Title: Still Life in Wood and Parchment

Author: scrtkpr

Team: Canon

Prompt: Strength

Wordcount: 6,500

Rating: PG-13

Warnings: None

Summary: Twenty-two years ago, Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy turned their backs on the life they could have had. But they haven't forgotten; and they haven't guarded their secrets closely enough.

Author's Note More about the prompt "Strength" can be found here. Thank you to my wonderful betas.

3 July 2022

My parents are getting divorced. I should have seen it coming, but I didn't.

Lily's with mum, but I'm here with dad. He's got a new place, just outside Newbury. Closer to you, so at least it won't take us as long to owl each other. James says he won't stay with either of them—he's going to room with Teddy.

Dad's tearing the place apart looking for something and he won't tell me what it is.

Al

3 July 2022

I'm sorry, Al.

What makes you think you should have seen it coming? You hadn't mentioned anything.

Why doesn't he just Summon it?

Scorpius

+ + +

6 June 1998

Potter,

Imagine my surprise when my wand arrived today.

If you intended it as a birthday gift, it's a day late.

I feel compelled to point out, it's generally considered bad form to give people things that already belong to them. Though "I don't need this anymore" as a birthday greeting was touching, I'll admit.

So thank you for saving my life. Thank you for finally returning my wand. And thank you ever so much for

the testimony you gave last week.

I'm not sure what I enjoyed more—your detailed descriptions of how I sobbed and poured my heart out to a spotty ghost in the bathroom, or the way you mentioned on three separate occasions how my hand trembled as I pointed my wand at Dumbledore. Though I think my favourite bit might have to be your public statement that I was the most useless Death Eater you'd ever seen in your life.

You really want to do me a favour, Potter? Don't do me any more favours.

Draco Malfoy

+ + +

3 July 2022

I don't know. Things just haven't seemed the same these last few years. I think since about the time Lily started at Hogwarts. I remember that Christmas especially, they fought constantly.

What I don't understand is, now they don't seem upset with each other at all. They're getting along better than they have in years. If they can manage that, why can't they just stay married?

I asked him about Summoning, and he said there was a charm on it to prevent spells like that. And then he said it wasn't important. And then he spent another hour and a half looking for it. You know what it was? The little wooden box he keeps his old school assignments inside. Mum always gave him a hard time for being so sentimental about them. She said it didn't make sense, that he never cared that much about essays or marks. Do you suppose she's forgotten he insisted on naming me after his Headmaster and his Potions professor? He obviously has an unhealthy attachment to his school days.

Anyway, he thought he'd packed it with the other things from his study, but for some reason it was with

the sheets and blankets. And this is the man who runs the Auror department.

I suppose it's a good thing he's taking time off to spend with me this month and Lily in August. He can obviously do with it.

Al

+ + +

6 June 1999

Potter,

Seeing as it's been one year since you wrote to me last, I thought I'd mark the occasion by writing to you.

You certainly did take me at my word. No favours from you. You must know that the manor was raided on no less than three occasions, many of our possessions confiscated on the flimsiest of grounds, when surely a word from you would have put a stop to it? Then again, perhaps you didn't know. You have been keeping yourself quite busy, if the front page of the Prophet is anything to go by.

So how does it feel to be the youngest Auror in a century? Rather like our Quidditch days, I would imagine. The rules never have applied to you, have they? No training required for Harry Potter—why train him when he can help reorganise the department instead? Here you are, on a first name basis with the Minister, while after a year, no one in my family can get him to answer an owl.

You must be enjoying it. I would be.

Well, it may interest you to know, I managed to reclaim our stolen property, nevertheless. Or some portion of it. (At least one of your co-workers at the Ministry was rather more susceptible to bribery than

he ought to have been. I won't say which one, though. It wouldn't be sporting. Besides, you're such an excellent judge of character. I'm sure you have your eye on him already.)

It was odd, surprising my mother with her own belongings for her birthday. Now that I think of it, rather like my birthday last year. I must admit I was disappointed not to get anything from you this year, but I suppose you've run out of things you don't value to send to people for whom you have no respect.

