nothing, his eyes fixed on the floor. Long moments passed, the silence stretching out between them, becoming heavy and uncomfortable. Harry began to wonder if he had misread Malfoy, if the other boy did in fact want him to leave.

He stood up from the bed, unsure what to do. "Um, look, I can go if you just want to be by yourself. I'll come by –"

"It's not true," Malfoy interrupted, his voice low and flat, "what Blaise said."

Harry blinked, startled at the sound of Malfoy's voice. "What? About you being gay?"

Malfoy shook his head impatiently. "The other part."

"Erm, about you fancying me?"

Malfoy rolled his eyes but didn't look at Harry. "The part about me using you to help my family. It's not true."

“I know that, Malfoy.”

“It’s just, I was joking about it downstairs with Calliope and then Blaise said pretty much the same thing and I want you to know it’s not true. I know this started as an agreement to fix a problem we both thought needed fixing but…” he trailed off awkwardly, obviously not wanting to say the words aloud.

Harry was oddly touched. Out of everything that had been said, Malfoy was most concerned that Harry would think his friendship false. He sat back down on the bed, his knee bumping against Malfoy’s leg. “I know. We’re mates, right? I mean, friends, for real.”

Malfoy nodded. He looked miserable. He still wouldn’t look Harry in the eye.

Harry laid a hand on Malfoy’s shoulder. “Look, I get the feeling you could use a bit of space at the moment. Why don’t I head out, I’ll see you tomorrow for breakfast, yeah?”

Malfoy sighed, looking slightly relieved at the suggestion. “Yeah, that would be good.”

“Okay then.” He rose again. “And try not to worry too much. It really will be okay.”

“Yeah, maybe,” Malfoy said tiredly, flopping down onto his bed.

Harry paused at the door, looking back over his shoulder. “Malfoy?”

“Yeah?”

“The other things Blaise said? It would be okay, you know, if they were true. More than okay, even.”

Draco's head snapped up, his eyes wide as he looked at Harry. Harry grinned at him and then slipped out the door.

10.

After leaving Malfoy to his thoughts, Harry almost instantly started to worry. What if he had read the situation wrong? Sure, Malfoy had said some things to Bunny that suggested he might not be totally averse to the idea of being with Harry. Except that he had never actually mentioned Harry by name. He only spoken in very vague terms about some "he" Malfoy was sure wouldn't appreciate his attention. And yes, Zabini had said Malfoy had a crush on Harry. But he suspected Zabini would have been more than willing to lie about that if he thought it would add to the tension of the situation. Harry had been so sure of himself as he tossed out his sly words on his way out the door but as he made his way back to Gryffindor Tower, his confidence dwindled.

It didn't help that Malfoy didn't show up for breakfast the next day. And it certainly didn't help that he apparently skipped lunch as well. They didn't have any classes together that day and Harry didn't catch a glimpse of the familiar blond head in any of the hallways despite looking very thoroughly. He just needed to see him, just get a quick look at his face. He'd know in the instant if it had been a mistake or not if he could just bloody see him!

Harry was so on edge about the situation that he was snapping at everyone. By the time evening rolled around all of his friends were giving him wide berth, no one wanting to be a convenient target for his foul temper. Alone, Harry made his way down to the Great Hall for dinner, his stomach in knots. He was sure Malfoy wouldn't be there; he had begun to suspect the Slytherin was avoiding him. He didn't even bother to look around for him as he dragged himself down the hall. Fuck, if he had been wrong, if Malfoy didn't have any interest in him at all…

He was so lost in his gloomy musings he didn't notice someone coming up behind him. One moment he was staring at his feet scuffing along the stone floor, the next he was being shoved into a dark alcove, his back pushed up against the wall, his head bouncing painfully off the stones. Harry blinked rapidly and

Malfoy's face came into focus.

Harry knew that kissing boys was different from kissing girls. Kissing girls was nice, there was no doubt about that. He had loved kissing Ginny. Kissing her had been like sinking into a bath – warm, comforting, and sensual. He could have kissed her for hours and never grown bored. But as much as he had liked Ginny and as much as he had enjoyed kissing her, the second Harry's lips touched Charlie Weasley's, Harry knew kissing girls would always be second-best. Even though Charlie's kisses had been gentle, they sent a heat through Harry's body that Ginny's most ardent kisses never had. Yes, Harry knew that kissing boys was different.

But kissing Draco Malfoy? That was something else entirely. There was nothing soft or gentle about it. Malfoy's hands were on his hips, grinding them back against the wall, pinning Harry in place. Malfoy's mouth was hot and brutal, his lips pushing Harry's open, taking what they wanted and demanding response. Sharp teeth bit at Harry's mouth, caught at his lips, at his tongue, closing down too hard on soft flesh. Harry moaned deep in his throat as desire unfurled with a heated fury, rushed up from his belly, melting his spine. He felt Malfoy grin against him at the sound before biting down again, even harder. Harry felt as though his skull would shatter with the want of it.

Harry returned the kiss urgently, body arching up even as his hands reached forward to pull Malfoy into him, slamming their bodies together with no coy pretense or restraint. He plunged his hands inside Malfoy's robes, pulling his shirt from his trousers so he could slide his hands along bare skin. He needed to feel Malfoy with nothing between them, to touch flesh, feel that flat, hard stomach, that strong back. Needed to feel skin and muscle and fucking Draco. And now Malfoy was moving against him, grinding him back further against the stones. Harry could feel their rough angles digging into his spine, his shoulder blades. But he didn't care. This was too good. This was better than anything, anything he had ever known.

Harry was lost in it, burning up in the heat of it, hot skin, hot hands, hot mouths. He was burning alive, everything he thought he was, everything he thought he knew consumed by the fire rising between them until all that was left was the desperate, aching need to keep kissing Malfoy forever.

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Draco liked to think he knew a great deal about kissing. He had kissed a lot of people after all, most of whom had been quite enthusiastic about his performance. He knew all the tricks – clever ways to swirl his tongue, just the right amount of pressure to use when sucking at soft lips, when to use teeth and when not to. And he had been kissed by some very talented people in turn. In fourth year, he had spent much of his time with a Durmstrang student whose tongue made Draco very much wish his mother had lost the fight about his schooling. The summer after his fifth year, Draco had worked out his anger about his father's imprisonment by sneaking out to clubs and getting off with strangers in bathrooms and back alleyways. Though most of these encounters were brief and easily forgotten, there was one young man, tall and blond with soulful brown eyes, who kissed Draco with such conviction that Draco had felt him on his lips for days afterwards. And then of course there was Blaise, who, for all of his many faults, had one of the wickedest mouths Draco had ever encountered. Yes, Draco was quite confident he knew most of what there was to know about kissing.

As it turned out, he was wrong. Very, very wrong.

He hadn't planned on kissing Potter. Or rather, he had still been in the process of planning it. The truth was, it was all he had been thinking about since the Gryffindor left his room the night before. Potter's parting words had been such a shock it had taken him several minutes to process them. And by then of course, Potter was long gone, having exited with a suave coolness Draco hadn't known he could achieve. And left to himself, Draco had a lot of time to think. He and Potter hadn't talked a lot about their love lives but Draco had definitely gotten the sense Potter wasn't all that experienced. How it was possible that the fucking Saviour of the Wizarding World was still a virgin was completely beyond him but Draco was almost positive this was the case. In fact, judging from what little Potter had told him, Draco could likely count the number of people the Boy Who Lived had kissed on one hand.

Which meant Potter was someone who took such things very seriously. For all of his rashness and physicality, Harry apparently moved very, very slowly when it came to sex. So, if he wanted this to last beyond a single snog, Draco would have to change his usual approach. It wouldn't do to just press Potter up against a wall somewhere and grope him like he was some kid at a bar. It needed to be a proper seduction, done slowly and with finesse. He had been so obsessed with thinking about this he had skipped meals and classes, instead sitting on his bed, plotting, daydreaming, and wanking.

The day seemed to flash by, Draco's hunger finally driving him from the dorms. He had to be careful how he treated Potter at dinner. He had to be subtle, he didn't want to scare him off, after all. But then, as Draco made his way down the hall, he had seen Potter walk by, fuck, looking like that and all his half-formed plans flew out the window. Draco found himself pushing Potter into the nearest dark corner,

pressing the other boy up against the wall, the exact thing he had sworn he wouldn't do.

