FIC: Medicine For the Soul

Title: Medicine For The Soul

Author:

Prompt Number: #4 by [info]dysonrules

Travel Destination: Alexandria

Rating: R

Pairing(s): Harry/Draco, mentioned Ron/Pansy

Summary: Pansy maintains that Draco is going to Egypt with Potter for a romantic trip. Granger is adamant that she is going with them. Draco knows, of course, that they are both entirely wrong.

Warnings: None that I can think of.

Word Count: ~7,600

Author's Notes: The title refers to an inscription above the door of the Library at Thebes. A million thanks to my wonderful beta [info]groolover.

Medicine For The Soul

For him that stealeth a Book from this Library, let it change into a serpent in his hand and rend him. Let him be struck with Palsy, and all his Members blasted. Let him languish in Pain crying aloud for Mercy and let there be no sur-cease to his Agony till he sink in Dissolution. Let Bookworms gnaw his Entrails in token of the Worm that dieth not, and when at last he goeth to his final Punishment, let the flames of Hell consume him for ever and aye.

— Curse Against Book Stealers

Monastery of San Pedro, Barcelona

"Draco!" Granger said, as soon as she arrived at the party. "There you are. I wanted to ask –"

"The answer is no," Draco interrupted. "As it has been right from the beginning. You are not coming on the expedition and that is final."

"But..." Granger's face puckered in frustration. "I'm the Director of the Institute of Magical History. You have to let me come."

"I have to do nothing of the sort," Draco retorted. "You may be the Director, indeed, the Founding Director, but this is my project, not yours."

"I... I'll withdraw your funding," she blurted, attempting to look stern. "Don't think I won't."

Draco raised an eyebrow and she flushed.

"Blackmail is really not your forté, is it?" he commented kindly. "In any case, I'm a well-established researcher in my own right, I have put a lot of my own money into the expedition and I'm quite prepared to finance the whole thing if you insist on being childish."

Her face crumpled.

"But it's not fair!" she wailed. "This is the most exciting research trip since the Institute began. Why won't you let me come with you?"

Draco considered her for a moment.

"Because," he said eventually, "I don't want you there. You have a tendency, only very slight, of course, to attempt to take control of everything you are involved with." He shrugged. "This is, as you say, a research expedition. I don't want to have to spend my time fending you off when I should be researching."

She looked up at him pleadingly and tried once more.

"Please, Draco?" she asked.

"No," he said with finality.

She sighed deeply and walked away, her shoulders drooping and even her hair looking limp. Draco watched her go and then turned to find Potter approaching him with a smile on his face. He sighed inwardly at having another potential battle thrust on him so quickly.

"Hello, Draco," Potter said, standing just too close for comfort and smiling charmingly. "Still denying Hermione her heart's desire?"

"Yes," Draco said shortly. "She's not coming with me and I have made that plain from the beginning. I don't know why she thinks constant nagging is going to make me change my mind."

"Well," Harry said smoothly. "You can't blame her for wanting to go with you. A romantic trip to Egypt with a gorgeous sexy bloke like you... Sounds like Paradise to me." His smile widened until it was just short of a leer and he winked. "I'm one lucky man."

Draco stared at him coldly.

"Please try to remember, Potter, that our relationship is a business arrangement. I am the researcher and you are the curse-breaker. This is a serious research expedition, not a dirty weekend."

Potter was undaunted.

"Still, there will be some time for relaxation, won't there? We can't spend all our time in libraries and museums. You need to get out into the sun; you're too pale."

He reached out and stroked Draco's neck. Draco jerked back and tried to glower. Potter grinned unrepentantly and Draco's stern expression wavered. He shook his head in exasperation.

"You're impossible, Potter," he said, a reluctant smile stretching his mouth.

"You mean irresistible, don't you?" Potter asked.

"Fortunately," Draco replied firmly, "resisting you is one thing I can do."

Potter gazed at him fondly for a few moments.

"By the way," he said eventually. "When are you going to give me all the details about the trip? If I'm meant to be protecting you, I need to know what I'm protecting you from."

"Curse-breaking," Draco corrected automatically. "I gave Weasley the basic facts you need for your preparations. I'll give you the full briefing when we leave."

Potter leaned closer confidentially.

"I'd rather have a debriefing, if it's with you," he whispered. He ran a hand down Draco's back. "A full debriefing."

He walked away before Draco could come up with a suitable retort. Draco stood and stared after him, trying to recover his equanimity. He was relieved when distraction in the form of Pansy approached slowly, one hand on her swollen stomach. Draco pulled up a chair for her and sat down beside her.

"How are you?" he asked, tearing his mind away from Potter. "How's the newest little Weasley coming along?"

"We're both fine," she replied. "How are you? Looking forward to running away to Egypt with Potter?"

Draco groaned.

"Not you as well. I've already had him drooling all over me. I'm practically having to beat him off with a broom; he'd be humping my leg otherwise."

Pansy smiled.

"Wouldn't you like that?" she asked innocently. "Narcissa said just yesterday that she thought you were gagging for it."

Draco stared at her in horror.

"My mother did not say that," he said hoarsely.

"'It's a wonder he's not flat on his back with his legs spread, every time Potter comes near him' were, I

believe, her exact words," Pansy reported smugly. Her face softened a little. "Why don't you give him a chance?" she asked. "Everyone knows you like him and even Ron has said he doesn’t understand why you're not together."

Draco hesitated.

"I don't think it would be wise," he said at last. "Not now, at least. The expedition is starting in a few days and I don't want that tangled up with emotions."

She was watching him, unconvinced by his excuses. Truthfully, Draco didn't know exactly why he was still resisting Potter's advances. He supposed it was habit more than anything, and he didn't like the thought of giving in, especially to Potter. He sighed.