Draco Malfoy

+ + +

11 July 2022

Dear Al,

Sorry for the delay.

Father took me to Rome last week, and we've only just returned.

I've grown rather tired of discussing which subjects I should take for NEWTs. He keeps going on about how the decisions I make when I'm young will affect the whole course of my life. As if he hasn't said that five hundred times before.

He's always telling me he'll support me in whatever profession I want to pursue, but I think he secretly wants me to do something important in the Ministry someday, like have a seat on the Wizengamot or even become Minister for Magic.

Wasn't your grandfather in the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts office? Perhaps he could put in a good word

for me there. (I'm joking, of course, but that would be hilarious, wouldn't it?)

Honestly, I think that you and I should do some traveling after our seventh year. Somewhere exciting. Father never takes me anywhere he thinks might be too dangerous. We could see those dragons your uncle told us about, that summer I was allowed to go to your birthday party. You remember, the one year your father failed to come up with a reason why it really wasn't a good idea for you to invite me, and my father failed to come up with a reason why it wouldn't be advisable for me to go? (What was your father's excuse this year? Has he realised yet that next year you'll be 17 and able to do whatever you choose?)

Don't get your knickers into a twist, Al, but why is it so important to you for your parents to live in the same house? If they're on better terms now, then surely that will mean less fighting at times when it is important for everyone to be together, such as during the hols? I know some people consider divorce a terrible thing, and perhaps I've just had more time to get used to it, but I actually enjoy spending July with Father and August with Mother. We're at Hogwarts for most of the year anyway, so where our parents live then doesn't really matter, does it?

Scorpius

P.S. Why would your father put protective spells on his old school assignments?

13 July 2022

You went to Rome and all you can be bothered to write about are NEWTs?

I think your idea about going to see the dragons is brilliant, though.

Dad said he really thought it would be a good idea to spend my birthday together as a family. Considering the divorce, it makes sense. They likely had it all planned out before we came home but waited a week to tell us. I'm not sure if they were doing it for themselves or for me, James, and Lily.

Maybe they just wanted to make sure they got some time with James.

Dad took me to a Quidditch match last week. He wanted James to come too, but he wouldn't.

As far as still spending holidays together as a family, you do realise that's not how divorce usually works, don't you? You said your parents always had separate bedrooms. I think when you left for Hogwarts, they just took it a step further. With my parents it's just—it's different.

You're right, though, we're away for most of the year at Hogwarts. And who knows? If my parents keep getting along this well, maybe we will still spend some holidays together. (That is, if James ever forgives the two of them enough to turn up.) But I miss having breakfasts together as a family. It'll take some getting used to.

Thing is, the divorce has upset my dad, much more than he's let on. I saw him last night, after he thought I'd gone to bed. He was reading through his old school stuff again, and his eyes were red, like he'd been crying. I've never seen my dad cry before.

Mum said they'd fallen out of love, that they still love each other but not like that. But that's obviously not the case for my dad. I don't understand how she could do this to him.

She's been writing to me nearly every day. She wants to make plans for when I stay with her in August, but I don't think I want to see her. Maybe I can talk dad into taking me and Lily to Rome instead.

Al

+ + +

27 June 1999

Potter,

Interesting article in the Prophet today. "Top Auror Trainees Rewarded With Early Promotions."

That wouldn't have anything to do with a couple early retirements I spotted on page 14, would it? Because those names looked familiar...

Honestly, I'm shocked. You must be really scraping the bottom of the barrel on your Ministry cleanup if a little abuse of power, misappropriation of Ministry resources, and susceptibility to bribery is meriting your attention.

I might be able to provide you with the name of one more person who would do well to consider early retirement. If the Ministry could find its way to returning my mother's tea service.

Draco Malfoy

+ + +

14 July 2022

Al,

I suppose I know what you mean about family breakfasts. And as I said, I've had much more time to get used to it. But whenever I miss things like that, I remember what my father said when he first told me about my parents' divorce.

He told me that family is the most important thing, but that there are many different kinds of family, and that you don't need to live in the same house to love each other, just as we all still loved one another

when I was at Hogwarts.