And oh, bloody fuck. Just putting his hands on Potter's body was almost too much. The whole world seemed to drop away, his focus narrowing to their two bodies in the shadowy alcove. He felt oversensitive, open, every sensation magnified. Potter's quickening breath ghosting against his cheek, the feel of Potter's hipbones pressed against the palms of his hands, Potter's body trembling and straining as though the whole of his being was wrapped up in this brief pause, waiting, waiting for Draco's next move. Usually Draco would have drawn it out, let the anticipation build. But now, here, there was no thought of playing games. There was only the overwhelming immediacy of being this close to Potter and Draco was dangerously close to losing control.

Then his mouth was on Potter's and fuck, kissing Harry Potter was a fucking revelation.

It was nothing like anything he'd ever experienced. There was no calculated use of technique, no thought of skill or comparison to past lovers. There was only Potter. Potter's lips, Potter's tongue, Potter's body moving against his own. Draco was consumed by a fierce, driving need to grab and take and have and have and have. And fuck but kissing had never felt like this. He wanted to devour Potter, make the Gryffindor his so completely that neither one of them would ever doubt it.

Too much, too much. A vague thought came, breaking through the haze of desire. You'll scare him off. But Potter was moaning into Draco's mouth and grabbing for his body and it wasn't too much at all. And Draco felt himself grinning, grinning, like a fucking idiot at the sheer brilliance of it. Potter's hands had worked their way under Draco's clothes, strong, calloused fingers dragging across his flesh like brands, leaving a burning path in their wake and Potter was kissing him like he would die if he didn't. It felt deep and barely contained and maybe it was too much after all because Draco could feel himself spinning wildly apart, breaking down completely from the raw honesty of it.

This is all I've ever wanted. All I've ever fucking wanted. Harry fucking Potter.

And there, in the alcove, pressed so close to Potter there was no room for even a breath between them, Draco knew that nothing could ever, ever be the same.

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The few couple of weeks passed in blissful haze. Every second that he wasn't in class he was with Harry (as Potter insisted Draco now call him; "If you're going to grope my arse, Draco," he had said, "the least you can do is call me by my given name."). He wanted to be near him all the time, to have his hands on Harry, to have his mouth on Harry, as much as possible. It wasn't easy. While the school was well aware of their friendship by now, Draco wasn't ready for everyone to know about this latest development. So they did their best to find quiet places. Slytherin House was out; Draco couldn't trust Blaise not to do something stupid. And Gryffindor Tower was definitely out. The couple of times Draco had ventured into Harry's common room, he had been met with barely contained hostility. While Harry was now well-liked by much of Slytherin, Draco was all too aware the Gryffindors only tolerated his presence to avoid Harry's wrath. He was quite certain that, should Harry ever leave the room, he would find himself on the receiving ends of some fairly nasty hexes in short order.

Luckily, they lived in an old castle with lots of hidden nooks. The back corners of the library were quite serviceable, especially when they added the privacy of Harry's Invisibility Cloak. More convenient than atmospheric, there was the stationery cupboard up on the fourth floor. There was also the abandoned classroom on the third floor but others knew about it too so it was a little risky. And of course, there was the Room of Requirement, but it was hard to come by. All of the former DA members and the students who had lived there the year previous knew about the room, so it was often in use. But they managed to snag it one Saturday afternoon and had four hours of uninterrupted snogging in total comfort. Draco couldn't remember the last time he had spent so long just kissing, lost in the feel of someone else without it turning to sex. Not that he didn't want it to turn to sex, of course, but he had a feeling it was too soon for Harry. And since the kissing was every bit as soul-shattering as it had been that first day, Draco wasn't about to complain.

No, there was really nothing to complain about at all. Except…

Except that he seemed to be feeling an awful lot these days. This was not that unusual. Despite his icy reputation, Draco had always been a bit on the emotional side. He was quick to laugh, quicker to anger, and prone to moodiness. He often struggled to keep his feelings under control or at least from showing on his face. But this, now, these feelings, they were different than his usual emotional spectrum. Every time he saw Harry, his whole body blazed with lust, which he was quite familiar with, and something else, something warm and affectionate and, Merlin help him, tender. He tried to ignore it, write it off as a hormonal glitch but the more time he spent with Harry, the harder it was to dismiss. This thing with

Harry, it seemed to matter to Draco. In fact, it seemed to matter a whole fucking lot and Draco wasn't entirely sure if that wasn't a problem.

He lay on his bed, Bunny snuggled up on his chest, mulling it over. So maybe he cared for Harry a little more than he'd like to admit, so what? It's not like it was a forever thing. How ridiculous would that be? Him and Harry Potter. The Malfoy heir and the Chosen One. The Death Eater and the Saviour. No, it was just a teenage fling, a school-boy love affair. They'd have a few months together, maybe they'd fuck, then they'd finish school and go their separate ways. And Harry would forget about him and he would, well maybe not forget but he would move on anyway and it would just fade away. No, it wasn't a forever thing. Not even a little. Not at all.

"Except it sure feels like a forever thing, Bunny," he whispered, stroking the soft black fur. "I am so completely fucked."

11.

As April drew to a close, the evenings finally became warm enough that Draco could return to his favourite tree by the lake. Several times, Harry came with him, conversation drifting into kissing, then back into conversation, then back into kissing. Twice he sat out by himself, his head tilted back towards the stars, letting their brilliance silence the chatter in his mind. Mostly, though, he came with Bunny. He had missed their quiet evenings, petting the silky ears and spilling out whatever thoughts were crowding his head that night. And Bunny seemed to have missed it too, judging from how eagerly he burrowed into Draco's arms, how contently he sprawled in his lap.

Bunny also seemed to have missed running free. Draco wasn't surprised by this; even he felt cooped up after the long winter months in the castle. Watching Bunny tear around the pitch like a thing possessed made him laugh out loud. He couldn't resist joining in, running across the lawn, not even close to catching the rabbit but giving chase nonetheless. He hoped Bunny would let Draco take him home in June. They would have fun running the grounds of the Manor together.

He was lying on his back, catching his breath, and mulling over how to best go about hiding Bunny from

his mother when he saw it, a great swooping shadow looming in the night sky. An owl, wings spread, claws extended. Hunting. In an instant, he was on his feet, eyes searching out Bunny. There he was, in the middle of the pitch, gambolling about like a little furry fool, no clue that his life was about five seconds from over.

Draco shouted to Bunny, starting to run, fumbling for his wand. He didn't know whether to cast some kind of protection spell on Bunny or stun the owl. He tried each in turn, missing both times, both animals moving too fast, the night too dark to see well. Bunny was running now, aiming for the cover of the nearby stands. He was fast, so fast, little more than a blur in the night. But the owl was faster. Draco could see it. Bunny wasn't going to make it in time. The owl was closing in, only a few feet away, now less, those claws so close, so close to Bunny's body …

Then several things happened at once and time seemed to slow so Draco could see them all perfectly. Red streaked through the night as he cried out one last attempt at a stunning spell and this one hit the mark. The owl flew backwards, knocked off its trajectory by the force of Draco's spell, falling to the ground with a heavy thunk. Bunny, not knowing the threat had been neutralized, turned in on himself and seemed to almost tremble for a moment before he began to stretch out. And out and out in a way that defied all reason. Strong back legs lengthened impossibly, shoulders broadened, front paws elongated into hands and arms, ears shrunk down, disappearing into a thatch of messy black hair that Draco would know anywhere.

Harry.

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Harry watched in dull horror as Draco's face paled to ash and then reddened, anger flooding his features. Oh fuck. Oh fuck.

"Draco, I –"

"Shut up! Just shut up!"

Harry shut his mouth with an audible clack. He watched Draco anxiously, looking to take his cues from the other boy. Unfortunately, all he saw there was growing rage.

“All this time? All this time you were Bunny?”

Harry nodded, his eyes never leaving Draco’s face.

Draco squeezed his eyes shut. “You fucking bastard! You bloody miserable fuck!”

“Draco, I’m sorry.”

“No! I said shut up and I meant it. I don’t want to hear your voice. Merlin, I hate you. Harry fucking Potter.”

Harry winced. It had been a long time since he had heard Draco say his name like that, spitting it out like it was something foul. Draco looked like he was going to say more but then apparently changed his mind. Turning abruptly, he started to march back towards the castle.

Harry was on his feet in a flash, his hand catching Draco’s arm. “Wait.”

The Slytherin shook him off angrily. “Get the fuck off me, Potter. Don’t you dare fucking touch me.”

“Please. I can explain.”

“Explain?” Draco rounded on him, incredulous. “You can explain? You can explain how you’ve been lying to me for months, spying on me, invading my privacy for your own amusement, pretending to be my friend, pretending to be more than my friend, manipulating me for fuck knows what reason other than

to humiliate me I suppose. You can explain all that, can you? Fine. Go ahead then. Explain it to me."

Harry stood dumbly, reaching desperately for words he couldn't find.

Draco sneered. "Yeah that's what I thought."

He turned to go. Harry stepped in front of him, blocking his path. Draco tried to move around him but Harry moved with him, determined to keep from leaving until he'd had a chance to make things right.

Draco huffed his impatience. "Get out of my way, Potter."

"No."

"I mean it. I will hex your arse into next year if you don't get out of the way right the fuck now."

"Please, give me a chance. I can explain if you'll just give me a minute."

"We both know you don't have anything to say that can explain this. Get out of my way."

"No."

Draco looked at him, seething with fury and Harry prepared himself to be hexed. But then Draco's shoulders sagged and his face seemed to crumple. For a moment, Harry thought the other boy was going to fall to the ground. He reached out a steadying hand, but Draco shook him off again.

"I don't get it." Draco's voice was small. Harry felt something in his chest clench at the sound of it. "Why did you do this? If you hate me so much, why did you help me last summer? If you wanted to see me

punished for Dumbledore, for being a Death Eater, that was your big chance. I was off to Azkaban before you stepped in with your testimony."

"I never wanted you to go to Azkaban, Draco. You didn't deserve it. You don't deserve it."

Draco's head snapped up at Harry's words, his eyes like ice. "But I deserve this? Sure maybe not prison, but I needed to be punished somehow, right? So you decided to take the whole thing into your own hands. Keep me out of Azkaban but make sure I still got mine in the end."

"Of course not! I wouldn't do that!" Harry insisted. Oh god, this was going all wrong.

"The thing I don't get is why bother with the friendship? You got all my secrets out of me as Bunny, why…" He trailed off and then his eyes widened with understanding. "You saw me with Blaise. You knew. You knew the whole fucking time! That's what this whole thing has been about. You saw us just before Christmas hols and then you came back and you were in my face, wanting to talk to me, trying to get under my skin. And then when that didn't work, you came up with your stupid little plan. Convinced me to hang out with. You let me think you wanted to help Slytherin, help me. Fuck, you let me think you wanted to be friends, more than –

"What was the plan then, Potter? Get me to care for you, admit to having feelings for you and then laugh in my face? Or maybe you wanted me to suck your cock first, maybe bend over for you so you could tell all your friends how you fucked Draco Malfoy up the arse, get a right laugh out of it? Was that it? Harry Potter fucks Draco Malfoy over, figuratively and literally, the ultimate schoolboy revenge."

Harry shook his head. "No, Draco. No."

"Fuck, I can't believe I fucking fell for it! How could I have been so stupid to think you –"

"Please. You've got it all wrong." Harry felt desperate. He had to make Draco understand. "There's no plot here, no plan to expose you or humiliate you or anything like that. I am your friend."

Draco snorted.

“I know. I know what it looks like but you have to believe me, I never meant for this to happen. Please, Draco. These last few weeks, they’ve been great. More than I ever thought I could have. I –”

“No. These last few weeks have been a lie. It’s all been a lie. I –”

His words cut off. Something cold and hard settled in his face. Harry could see it, see Draco shutting down in front of him, closing Harry out, probably for good.

He would not let that happen. He would not lose this.

“It hasn’t been a lie,” he whispered fiercely. He took Draco’s face in his hands and kissed him, desperately, longingly, trying to put every bit of feeling he had for the other boy into the kiss, hoping it could convey what his clumsy words could not. For a moment, it seemed like he was getting through. Draco’s body seemed to soften somehow, the ominous tension leaving his shoulders, and then he was leaning in towards Harry, returning the kiss. Harry could have cried with relief. It was going to be all right. Draco was kissing him back and it was going to be all right.

But then Draco pulled back roughly, wiping at his mouth with the back of his hand. He glared at Harry for a moment and then turned to leave. Harry reached out again but this time, Draco didn’t let himself get pulled back. This time, instead of shaking off Harry’s hand, he turned around swinging, his fist connecting with Harry’s face. Pain exploded behind Harry’s eyes and he dropped to the ground. He hadn’t yet recovered from the shock of it when he felt Draco’s foot drive into his stomach. He curled up protectively, but not before Draco landed one more solid kick. Harry moaned, his whole body flaring with pain. Squinting up, he could see Draco standing over him, his expression stony.

“Stay away from me, Potter. If you ever come near me again, I will fucking kill you.”

And then he was gone.

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Part 4hd inspiration for jamie2109 (4)

Author: Anonymous

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Title: He Was He and I Was Bunny (Part 4 of 4)

He Was He and I Was Bunny Part 4 of 4

Harry stumbled through the next couple of weeks in a numb fog. He had done his best to heal himself but had still shown up to breakfast that first day with a noticeable black eye. Paired with the fact that Harry was eating with the Gryffindors and Draco looked ready to kill anyone who so much as breathed in his direction, it was pretty clear to everyone something had happened between them. But given the looks of pity and confusion coming at him from the Slytherin table, Harry was pretty sure Draco hadn't told anyone what had happened. And if he wanted to keep it quiet, so would Harry.

Not that people made this easy. Slytherins and Gryffindors alike approached him constantly to find out what had happened. While his friends were among the most persistent, Hermione in particular, it was the Slytherins he had a hard time refusing explanations. Especially the younger ones, who were plainly afraid Draco's falling out with Harry would result in them being targeted by bullies again. He tried his best to assure them this wouldn't happen but he couldn't help feeling he had let them down.

Draco refused all of Harry's attempts to talk to him. He sent back owls unopened, Incendio'd notes Harry tried to slip to him in class, and was virtually absent from all of his usual hang-outs. He managed to keep considerable distance between himself and Harry in the hallways and common areas. When Harry tried to approach him at dinner, Draco simply got up from the table and left, his meal untouched. He had also changed the password to the Slytherin quarters and apparently threatened dismemberment to anyone

who let Harry in. Try as Harry might, he could find no way around the wall Draco had put between them.

He slept poorly, dreaming often of Draco. He always woke feeling miserable and missing the Slytherin. His chest constantly felt tight and his head ached from all the tension he held in his body. He tried to throw himself into classes, NEWTs were in a few weeks after all, but he had trouble concentrating. Hermione was trying her best to coach him through revision but he knew she was starting to lose her patience with his wandering attention. Ron, who had been less than thrilled by Harry's friendship with Draco, seemed reluctant to even approach the topic as if embarrassed by Harry's obvious pining.

The final straw came one morning at breakfast. Harry was gazing wistfully at the Slytheirn table when he noticed Zabini watching him. Seeing he had Harry's attention, Zabini edged closer to Draco and curled his hand around the back of Draco's neck in a very deliberate and unmistakable gesture of possession. And then, his eyes locked on Harry's, he smirked. Harry was scrabbling across tables in a flash, knocking Zabini to the floor before anyone even knew what was happening. But before he could even get a decent punch in, Ron was pulling him back and Nott and Greengrass had swooped in to see to Zabini. Draco remained in his seat, staring blankly at Harry for a moment before returning to his breakfast.

Wrenching out of Ron's arms, Harry left the room. He ended up out by the lake, under the tree where he had sat with Draco so many nights. He stayed there all day, ignoring his grumbling stomach and the curious looks from students walking by. When evening fell, he remained, despite the chill in the air.

It was dark when he felt a warm cloak being wrapped around his shoulders. He looked up in surprise and saw Hermione. She gave him a small smile and settled in next to him.

"Are you in love with Malfoy?" she asked softly.

He looked at her in alarm. "How did you know?"

"Harry, you weren't even this upset when Ron left us last year. It has to be more than just a fight between friends that has you down."

“Does everybody know?”

“No, I don’t think so. I don’t think they even had their heads wrapped around you two being friends. The idea that you could be more than that would never occur to them. Do you want to tell me what happened?”

“Oh, Hermione. I fucked everything up.”

They talked for a long time, Harry telling her everything, all the way back to Fred’s funeral. He glossed over the part with Charlie, but the look on Hermione’s face told him she wasn’t fooled. He’d have to remember that she was too perceptive by half. When he came to the end of the story, he found he could barely look at her.