He said that we would always be a family, because he and Mother had me to tie them together.

Perhaps I'm strange, but it didn't really occur to me to feel too badly about it.

It's hard to say about your father (though if you only saw the red eyes, then technically you've still never seen him cry). People cry for a lot of reasons. Perhaps he just received a really bad mark once that he's never got over? Perhaps he's allergic to old parchment?

Really, though, are you sure they're just school essays? Seems like an odd thing to cry over.

Scorpius

+ + +

1 August 1999

Did you enjoy your birthday, Potter? My mother is enjoying her tea service, so thank you for that. (It was a little tasteless of you to point out so plainly that you were returning it despite the fact that the request came from me, but I'll overlook it.)

So what did you do to celebrate? Propose to that little Quidditch starlet of yours? She's been in the Prophet quite a bit herself in the last month. Fresh out of Hogwarts and already the "Hope of the Harpies". You must be so proud. She sounds almost heroic enough to deserve you.

However you celebrated, I'm sure my birthday wouldn't have measured up.

Tell me, how does it feel to have the perfect life?

Draco Malfoy

1 August 1999

I must say, Potter, I'm surprised at your candour. I'll attribute it to the hangover from which you're no doubt still suffering. (There are potions for that sort of thing, you know. Slughorn would be so disappointed in you.)

Do correct me if I'm mistaken, as I'm not sure I managed to decipher that near-illegible scrawl of yours. The Hope of the Harpies broke it off with you—tell me, was it the long distance relationship, or has her new celebrity gone to her head?—and in an attempt to console you, her brothers spent your birthday getting you disgustingly drunk. And then held an impromptu arm-wrestling contest. Which somehow—am I reading this correctly?—led to your house catching on fire. And now you have a hangover, a damaged kitchen, and a sore shoulder. (And no girlfriend, I might add.)

Well, I'm not too proud to admit when I'm wrong. You're right, Potter, that really doesn't sound like the best day, all around. If you want me to concede that you don't, in fact, lead a charmed life, however, you'll have to do better than that.

What I'm most interested in is your choice of activity for the evening. Arm wrestling? What are you, five? Leave it to Gryffindors to resort to brute force. There are other tests of strength, you know. Strength of magic, strength of wit...

I will say this, though. If I chose to do so, I assure you, I could drink you under the table and beat you at arm-wrestling while I did it.

Draco Malfoy

3 August 1999

Yesterday didn't happen.

+ + +

16 July 2022

You wouldn't believe how many spells he had on that box.

They looked like old school essays, and they didn't respond to the first Revealing Charm I tried, but I found one that worked. Sort of. After I cast it, they all went blank.

You were right—whatever they are, they're not school assignments. I really don't understand what he could possibly be going to such lengths to hide. He's had this box since before he married my mum—could anything still matter enough to keep secret after all these years?

I could crack it eventually, but I'm worried my dad will catch me if I keep them out for too long. He almost did last night—he woke up, and I barely had time to put his spells back in place and get it all put away before he walked in. I can't try it when he's out, because when he's out he's usually at the Ministry, and if the Trace shows magic here when he's there—I can't risk it. I'm going to write to James and see if he can suggest anything. If he can get a spell or two out of Teddy, that would be even better. Teddy must have learned all sorts of useful spells in Auror training. Besides, they're the ones who worked out how to use that map James found in dad's desk. I'm sure they'll come up with something.

Oh, and I forgot to mention—it's not just parchment in that box. At the bottom was a wand and two

Snitches—a golden one with mangled wings, and a silver one that looks too beautiful to actually play with. It had jewels on it. Have you ever heard of such a thing?

Al

P.S. You're right. I only saw red eyes, no tears whatsoever. As far as I'm concerned, the worst he suffered was a manly moistening of the eyes.

+ + +

27 August 1999

Of course I was gone this morning. If I'd stayed any longer, my parents would have noticed I didn't come home last night. And contrary to whatever assumptions you may have made, I don't just sit on my arse at the manor all day long.