“Harry,” she said and waited until he looked at her to continue. “Why do you think Malfoy’s so mad at you?”

Harry gave her a look. Hadn’t she been listening? “Um, because I lied to him for months? Because I spied on him? Because I betrayed his trust?”

“That’s part of it, yes, but I don’t think that’s really what’s got him so upset.”

“No, Hermione, I’m pretty sure that’s really it. He told me so himself.”

She shook her head slightly, muttering, “Boys.”

“I heard that, you know.”

She rolled her eyes. “Malfoy made himself vulnerable to you. Or rather to Bunny. He shared things with you as a rabbit that he never would have shared with you as Harry. You’re a boy, you know how boys are

– they tell personal things to pets or ghosts or possibly girls who are friends, but not other boys, never mind erstwhile nemeses. He's been exposed and not by his choosing. You have knowledge of hidden parts of him without his permission, do you see? And worse still, he obviously cares for you. From his behaviour over the last few weeks, I'd say he cares very deeply for you or he wouldn't be so angry. He thinks it was all a game to you, just some way to humiliate him. And that's why he's angry. Because he gave to you, knowingly and unknowingly, probably more than he's ever given anyone and he thinks it meant nothing to you."

"But that's not true –"

"I know, Harry."

"If I could just get him to talk to me…"

Hermione gave him a long, thoughtful look. "I think I can get him to talk to you."

He looked at her in surprise.

"But it's not going to be pleasant and I'm not going to do it until you've thought about what you're going to say. It won't help anything if I get him alone with you only to have you stand there mumbling incoherently and looking pathetic."

He gave her a dirty look.

"I'll tell you what. You let me know when you're ready and I'll take care of the rest, okay?"

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Four days later, he was ready.

“Are you sure about this, Harry?” Hermione asked. “It seems like an awfully big risk.”

Harry nodded firmly. “I’m sure. I’ve thought about it a lot. You were right about Draco being vulnerable against his will. And if I’m going to make it up to him, I have to make myself just as vulnerable.”

“But Harry, he could go straight to the press.”

“I know that.”

“You don’t care?”

“I care. I just care about Draco more. I mean, before, keeping my secrets mattered for the war. Me being discredited or made to look foolish in the press hurt our cause. But now, well, I might be humiliated if he shares the things he learns about me, but it’s only me that will get hurt. And that’s a risk I’m willing to take.”

She looked doubtful but nodded slowly anyway. “If you’re sure then.”

“I am. Just get him here.”

12.

Draco met Granger in front of the Room of Requirement at seven o'clock precisely, as agreed. He still couldn't believe he was there. He had no interest in anything Harry had to say. But Granger had been very persuasive – almost Slytherin, really – in her approach. Rather than appealing to his feelings for Harry, she fought dirty, guilting him heavily, reminding him of how many of Harry's loved ones had been hurt by Draco's family. How his father had almost killed Ginny Weasley, how his aunt had killed Harry's godfather, how Bill Weasley's face had been ravaged thanks to Draco, how she herself had been tortured in Draco's own home. Then she brought up the fact that Harry had saved Draco's life, twice, and helped keep him out of Azkaban. She mixed a few threats in along the way, making vague allusions to the extensive Dark Arts knowledge she had accrued over the last few years and the fact that many people felt very protective of Harry. Finally, she finished with an appeal to his practical side, promising that Harry would leave him alone after this, which in itself almost made it worth it. He was tired of leaving dinner without eating.

She showed him into the Room of Requirement. The first thing he noticed was that Harry wasn't there. Draco let out a sigh of relief. He really hadn't wanted to see him. The second thing he noticed was the large stone basin sitting atop a table in the middle of the room. Neatly arranged along one side of the table were at least two dozen phials, each filled with swirling, silvery liquid.

"He just wants you to look at them," Granger said brusquely. "As many as you're willing to. They're in order."

She left, closing the door behind her.

Draco looked at the neat rows of phials. It was going to be a long night. Sighing heavily, he poured the contents of the first phial into the Pensieve and lowered his head into the basin.

He found himself in what he could only assume was a Muggle house. None of the pictures moved and there was a room full of strange contraptions he knew Muggles used to prepare food. The place was repulsive, the décor tacky and common. There seemed to be an abundance of dried floral arrangements and ceramic bric-a-brac. It reeked of people trying to present above their station.

Draco was so caught up in the hideousness of it that he almost didn't notice the skinny, messy-haired child sitting in the corner. Harry. Who else could it be?

Harry was sitting quietly, a picture book in his hands. It was fairly beat-up; many of the pages were torn or had been scribbled on. Still, he wore a small smile on his face and seemed to be enjoying himself. He didn't look more than four years old. Suddenly, a large blond boy, who looked closer to a small whale than a child, barreled into the room. He was running carelessly, not looking where he was going. He slammed straight into an end table, knocking a lamp off balance, sending it shattering to the floor.

Within seconds, a sharp-faced woman appeared. "What was that? What broke?"

Draco noticed, with some surprise, that she was directing her questions at Harry. Who had gone very pale, tears already forming in his big, green eyes.

"It wasn't me, Aunt Petunia," his voice wobbled. "I was just sitting here with my book, honest."

"He's lying, Mummy," the whale-child piped up. "He knocked over the lamp. He did it on purpose. I saw him."

"First you break my things and then you lie to cover it up?" Harry's aunt shrieked.

Harry shook his head no. Tears were rolling down his cheeks but she didn't seem to notice. She had hoisted him up by the arm and was marching him across the room. She opened the door to the cupboard under the stairs and shoved him inside. Draco followed, crouching beside Harry in the small space. "You stay there until morning. Maybe then you'll think twice before you misbehave."

Then she closed the door. It was so dark, only a bit of light seeping in under the door. Draco heard a bolt slide shut. Four-year-old Harry curled up into a ball on the cold, bare floor and wept.

The next memory showed the same cramped cupboard. There was a mattress in it now, some small toys, mostly broken, and a few childish drawings. A bare light bulb illuminated the dank space. A slightly older Harry lay shivering under a thin blanket, his face pale and sweaty. He was clearly quite sick. A sudden coughing fit racked his thin frame. A voice shouted from the next room, "Stop making so much blasted

noise, boy."

An old playground came next. Harry, perhaps nine years old, as skinny and runty as ever, was being held by two older boys while the massive blond one – his cousin, presumably – punched him repeatedly.

Now they were in a bedroom. There were bars on the windows. Harry was lying on his bed, staring at the ceiling. This was sometime after he had started at Hogwarts; his snowy owl was in a cage beside him. Long moments passed. Draco waited for something happened. And then realised nothing was going to happen. This was what Harry wanted him to see. This had been his life. Many minutes later, there was a rattling of china as a tray was pushed through a small flap in the door. The meal was astonishingly small and grim. No wonder Harry had always looked so thin at the start of the school year.

In the next scene, Harry was much older. He appeared to be saying good-bye to his family, a witch and wizard looking on. There was a great deal of arguing and some disparaging comments about the wizarding community. It was quite clear Harry's aunt and uncle couldn't care less what happened to him. His cousin offered his hand. From Harry's stunned expression, Draco gathered this was not a regular occurrence.

So this had been Harry's family. Despite himself, Draco felt his stomach churn in anger.

The next few phials showed scenes in a different house, a bustling, crowded house full of red-haired people. It had to be the Weasleys' place. These scenes were full of loud voices and laughter. Mrs Weasley stuffed Harry full of food and ruffled his hair. The twins dragged him into their plots, whispering in dark corners. Harry and Ron Weasley played wizard chess and Exploding Snap; they talked late into the night in the darkness of their room. Everyone smiled at Harry and seemed genuinely pleased to have him there. Draco understood what Harry was trying to show him. Contrasted with his Muggle relatives, it was clear why Harry valued the Weasleys so much.

The memories went on, illustrating Harry's life. There was no particular pattern to them. Some were happy: spending time with his friends at Hogwarts, flying on his Firebolt, opening presents at Christmas. Some were embarrassing: Harry and Cho Chang at Madam Puddifoot's, arguing about Hermione Granger while pink confetti fell around them. Some were terrifying: battling the basilisk in what had to be the Chamber of Secrets, facing the dragon during the Tri-Wizard Tournament. Some were devastating: watching Sirius Black fall through the arch in the Ministry, Harry in the Forbidden Forest with the shades

of a woman and three men, walking towards his own death.

After what seemed like hours, the memories seemed to catch up to current time. Draco watched as Harry first discovered his Animagus form, saw him tripping over himself as he attempted to move in his new body. He saw Harry happening upon him the night Draco visited Dumbledore's tomb. It hadn't been planned then, that first meeting. He saw himself and Bunny sitting under their tree. His own face looked happy, relaxed. Bunny was sprawled out gracelessly on his lap, not a care in the world.

He saw Harry kissing a red-haired man, a Weasley clearly. Fuck, how many of them did Harry get off with? There was a Christmas tree in the room. Holidays then. Right before everything had started between them. He watched as Harry broke the kiss, mumbling. Harry and the Weasley talked about kissing the wrong person, about Harry being involved with someone else, someone who he wasn't sure took the relationship as seriously as he did. Draco was startled when he realised Harry was talking about him.

Finally, Draco came to the last four phials. They were set a bit apart from the others. One by one, he watched them.

He saw Harry kissing Ginny Weasley. He saw Harry kissing Charlie Weasley. He saw Harry kissing him. It was immediately obvious what Harry wanted him to see. His kiss with Draco was nothing like the kisses he shared with either of the Weasleys. He seemed to enjoy kissing them, quite a lot actually, but those kisses were quieter somehow, more contained. By comparison, the kiss Harry shared with Draco was desperate, needy and full of heat. Watching it, he could almost feel that kiss on his lips; feel the way Harry kissed him as if his whole life depended on it. Harry's hands moved against Draco's body with an urgency completely lacking in the other memories and his eyes were dark with desire when he looked at Draco.

The last phial showed the two of them together by the lake, Harry in his human form snuggled tight against Draco's side. They were talking, Draco's fingers gently running through Harry's wild hair. As much as he'd like to deny it, Draco was forced to recognise the tenderness of the gesture. He watched as Harry cuddled closer to him and sighed contentedly. He seemed peaceful. When he looked up at Draco, the emotion in his face was undeniable. Draco understood why Harry had saved this memory for last. This quiet scene was everything Harry wanted, everything he'd been denied for most of his life: peace, comfort, acceptance, love. However badly Harry had handled the situation, his feelings for Draco were very real and very important to him.

Which meant Draco had some serious thinking to do.

Reaching for the first phial, he poured it once more into the Pensieve and bent his head to watch it all again.

13.

Harry didn't sleep at all that night. He sat by the fire until the small hours of the morning, his eyes glued to the Marauder's Map, watching the small dot that said, "Draco Malfoy." Draco stayed in the Room of Requirement until almost five in the morning. Harry didn't know if this was a good sign or a bad sign. Harry would have stayed staring at the map all day if Hermione hadn't come and nagged him into going down for breakfast.

"Whatever his decision is, Harry, you're not going to change anything by sitting here, starving yourself," she said in an exasperated tone.

Draco was not at breakfast, nor was he in Potions. He did appear at lunch though. Harry's stomach dropped as soon as he caught sight of the Slytherin. Draco caught his eye and gave him a long, thoughtful look. Then he turned to his meal and didn't look at Harry again. Harry had no idea what it meant. It wasn't the hateful sneer he had feared but it wasn't exactly rushing to him with open arms either. Harry went back to his dorm, skipping the remainder of his classes and dinner. He couldn't handle seeing Draco like that and not knowing how he felt.

Unfortunately for Harry, Draco seemed to be taking his time with things and, after another day of skipping classes and sneaking off to the kitchens for food, Harry still hadn't heard from him. So he returned to his routine and his studies and tried not to think about it. Not that he was very successful, but he tried nonetheless.

Several days later, Harry was sitting with Ron and Hermione in the library, the table covered with textbooks and revision notes. With NEWTs just around the corner, Hermione was in full panic-mode, babbling incessantly about all the things she didn't know, damning the inadequate resources of the Hogwarts library, and nervously cramming quills into her hair. Ron, who had decided to join George in running Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes, was taking a more laid-back approach to the situation, and was asleep in his chair. Harry stared dully at the book in front of him and hoped that defeating Voldemort was enough to get him into Auror training. There was no way he was going to pass his Potions exam.

His miserable musings were interrupted when Calliope appeared at his elbow, looking vaguely anxious.

"Hi, Harry," she said softly, earning her a glare from Hermione.

He pulled her into a one-armed hug. "Hey, Calli. What's up?"

She looked nervously at Hermione and then whispered as quietly as she could, "Draco asked me to give you this."

She produced a note from her pocket. Harry took it, his heart in his throat.

"I hope you two make up soon," she said. "I really miss you. Slytherin isn't the same without you around. And Draco's grumpy all the time."

"I miss you too," Harry said, squeezing her again. "I'll tell you what, no matter what happens with me and Draco, this Saturday, let's you and me have a picnic out by the lake."

Her eyes lit up. "Really?"

"Yes, really," Harry said with a smile. "You come out to the big oak tree at one o'clock and I'll have lunch for us."

He watched as she scampered happily off and then eagerly opened the note.

H.

Meet me tonight. 9:00. The usual spot.

D.

Hmmm. Not much to go on, though the use of H. and D. was better than P. and M., he supposed. He looked at his watch. Seven-thirty. Still an hour and a half to go.

He tried to get back to studying but he felt like he was going to crawl out of his skin, he was so anxious. By eight o'clock, he couldn't take it anymore. He excused himself, Hermione's dire predictions regarding the consequences of inadequate exam preparation ringing in his ears as he left the library. Stopping to get a cloak, Harry went out to the lake. The night was clear and cold. He cast a warming charm as he settled onto the grass, stretching his legs out in front of him and propping himself up on his elbows. Tilting his head back, he watched the stars gleaming in the night sky.

Some time later, a figure stood over him, blotting out the view.

Draco.

***

Draco watched impassively as Harry scrambled to his feet. He looked nervous, like an accused man waiting for the verdict to be read. Draco frowned and Harry's face fell.

"You know you're a total arse," Draco said after a minute.

"Yeah, I know," Harry mumbled, his eyes on his shoes.

"You know I'm a total arse, too, right?"

Harry's head snapped up, hope flitting briefly across his face. "What do you mean?"

"I mean I won't change my opinions just to please you and your friends. I may not be so much about pure-blood supremacy these days but that doesn't mean I'm joining Granger's bloody crusade to free house-elves and I'll always believe there should be a law against Weasleys breeding. I'll say things that make you cringe and embarrass you in front of your friends and I won't apologise for them. My parents will probably always hate you and your friends will certainly always hate me and, frankly, I couldn't give a shit about any of them, so don't be expecting me to try to build bridges.

"I'm very demanding. I'll need your full attention at all times; I'm used to people hanging on my every word. I'll not have you staring off into the distance, thinking Quidditch strategy while I'm talking. You're going to have to start dressing better because no boyfriend of mine is going around looking like he pulled his clothes out of a giant's arse. I require daily compliments and presents on a regular basis. And not shitty presents, thoughtful presents. Or at least expensive presents. And there'll have to be a lot of sex. Real sex, not "only at night, under the covers, with the lights off" Gryffindor sex. Do you think you can handle all that?"

There was a brief pause where Harry looked like he'd been hit by a Bludger. Then he broke into a smile so wide it threatened to split his face. Seeing it, Draco felt just a bit dizzy. Harry was so fucking beautiful.

“Yeah, I think I can handle all that.”

“Good,” Draco said with a firm nod. “Now kiss me. I’ve been going fucking crazy without you.”

The words had no sooner left his lips than Harry was on him, crushing Draco tight against his body. Harry’s mouth was hot and wet and he was kissing him with that searing kiss that Draco had come to need like he needed air to breathe. It had all been worth it. All the pain and the anger, all the years of maddening frustration over the fact that someone could get under his skin like that, could make him rant and scream and want so badly he ached with it even though he couldn’t do anything about it … It had all been worth it to get to this moment when Harry Potter was kissing him and it was for good.

Then Harry’s hands were moving on his body and all thought fled from his mind. There was only the need to get his hands on Harry right now, to get under the layers of clothes and touch skin. He pulled roughly at Harry’s clothes and Harry was doing the same to him and Draco began to fear he that he was going to come in his pants, long before Harry went anywhere near his cock. And now Harry’s hand was under Draco’s shirt, sliding up over his chest, dragging across nipples, back down across his stomach, trailing towards the waistband of his trousers.

“Oh and Draco?” Harry said, his fingers edging under the fabric. “I don’t know where you’re getting your information about Gryffindor sex, but I fear you’ve been seriously misinformed.”