Potter, there's something you need to understand. If we're going to continue with this—whatever it is—no one can know about it. No one. I've spelled the contents of this letter to be visible only to you. When you write to me, I expect you to do the same. If you don't know how, look it up.

We are doing better than we were a year ago, but my family is still in a precarious position. I know you don't care much about the Malfoy family name, but in my parents' eyes, I'm all that's left of it. I have responsibilities, obligations.

Look, if you want me to wake you up before I leave next time, I will.

D. M.

+ + +

18 July 2022

Al,

I would suggest some spells, but I suppose I'll wait and see what those two come up with. There's no real rush—if your father kept that box and its contents for two decades, it's not going anywhere, unless you give him a reason to hide it somewhere else.

Spare wands tossed away in drawers or cabinets or—in this case—little wooden boxes fascinate me because I always wonder, is the owner of that wand dead? Did they lose it? And if not, why would they give it up? Wands are about as hard to part with as an arm or a leg, aren't they?

Regarding the jewelled Snitch, yes, I saw one once, when Father took me to Paris the summer after second year. I pointed it out to him, and he became all stiff, told me they were a waste of money.

But he might have just been in a bad mood that day. He normally likes things like that.

Scorpius

P.S. Don't be so hard on your father. Even heroes can be sensitive. Besides, I seem to recall someone else suffering from moist eyes, not six months ago, when his ill-chosen Ravenclaw girlfriend broke it off with him. You've really no room to judge.

+ + +

24 December 1999

Are you enjoying yourself in that den of freckles and ginger hair?

Mother's party is going well, though the girl she has placed next to me is a nightmare. I'm actually pining for the last dinner, and Astoria Greengrass, who is actually quite the decent conversationalist and, even more in her favour, capable of keeping her hands to herself. This one is relentless. It's as much as I can do to keep clear of the mistletoe.

I hope you've managed to get over your little snit about spending the holidays together. I still don't understand why the day after can't do just as well. Can you honestly say you remember what date it is when I've got you on your back and my tongue in your mouth? If so, I'm obviously not snogging you properly.

Perhaps we can put in some practise on New Year's Eve. Against my better judgment, I've told Mother I won't be here at the manor that evening; that I fancy a night out. She's going to make my life miserable for the next month, I hope you realise.

I've escaped my fate long enough and must return to the grasping clutches of my companion for the evening.

D.

P.S.

I know I said I wasn't going to get you anything, but after a year and a half, I haven't managed to make it work well for me. I'm sick of looking at the thing. And don't tell me you won't enjoy the reminder that you're the master of my wand, because I know you will.

Keep it, Potter. It's yours.

+ + +

23 July 2022

Finally got one of those spells from James and Teddy to work.

I should say something to prepare you, but I'm sorry, I can't think of anything. I'm sure I'll have more to say later, when the shock has worn off.

I've made copies for you, using that charm Rose taught us. It was a job getting it to copy the actual contents of the letters rather than the fake school assignments, but I'm not in the mood to go into it.

There are a few I'm not sending. I wish I'd never laid eyes on them, and I can only imagine that they would scar you for life, seeing as your dad wrote them.

Al

+ + +

18 February 2000

What the bloody hell were you thinking, Harry, getting yourself hexed like that? How stupid do you have to be to go into a raid with only two half-trained incompetents as backup?

I suppose no stupider than me, showing up in the middle of a pack of Weasleys. Did they swallow my explanation about the Healer trainee giving me the wrong room number? Granger looked suspicious.

I'll be there at 11 pm. Make sure the Weasleys have gone home well before.

You won't want them walking in, I promise.

Draco

+ + +

23 July 2022

Al,

I don't know what to say either. Are you sure this isn't just a prank? You said you got that spell from James?

Scorpius

+ + +

7 May 2000

You're right, Harry, I would have had loads of fun at the match. It was so clear to me when I saw the Prophet this morning.

The headline left something to be desired: "Holyhead's Hottest Harpy and Harry—Rekindling Old Flames?" But the expression on her face as she placed the Snitch in your hand? They do say a picture is

worth a thousand words.

Are you sure you even wanted me there in the first place?