“Really?” he replied, a bit breathless. “Well, you’ll just have to set me straight then, won’t you?”

14.

Harry’s first thought was to head to the Room of Requirement but by the time they reached the castle, he had changed his mind. When it became obvious they were heading towards the dungeons, Draco gave him a curious look but he said nothing, letting Harry lead the way. They stopped outside the entrance to Slytherin House and Harry turned to face Draco. He knew how he wanted this to happen,

but only if Draco wanted it to be that way too.

“Do you want to keep this a secret?” he asked. “I’ll go along with whatever you want.”

“No,” Draco said quickly. “After what you showed me in the Pensieve – No, I’m not going to pretend where you’re concerned. I’m done keeping secrets.”

Harry felt a goofy grin break out over his face.

Draco gave the password. As the door opened, Harry grabbed his hand and fairly dragged him through the common room. He saw the startled expressions of Draco’s housemates. Several looked happy to see Harry, were about to say hello when something about the look on his face stopped them.

Then they were in Draco’s dorm, the door closing behind them with a soft click. There was a quiet moment where they both just looked at each other. Draco’s eyes were dark and wide, his lips parted slightly, his hair falling forward into his eyes. Harry felt something rushing through him, a wild tangle of emotion that he couldn’t begin to understand but threatened to undo him just the same.

There was so much he wanted to say but none of it seemed as important as kissing Draco immediately, feeling that hot, wet mouth move against his own. Draco responded with fierce hunger, his lips tearing Harry’s kisses from him, leaving him breathless and aching. He heard the soft, needy noises coming from his own throat, heard Draco growl slightly in response, felt hands digging painfully into his hips.

Draco was guiding them back towards the bed and they fell against the mattress. The smell of Draco was everywhere, that familiar mix of wildflower shampoo, cologne, and something that was all his own, sensual and immediate, sinking into Harry’s skin, marking him as owned in a way that no words could deny.

“God, Draco,” he breathed. “Never wanted anything so much in my life.”

Draco stretched an arm out, waving his wand lazily as he cast a locking spell. He had just started incanting a silencing spell when Harry stopped him.

“No. No Silencing Charms. I want everyone to know exactly what’s going on in here.”

Draco raised his eyebrows at that, but let his wand fall from his hand without objection. “Guess I do have quite a bit to learn about Gryffindor sex.”

Harry grinned and rolled against Draco, loving the way the he groaned in response, the way his hands curled around Harry’s forearms in a death grip. And then Draco’s hips were pressing into him, his cock brushing against Harry’s through layers of fabric and Harry was lost in the sensations sparking through him.

It was only when Draco started to pull on the hem of Harry’s jumper that the reality of what was about to happen hit him. Nerves made a sudden appearance and he stiffened under Draco’s touch, breaking the mood. The Slytherin paused and gave him a questioning look.

He could feel his face heating, a deep blush stealing over his cheeks as he struggled to sitting. “Draco, you should know I’ve never…”

“With a man?” Draco asked easily; he didn’t seem all that surprised by Harry’s confession.

Harry looked away, embarrassed. “With anyone.”

“So this is your first time?”

“Yeah.”

He felt like an idiot. He shouldn’t have said anything, should have just fumbled his way through and

hoped for the best. Even if he had totally fucked it up, it couldn't have been any more embarrassing than this. Draco was going to think he was a freak, blushing and stuttering on about his virginity like a girl.

He dared a quick glance up. Draco was smiling.

When he saw Harry look at him, his smile grew. Then his hand was on the centre of Harry's chest, pushing him gently but insistently back down onto the bed. Draco stretched sensuously for a moment before leaning over Harry, a predatory smile on his face.

"You're telling me," Draco whispered, his voice a heated rasp, "that I get to be the first person to see your naked body spread out on the bed, the first person to brush my fingers over every inch of your skin? I get to be the first person to run my tongue up the inside of your quivering thighs, wrap my mouth around your gorgeous cock and suck you hard until you're begging for mercy?"

Harry's closed his eyes, his blood surging at Draco's words.

"You're telling me," Draco continued, his breath ghosting across Harry's skin, "that I get to be the first person to ever make your eyes roll back in your head as you feel the perfect tight heat of my arse clenched around your cock? The first person to make you feel so much pleasure you can't help but moan and shout and slam into me so hard you think we'll both break? The first person to rip an orgasm out of you so intense you'll swear you've gone blind?"

Harry shifted against the mattress in heated agitation and moaned softly as he nodded.

Draco leaned closer and ran his tongue over Harry's lips, soft and wet. "I think that is the fucking hottest thing I've ever heard in my life."

And then he was kissing Harry once more, long and slow and deep, pulling them back into the moment. Just when Harry was reaching the point where everything got thick and hazy, Draco drew back.

“So,” he said, giving Harry a wicked grin. “Silencing Charm, then?”

“Oh no,” Harry responded, letting a smirk come to his face. “No Silencing Charms. That part wasn’t me trying to seem experienced That part was me being a possessive bastard. I want everyone to know you’re mine. I want everyone to hear what I do to you, what you do to me.”

Harry was pretty sure Draco understood that by “everyone” he actually meant Blaise but neither of them said anything about that. Instead, Draco pulled Harry to him, their mouths crashing together, the kiss hard and bruising.

At last Draco broke away, panting. “Well then, let’s get to the part where you make me scream your name.”

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Four years Draco had been waiting for this, waiting for Harry Potter to touch him like this, kiss him like this, moan out his name in a needy whine. To think how close he had almost come to letting this go…

Draco felt like he couldn’t get Harry naked fast enough. The Gryffindor’s possessive streak was unexpected and insanely hot and Draco wanted nothing more than to have Harry’s cock in him now. He pushed roughly at Harry’s clothes, yanking his jumper off unceremoniously. He ran his hands over Harry’s chest, the smooth tawny skin, the pink nipples, the small red scar in the centre of his chest. He felt Harry shiver under his touch. He was so marvelously responsive. Draco couldn’t wait to see him twist and writhe.

Now Harry was pulling at Draco’s clothes, clumsily undoing buttons, tugging his shirt off. Impatient, Draco shook free of the garment, tossing it on the floor.

“Oh.”

Harry's voice was soft and startled, different from the low, urgent noises he had been making just a moment ago. Draco felt his stomach drop.

Fuck.

He didn't have to see Harry's face to know what he was looking at. Draco knew his body was on perfect display, the long, white scar that crossed his torso and the fading Dark Mark on his arm both clearly visible.

Harry would have known they were there of course. As Bunny, he'd seen Draco naked before, many times. But this was the first time they stood in front of each other as themselves and suddenly Draco was horribly conscious of what those marks meant. His right hand flew automatically to the Dark Mark, fingers stretching out wide in an unconscious attempt to block it from view.

Fuck.

Harry's face had paled and he was chewing his lip nervously. A shaky hand reached out to trace the fine white line that ran from Draco's heart to his left hip. Draco closed his eyes at the touch, memories of the girls' bathroom rushing up, threatening to overwhelm him.

"Draco, I –"

Draco's eyes snapped open. He knew they needed to deal with it, all of it, but he was damned if they were going to do it right then. He had waited too long for this moment to let old ghosts take it from them.

He let his hand fall away from the Mark and fixed Harry with a determined look. "Later, Harry."

“But I want –“

Draco cut him off. “We can talk about all of it, as much as you need to, I promise. Just later, okay?”

Harry nodded, but his fingers continued tracing Draco’s scar.

Draco took Harry’s hand and moved it from his chest to his cock, squeezing Harry’s fingers around his erection.

“Later,” he said firmly.

For a moment, Draco thought they wouldn’t recover from the abrupt intrusion of the past, but then Harry was pulling him down, his lips finding Draco’s, and everything else was swept away by the rising tide of heat and lust and dizzying pleasure.

The first orgasms came quickly; they were barely out of their clothes, hips grinding against each other, hands grasping and desperate. They paused only long enough for Draco to cast a cleaning spell before falling into each other again.

Draco’s feverish daydreams didn’t even come close the reality of being with Harry. It was everything he had imagined and nothing like what he expected. Despite his initial shyness and a bit of awkwardness due to inexperience, Harry was completely uninhibited, seemingly guided solely by instinct and feeling. He moved easily within contradictions, now aggressive, now tender, now yielding to Draco, now taking control. Harry shifted between moods and roles as naturally as waves shifting between ebb and flow. Unlike Draco’s past lovers, there was no concern for showmanship, no battle for dominance. With Harry, there was only sensation and emotion, washing over them, pulling them deeper into each other with each moment.

“Oh Draco, never knew, never knew, ah, yes, oh fuck, Dracodracodraco…”

“Fuck, Harry, so perfect, ah, just like that, Harry, so good…”

When Draco felt his second orgasm building, he slowed them down, determined to make this first time unforgettable for Harry. He had Harry turn over onto on his stomach. Draco took a minute to just look at him, even though it made Harry blush.

Harry was beautiful. Draco knew he would be but the sight of Harry’s naked form made Draco’s chest ache and his cock twitch nonetheless. Slowly, teasingly, he ran his fingers over Harry’s arms, legs, back, and neck, touching every inch of him. Draco massaged Harry’s strong shoulders, scratched along Harry’s scalp, traced Harry’s spine with his fingertips. He ghosted his hands over Harry’s arse, the insides of his thighs, the backs of his knees. Draco took in every jump, every shudder, every soft intake of breath, mapping Harry’s sensitive points, committing them to memory. Then he did it all again with his lips and tongue, lapping at the golden skin, nipping and mouthing at the curves and planes of Harry’s body.

Harry tensed slightly when Draco’s lips dragged up the back of his thigh to the curve of his arse.

“Draco, what are you –”

“Just trust me Harry. You’ll like it.”

With gentle hands, he spread Harry open.

“You are so gorgeous.”

Draco licked and sucked at Harry’s small, pink entrance, taking his time and enjoying every gasp and tremor he got in response. Gently, he added fingers, gauging Harry’s response carefully, wanting to bring only pleasure. Harry writhed beneath his touch, hands fisting in the sheets, breath coming in sharp pants. Draco smiled to himself and kept going, his tongue and fingers working together to drive Harry into a frenzy. It was only when Harry was swearing and moaning and thrusting back against his hand that Draco stopped.

“Turn over, Harry.”

Harry did. Draco drank in the sight of him, face flushed, green eyes clouded with desire, his hard cock jutting up towards his stomach. He knew Harry was close to the edge, knew that he shouldn’t push him but he couldn’t resist putting his mouth on that cock. Harry’s back arched and his hands flew up to grasp the headboard when Draco’s lips closed around him.

“Fuck, Draco, fuck, fuck, oh, so good…”

Draco felt Harry trembling, felt his hips pushing forward slightly. It was time to stop. He pulled back and Harry moaned his disappointment. Draco gave him a small grin before reaching under his bed to find the tube of lubricant.

He stretched out beside Harry. “Help me?”

“What do you want?” Harry whispered, his breathing ragged.

Everything. Everything.

“Just touch me.”

Harry did, running his hand across Draco’s chest, fingernails scratching lightly over his nipples until Draco moaned and twisted beneath the touch. Then Harry’s fingers were trailing over Draco’s stomach, circling his hipbones before finally wrapping around his cock. Draco gave himself a moment to revel in the feeling of Harry’s hand on him, the delicious tension in his groin building with each movement of those calloused fingers. Then Draco coated his own fingers in the sweet-smelling oil and reached around behind himself.

Harry sat up abruptly, hand falling still, eyes widening as he watched Draco's fingers disappearing into his body.

"Can I do that?" he whispered after a moment.

Draco groaned at the thought. "Oh fuck yes."

And then Harry's fingers were inside him, thrusting and twisting and brushing against that spot that turned Draco's bones molten and made stars explode behind his eyes. And oh fuck, but it felt good, so fucking good…

"Oh, Harry, fuck, just like that, Harry. Merlin, fuck, need more, more" he murmured, pushing back hard against Harry's fingers.

"Draco, I need to, need you. Can I?"

Draco nodded, too breathless to speak, and Harry was rolling them over, pressing open-mouthed kisses along Draco's throat, his teeth scraping across Draco's collarbone. Draco had his hands on Harry's cock, slicking him up, guiding him in place. And then Harry was pressing forward, slowly, carefully, his whole body shaking. Draco felt that familiar burn and hissed greedily, pulling Harry closer, taking him in.

The world seemed to fall away as Harry moved inside him, his mouth pressed against Draco's neck, his breath hot and wet against Draco's skin. One of Harry's hands snaked in between their bodies, closing around Draco's cock, moving in a clumsy rhythm that felt perfect anyway. Then Harry's hips began to move faster, thrusting harder and Draco's every nerve was set to blazing. His legs tightened around Harry, his hands roaming all over Harry's body, now on his shoulders, now on his waist, now in his hair, needing to touch, to feel, to have Harry, all of Harry. And Harry's head was lifting, his lips grazing across Draco's cheek and closing over his mouth and he was making soft noises that were swallowed by their kisses but Draco heard them just the same.

Harry came first, his eyes closed tight, his head thrown back with a strangled cry. Draco followed moments later, shouting as his orgasm tore through him, his vision fading almost to black before coming

back again. Then Harry collapsed against him, chest heaving, body trembling. He pressed mushy, uncoordinated kisses to Draco's face, neck and shoulders before rolling off him to lay together, sweaty and exhausted.

They stayed like that for a long while, limbs tangled together, their breathing calming until it was slow and even once more. A sated sleepiness crept over Draco and he drifted on the edge of awareness, not wanting to fall asleep but not wanting to lose this soft, peaceful feeling either. After a moment, he felt Harry shift beside him, felt fingers running through his hair gently, obvious tenderness in the touch.

Draco looked over and saw Harry watching him, his eyes full of soft wonder and something else, something shining and hopeful and too new to put into words. But Draco didn't need the words because he felt it too, a warmth flowing through him, winding around his heart, sinking into his very being.

15.

It had been a long week, filled with many angry and confused people. The news of their relationship had hit the papers far sooner than either Harry or Draco had expected. Draco's parents had descended on Hogwarts in a fury. Harry, at Draco's request, had waited outside the Headmistress's office while Draco met with them. After two hours of screaming, several threats about stripping Draco of his inheritance and a solid half-hour of tears from Narcissa, Draco stormed out. As far as Harry knew, they hadn't been in touch since. Most of Draco's friends were also surprised; he had hidden his orientation quite well. Blaise, of course, hadn't been surprised but was furious. Pansy, on the other hand, was quite pleased. At least that was how Draco interpreted her note, which read, "It's about damn time. P."

Of course, most of Gryffindor was in complete shock. The common room seemed to fall strangely silent every time Harry entered and eyes followed him everywhere. Much as Charlie had predicted, Ron took the news that Harry was gay in stride but had considerably more trouble accepting that Harry was dating Draco. Ginny still wouldn't look him in the eye, apparently having decided that he had lied to her about his sexual orientation throughout their entire relationship. Between studying for NEWTs and trying to smooth things over all round, Hermione was too stressed and snappish to actually talk to Harry much about what was going on. Only Neville seemed truly happy for him.

“Whatever it is that makes you happy, Harry, you deserve to have it,” he’d said, clapping a hand on Harry’s shoulder.

The thing that surprised Harry the most about the whole situation was how little he cared what other people thought about it. He was done letting others have a say in his life. He had put in his time for the greater good. From here on out, his life was just that: his. And so, while he did his best to hear his friends out and assure them that he did, in fact, know what he was doing, Harry spent most of his free time with Draco, naked and sweaty and happier than he’d ever been in his whole life.

Except of course, for Saturday afternoon, when he had a very important date. When Draco found out about it, he insisted on tagging along. Needless to say, Calliope was ecstatic to find her two favourite people waiting for her by the lake with a picnic basket full of goodies. It hadn’t taken long though for her bright smiles to give way to that pout Harry knew far too well.

He sighed. “What is it now, Calli?”

She threw up her hands dramatically. “I can’t believe you’re both leaving me here like this!”

Harry watched her flailing and felt a familiar mix of guilt, amusement and affection. “Sweetheart, you knew this was going to happen. You knew we’d have to part ways at the end of this year.”

“But it’s not fair!”

“I know but it’s how things are. After NEWTs, Draco and I are done with school. You still have six more years. Six more wonderful, fun years. You’re going to love them.”

“Yeah, right.” Calliope looked away, her face the perfect picture of pre-teen angst.

Harry gave a small sigh. Did Slytherins have special classes in melodrama? “It’ll be okay, Calli.”

“How do you know that? Maybe once you leave, everyone will start hating Slytherin again. It’ll be just like it was at the start of this year, when no one would even look at us except to pick on us and call us names.”

“It won’t be like that, I promise.”