+ + +

24 July 2022

I talked to James, and it's not a prank. He took it even harder than I did. I had to make him promise not to confront dad about all this immediately. He's furious.

I don't know what to think. I'm angry too, but then I remember dad's red eyes that night and feel bad for being angry with him. Then I remember how I thought he was crying over my mum, and I get angry again. And then I remember that he was crying over your dad and it just gets too weird to think about.

Did you know your dad was gay?

I reread the letters today. All the ones I made copies of, anyway.

Not to be insulting, but your dad was a bit of a bastard, wasn't he?

Do you think he kept any letters?

I'm not exactly in a hurry to see any more of these, but I think I need to read the one my dad wrote in 2017. If you can find it.

Al

P.S. I forgot to tell you off for it at the time, but leave off about my ex-girlfriends. And I did not cry. You git.

+ + +

1 August 2000

Did you enjoy yourself at your party last night? You'll enjoy yourself more tonight.

In the meanwhile, I'm sending a small token of my affections.

It's hard to know what to get the man who has everything. But it occurred to me that it may have been a bit unreasonable of me to damage that Snitch of yours last May.

Enclosed is a replacement. I may have something else for you that I'll deliver in person.

I'll see you tonight.

Draco

+ + +

25 July 2022

Al,

Why does that not surprise me about James? He's such a Gryffindor. What good would he possibly accomplish, confronting your father about this now?

I'd never thought to wonder if my father liked men, but learning about it now, it's not actually as surprising as you might think. I mean, all right, the bit about your father came as a bit of a shock. But once I thought about it, the rest of it sort of made sense. He always used to tell me how important it was to treat my grandparents with respect, but that I was never to listen to their views on matters like that. And I've never seen him express interest in a woman since the divorce. Though I haven't seen him express interest in anyone, actually.

As far as my father being a bastard, well, yes. But if he hadn't been, I wouldn't be here in the first place, so I can't say that I mind.

You're right, though, we need more information.

If my father saved any letters, I doubt I'll find them on my own. But they would likely be somewhere in his room or study. So here's what I did. I cast that spell, remember the one we used to find out where Hugo Weasley was hiding his magazines? It'll tell me anything in those rooms that's been touched since I cast it. Then I told my father about your parents' divorce. This is the part where you praise me for my brilliance.

He was very rattled when I mentioned your father—I think he thought he had me trained out of it years ago—and he paled visibly when I mentioned the divorce. If he did keep any letters, odds are he'll be rereading them tonight.

Scorpius

P.S. Whatever you say, Al.

+ + +

15 December 2000

Fuck you, Potter, and fuck your ultimatums.

There are a thousand reasons why I'll never be able to spend Christmas with the Weasleys, and you know them all.

I've spent all year dodging my mother's attempts to set me up with eligible young women. I've lied to my parents time and again. I've given you everything that I have to give, and none of it's good enough for you.

You were right about one thing, though.

This isn't working.

It doesn't matter how I feel, I have obligations. I'm stronger than this. I won't be writing to you again.

+ + +

25 July 2022

If it had been left up to my dad, I wouldn't be here. So maybe I don't mind so much either.

He and I had a big row yesterday. He asked me how I would feel if he... But then he just stopped. I knew what he was going to ask, though. He'd been reading those letters every time he thought I wasn't looking. He didn't think I knew what they were, of course, and he shoved them out of sight when I

entered the room, but...anyway, I just got so angry.

I told him I'd changed my mind, I didn't want to go to Rome, I wanted to stay with mum for the rest of the summer. He looked so hurt, like he did when James wouldn't come to the Quidditch match, only worse, because he expected James not to come. And then he told me I can't change plans at the last minute like that.

He's been so quiet tonight. When I went into his study, he didn't have the letters out like those other nights. He was just sitting there, staring at the wall.

I don't want to hurt him. I don't know what I want.

As far as him being gay, or bi, or whatever he is, that did come as a shock for me. But I suppose that's mostly because, up until last month, he was married to my mum. Maybe it makes sense too. The one time James called someone a poofter in front of my parents, dad made it very clear that love between men was nothing to be ashamed of. He lectured him for ... well, several minutes, which is a lot for him. He usually leaves stuff like that for mum to deal with, so he obviously felt very strongly about it.

That would have been the same year he wrote that letter you're looking for, now that I think about it.

Let me know what you find out.

Al

+ + +

14 September 2017

I always thought, if I wrote to you again, it would be on your birthday—or, more likely, the day after. But

you've already had your birthday this year. I thought I'd made it through, was safe for another year. I wasn't counting on what it would be like to see you again, there on the platform.

We've done an excellent job of not looking at each other, these last seventeen years, haven't we? But I couldn't help looking this time.

You and your perfect little family. Is it really so perfect as it looked? Mine isn't, but you knew that, didn't you?

I won't say I made the wrong choice, though, Harry, even if I did make it for the wrong reasons. I only need think of my son to remind myself of that. He's the only thing that's gone right in my life. And all I have left to do is shield his life from all the things that went wrong in mine.

But is there so much left to protect him from? Would it hurt him so badly if... These are the kinds of thoughts I torture myself with.

I received an owl from Scorpius tonight. He and your son have become friends, did you know that? That hurt in so many ways, I couldn't describe the pain, not even to myself. He'll never know how much that innocent letter hurt me.

The house is very empty now, very still, with him at Hogwarts. Astoria isn't home much, these days. Nothing like an empty house to make one think. To drive home all the painful truths one has been avoiding.

I didn't actually think you'd let me go through with it, you know. It took me so long to admit that to myself, but it's true. I expected you to swoop in, do something dramatic, something heroic. Expose our love irrevocably, take the decision out of my hands. Save me again. From myself, from my obligations, from my fears.

Instead you didn't show up. And a few weeks later, I read your engagement announcement in the Prophet over breakfast. I remember the breakfast part clearly, because I threw it up a few minutes later. A bit unreasonable of me to react like that, I know, considering I'd got engaged before you. But as much

as I like to pretend to be, I'm not a very reasonable person, am I?

Tell me, Harry, do you hate me now? What was lurking behind that nod on the platform? Because I couldn't tell.

I miss you.

Do you remember that first time? I can't get it out of my head. I lie in bed at night, and I can still feel you, feel your hands, on my chest, on my face, my lips.

I'd leave her, Harry. I'd leave her tonight if you asked me to.

+ + +

25 July 2022

Al,

You forgot to praise me for my brilliance.

Father's gone to bed now. There's nothing in his study. I'll check his bedroom tomorrow and let you know if I find anything.

I was rereading that letter he wrote shortly after we started school. The part where he talks about the empty house and having all that time to think.

Do you think that's what happened with your parents after Lily started at Hogwarts?

Scorpius

26 July 2022

I hadn't thought about it. I mean, yeah, maybe it was. But I was too distracted wanting to burn my eyes out after reading about my dad's hands on your dad's chest. Actually, do me a favour and don't mention that letter ever again.

I need to read the one you're looking for, though. Did you find it?

+ + +

25 November 2017

I don't think that's a very fair question to ask, Harry, considering the answer won't make any difference at all, but no, of course they didn't. And no, I don't. Not in the way I know you mean.

So you have to be strong for your family. Well, if I can't have you, at least I'll have the irony to comfort me.

Don't worry, Harry. I have no doubt you'll succeed, if that's what you choose to do. You're the strongest person I know.

+ + +

26 July 2022

All right, Al, I found it. He kept it in a wooden box too, though I wonder if, in this case, the motivation was practicality more than sentimentality. There are other letters in here, or pieces of them, that are singed and barely readable. I think he started to burn them once and then changed his mind.

Don't worry, though, he must have done it in an earlier year, because this letter you've been wanting to read is just fine. The creases are worn, but he seems to have taken a great deal of care with it.

I don't know if this letter will give you the answers you are looking for, but it did give me a new question. It was written less than a month before my father and mother divorced.

Did he leave her for your father, even knowing they'd never be together? I don't understand.