Calliope muttered a sulky “sure” and looked away.

“How about this. If someone’s giving you a hard time, you write to me and I’ll show up and take care of them for you.”

“Harry,” Draco broke in. “She’s a Slytherin. She doesn’t need some Gryffindor swooping in to save the day.” He turned a winning smile on the girl. “You write to me, Calli, I’ll help you come up with a plan to destroy them.”

Harry frowned. “Nice, Draco.”

“What? It’s how we do things in my house. You ought to know that by now.”

He gave Harry a withering look. Harry gave him one back.

“You know, you can kiss if you want,” Calliope said.

Harry choked.

The girl rolled her eyes. “Everyone knows you two are together now. And it’s not like I’m a baby. You can kiss in front of me. I won’t freak out or anything.”

“I’ll bear that in mind,” Harry said dryly.

“Jane Carmichael says she’s going to sneak into your dorm room and get a picture to sell to the Prophet.”

Draco raised his eyebrows. “Oh, does she now?”

“Mmm, figures she’ll be able to get at least a hundred galleons for it; maybe more if you can see Harry’s arse.”

“What? What about my arse?” Draco asked, indignant.

And well he should be, Harry thought. Draco had the nicest arse he’d ever seen.

Calliope shrugged and shot him a cheeky grin. “I don’t know. I guess Malfoy arse isn’t worth as much. Harry’s the one who’s famous after all.” She tapped her forehead meaningfully.

“Yeah, well, it’s not like his arse has the scar on it,” Draco grumbled.

Harry bent his head, his mouth brushing Draco’s ear as he whispered, “I don’t know. It might after last night. Definitely has some teeth marks at least.”

He was thrilled when Draco actually blushed.

Calli watched the exchange with narrowed eyes. “What did you say?”

“Never you mind,” Draco replied brusquely and gave Harry a shove.

Later, after the picnic was done and Calliope had left, Harry and Draco remained stretched out under the tree. Harry had his head in Draco’s lap and was enjoying the feeling of Draco’s fingers running through his hair. The petting paused briefly as Draco’s fingers traced up the line of Harry’s nose and trailed over his forehead in the affectionate gesture that Harry knew so well but had never felt before on his own face.

He sighed contentedly. “This feels so much better this way.”

“Hmmm?”

“Than as Bunny. It feels so much better when you touch me like this.”

“Really? You always seemed to enjoy it when I pet bunny-you.”

“Oh, I did. But I like it even better when you pet me now.”

Draco smirked. “You don’t say?”

They fell into a comfortable silence as Draco continued to stroke Harry’s hair. Harry’s eyes drifted closed and he let Draco’s fingers soothe him into a drowsy state of total relaxation.

A few moments later, Draco heaved a dramatic sigh.

Reluctantly, Harry squinted up at him.

“You know the whole downside to this situation though, of course,” Draco said.

Harry wasn’t sure exactly what situation he meant but he assumed Draco was talking about them. “Romilda Vane trying to poison your food?”

“No, though that was annoying. Honestly, though, what was she thinking? Snape taught me how to sniff out poison when I was twelve. Gryffindors. Absolutely no flair for intrigue.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “So not Romilda Vane, then. How about your parents threatening to disown you?

“No.”

“The press?”

“No. That part I rather like. Unlike you, I have no problem with the spotlight. And it’s not as though I can blame the masses for clamouring to know every little thing about the glory that is me. No, the downside is that I have lost my one true confidant. Bunny was the only one who listened without judgment, the only one who I could tell anything to.”

“Draco, I am Bunny. You can tell me anything that you told your rabbit.”

“No, I can’t.”

“Of course, you can!” Harry said, mildly insulted.

“No, I can’t,” Draco insisted. “You know full well that much of my time with Bunny was spent ranting

about you. I can hardly rant about you to you."

"I don't know, you've always managed pretty well in the past."

Draco huffed, apparently annoyed at Harry's accurate assessment of his behaviour. "Yes, well, that was before. Obviously."

"Besides," Harry went on with a grin, "seems to me that a lot of that ranting was to cover up some unrequited lusting on your part. Maybe now that we're together, you won't need to rant about me so much."

"Harry, please, you may be my boyfriend but you are still Harry Potter. You still annoy me on a regular basis with your Gryffindorish tendencies and need to do good in the world. And your hair is still atrocious. I can guarantee daily ranting will be necessary for a long time to come. Hence the need for a new pet."

Harry ignored the assault on his character and hair. "Well, you seemed to really like Bunny. How about another rabbit?"

"No, you've ruined them for me. I'll never trust another bunny again."

"Dog?"

"Sirius Black."

"What's he got to do with it?"

"Can't trust a dog not to be an Animagus. No dogs, no cats, no bunnies, no rats."

“Bird?”

“Too creepy. I’m afraid they’re going to peck my eyes out with their pointy little beaks. Besides, I’m still traumatized from watching that owl nearly gut you.” Harry gave him a sheepish look and Draco kissed him lightly in response. “It’s okay. I’ll get over it. One day.”

“How about a toad?”

Draco was clearly horrified at the suggestion. “Please. Who am I? Longbottom? Honestly.”

“Fine, no toads. How about a snake?”

“So I can watch you two have conversations that I can’t understand? I don’t think so.”

Harry grinned. “How about a fer –”

“Say it and you won’t get another blowjob for a month.” Draco fixed him with a fierce glare. “Maybe more. Maybe a lot more.”

“Fish.”

“Fish are so not pets. No, I need something really exotic. Something on one else has. Like a unicorn or something.”

“Yeah, except that you have to be a virgin to get near one and well, didn’t that ship sail sometime back in fourth year?”

“Just because you’ve been bizarrely celibate most of your life…”

Harry smacked him and Draco laughed.

“Oh, it’s no use,” he said, brushing blond hair back from his eyes. “No one will ever be as good as Bunny.”

“You can still have Bunny, Draco. I don’t mind getting some cuddles in rabbit form every now and again.”

“No, there’s no point. It won’t be the same.”

“True. But you know, Draco, sometimes change is a good thing.”

“Hmmmmm.” Draco gave him a long, slow look. Then a small grin curved his lips, a glint coming into his eye. Harry knew that glint. It usually meant trouble. “Yes, well, speaking of change, when is it my turn to top?”

Harry startled at the words and tried to cover it by pretending he was aiming to brush errant blades of grass off his jumper. “Smooth segue, Draco.”

“Yes, yes, you’re very witty. And you needn’t bother with the little charade. I saw you jump.”

Harry sat up and attempted to look offended. “I did not!”

Draco rolled his eyes. “Oh, you so did. What’s the matter? The thought of taking it up the arse a little too much for you? Thought you Gryffindors were supposed to be all brave and adventurous.”

“It’s not and we are! I just thought you liked, um … you know…”

“I do like ‘um … you know,’” Draco said. “But that doesn’t mean I don’t like the other once in a while as well.”

“Oh, well…”

Draco leaned forward now, his hand creeping up Harry’s thigh. When Harry looked up, Draco’s face was very close to his, grey eyes shining with amusement and a hint of challenge. “You never know, Harry, you might like it. You’ve liked everything else we’ve done. And you know I’d make it good for you.”

“I’m sure you would.”

“Then what’s the problem?” Draco asked.

Yes, those eyes definitely held a challenge.

“There isn’t a problem,” Harry tossed back.

Draco smirked. “Scared, Potter?”

Ah. A different kind of challenge now. But Harry hadn’t forgotten. He remembered well that fateful duel in second-year. He knew his line.

He grinned at Draco. “You wish.”

A smile broke over Draco’s face at his words, wide and open. Seeing it, Harry felt his stomach swoop.

When Draco smiled, he was the most beautiful thing Harry had ever seen in his life.

Draco's hands were moving up Harry's body, sliding under the hem of his jumper. "Well then, let's head back to the castle and you can show me your Gryffindor courage."

"I'll tell you what," Harry said as he glanced around to make sure he was well-hidden from the view of any passing students. "I'll come back to your room and let you do whatever nasty thing your heart desires. If."

"If?"

"If you can catch me."

In a flash, Harry transformed into his rabbit form. With one mad leap in the air, he bolted towards the Quidditch pitch.

He heard Draco laugh and call out after him, "That's right. You run, Bunny. Because you better believe you're going to get it once I get my hands on you."

Harry laughed to himself as he zig-zagged across the lawn. He was going to make Draco work for it, to be sure, but he had every intention of getting caught.

~ The End ~