Scorpius

+ + +

21 November 2017

I've held onto your letter for two months, too angry that you'd said all those things, that you'd said them all now, years too late. Too furious to form a response, but certain that if I wrote back at all, my anger is not what I wanted to write about.

You look at your son and are confident he is not a mistake. Of course my children aren't mistakes either.

But it's hard not to look at my wife without feeling like I made a mistake, somewhere, when I know I promised her something I can never give her, because it's just not there to give. Because I gave it to you,

seventeen years ago.

I do love my wife. I do. But I've never felt for anyone what I felt for you. What I still feel for you.

No, I don't hate you, though I should, you bastard. And of course I still remember ... whichever first time you mean. That first drunken kiss, our hands still clenched tightly together on the table, until we finally let go, so I could grab your arse, and you could grab two fistfuls of my hair? Or the first time we both knew what we were doing, sober and terrified? I can still feel the way your hands trembled, when you touched me.

Did they shake like that when you touched your wife? Do you love your wife, Draco?

I told you seventeen years ago that I loved you. You made it painfully clear it didn't make any difference.

I still love you.

And it doesn't matter. I have to be strong for my family.

Please, Draco. You've never given me anything I asked for. Not when it mattered. Give me this.

Don't ask me again.

+ + +

27 July 2022

Maybe your dad was tired of living a lie. Or maybe he was just being a Slytherin, hoping that if he made

the gesture, my dad would change his mind. I don't know. You know him better than I do.

When I told my dad about your parents' divorce, over Christmas hols in first year, I remember thinking his reaction was so strange. His face got all tight, and he looked ... well, terrified and furious, at the same time. He told me never to mention your dad again. I thought it was because he hated him so much. Later he said he was sorry, but you know how he's always refused to set so much as a foot in the same room as your dad if he could possibly help it.

I always thought he didn't trust himself not to punch him. I think he must not have trusted himself not to do something else.

If he really felt like that, how could he stay? When he knew your father had got that divorce and was just waiting for him like that?

How can he sit here and not do anything now?

He has to be doing it for us. That's the only explanation.

I need to talk to James and Lily before dad's birthday party on Sunday. They need to know about this. They need to understand.

Al

+ + +

28 July 2022

I wouldn't be surprised if Lily wasn't able to resist the tortured romance of it all. But good luck with

James. That'll be a tough nut to crack.

Scorpius

31 July 2022

Lily was just shocked. James was still angry. Lily said she didn't know if she was up to seeing dad on Sunday. James said he definitely wouldn't be there.

They both came, though.

And you know what's strange? It still felt like we were a family. More like a family than we've felt in years, actually. Lily didn't have her head stuck in the Floo. James paid attention to what the rest of us had to say. Mum and dad seemed happier with each other. It would be easy to think, like I did before, that if they get along so well, they must belong together, but that would be ignoring the obvious—they're happier when they don't live together. I told James and Lily what you said about divorce. Maybe it really can be that way for our family, too.

I need to decide what I want to say to my dad. He had the letters out again tonight.

Al

1 August 2022

Al, my father must have gone to reread that letter—I suppose the day after your father's birthday is an anniversary of sorts for them—and I don't know how he knew those fragments of letters were out of order, but he did. He confronted me, and I've never seen him so angry. Ever. But when I told him your

father had his letters out, he just froze. And then he left. I think he might be going to your house, so perhaps try to stay out of the way.

Scorpius

1 August 2022

Too late! I heard a noise in the sitting room and went to make sure my dad was all right. They were by the fireplace, kissing! Though I thought they were fighting at first, as violent as they were being about it—they'd upset the contents of two shelves. That was probably the noise I heard. Either that or your dad, moaning. He sounded quite ridiculous. And god, my dad was definitely crying this time. Unless—maybe your dad just cried on him or something? He could have, you know.

But that's not even the worst of it. My dad's robes were half off—thank god he wears Muggle clothes underneath—and your dad had one hand in his hair and the other hand... I don't want to think about it.

I'd made up my mind to tell him I would be supportive, but just. Ugh.

1 August 2022

You can do it, Al. Be strong.

Don't forget to return to LiveJournal or InsaneJournal to comment!

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