"I promise to think about it when we get back. Not before, though."

She smiled slyly.

"Well, I suppose I'll have to be content with that for now. Of course, you never know what might happen in Egypt. The heat of the desert, exciting adventures in dark tombs, suppressed passion breaking down barriers, maybe a hot sheikh or two."

Draco laughed loudly.

"You've been reading those Muggle romances again," he said. "I expect all the sheikhs are eminently respectable old men."

"There must be one or two who measure up," Pansy said. "Perhaps one will kidnap you and carry you off to his tent to have his wicked way with you and Potter will have to come to the rescue."

He glared at her.

"How do you know it will be Potter rescuing me and not the other way around?" he asked.

Pansy looked amused.

"Really, Draco, you are funny," was all she would say.

Just then, young Bryony Weasley came up to them, looking more like Pansy than ever, and gazed solemnly at her godfather.

"Uncle Draco, why are you being nasty to Aunt Hermione?"

He looked at her in astonishment and then over at Granger, who was watching them anxiously.

"What do you mean?" he asked, suspecting he knew all too well what she meant.

"Aunt Hermione really wants to go on your trip with you," Bryony said. "She's so unhappy that you've said she can't."

Pansy was struggling not to laugh. Draco cursed under his breath; Bryony hated it when her two godparents were not getting on, though thankfully she had given up her attempts at matchmaking. He looked at the wide, irresistibly hopeful eyes of his goddaughter and sighed. It seemed Granger would be coming on the expedition, after all.

On the morning of their departure for Egypt, Draco arrived at London International Flooport to find Granger already there. She had reserved three seats in the Departure Lounge for the wait until the Floo was connected to Alexandria and she was looking bright and efficient. He scowled at her as he sat down, resting a folder of notes on his lap.

"I hope you remember your promise," he said. "My expedition, not yours. I am in charge, not you."

She nodded earnestly.

"Of course, Draco. I'm not going to try and take over anything; I just want to help."

Draco didn't believe her but she seemed relatively sincere at the moment. He relaxed into his chair and flicked idly through his notes.

"I hope Potter's not going to be late," he commented after a few minutes.

"I don't think he will be," Granger said, a note of worry creeping into her voice. "Of course, Harry never has been any good with time." She bit her lip. "Perhaps I should –"

"Hermione, Draco. How are you both? Looking forward to exciting adventure and romance?"

Potter stood next to them, a wide smile on his face and a fedora perched on his head at a jaunty angle.

"Dear Merlin," Draco groaned, amused in spite of himself. "It's Indiana Potter."

Granger clicked her tongue disapprovingly.

"Really, Harry," she said in her best school teacher voice. "This is not a game. It's serious work."

Potter pouted at her, his eyes full of laughter.

"Let me have a little fun, Hermione. Besides, it'll be bloody hot in Egypt. I'm being eminently sensible in wearing a hat."

He sat down next to Draco and gazed into his eyes.

"How are you, Draco?" he asked seductively. "I dreamt about you last night, you know."

He leaned closer and Draco promptly whacked him on the head with his folder.

"I think you wanted to know more about the expedition," he said coolly, ignoring Potter's yelp of pain, "and we just have time before the Floo opens. We are going, as you know, to Alexandria to conduct research among the primary sources in the University Archive of Magical History. Depending on what we find there, there may be fieldwork afterwards but that is uncertain at the moment."

"What do you need me for if you're not going to be grubbing about in tombs and so on?" Harry asked, his lust forgotten for the moment.

"You have Granger to thank for that," Draco replied with a cool look at the Director of the Institute of Magical History, who was clearly having difficulty in restraining herself from speaking. "There were a couple of... unfortunate incidents with other members of the Institute. The idiots didn't know what they were doing and fiddled with old artefacts without ascertaining whether or not they were cursed. Therefore, it has recently become a rule of the Institute that all research expeditions have to take a professional curse-breaker with them. You and Weasley are widely regarded as the best, so..." He shrugged. "That's why you're here, not, as you seem to think, because I harbour some hidden desire for you."

If it hadn't been for Draco's extensive training when young, he would have blushed at this not-entirely-true utterance.

Potter grinned at him.

"You keep telling yourself that, Draco," he said. "By the way, what exactly are you researching?" Draco blinked at him. "You still haven't told me that."

"We're researching the Library," Draco said.

Potter looked completely blank.

"You're researching the Library," he repeated carefully. He hesitated, frowning.

"The Ancient Library of Alexandria, Harry," Granger put in, unable to keep silent any longer.

"Oh," Potter said, still looking rather blank. "Er..."

Draco sighed.

"You tell him," he said to Granger, who looked ready to burst with information.

"The Library of Alexandria was the most important and extensive library of the ancient world," she said breathlessly, her eyes shining at the thought of it. "Every ship that docked at Alexandria was stripped of books. The owners were given copies of the works and the Library kept the originals. The librarians also acquired books from the large book fairs in Europe and... well, from anywhere else they found them. By all accounts, they weren't terribly scrupulous about their methods; the growth of the Library's collections was the only important thing. And..." Granger paused impressively. "The Library contained

the largest collection of magical texts ever collected by anyone anywhere."

Potter glanced from her to Draco.

"This is the library that was burned down, isn't it?" he asked. "I think I remember now hearing something about it when I was out here a few years ago, visiting Bill. But I thought it was a Muggle library."

Hermione shook her head.

"This was before the separation of Muggles and Magical Folk," she said. "Ancient Egypt, and, indeed, Ancient Greece, were both civilisations that were built on magic. Later, magic began to fall out of general use in Greece; they preferred to rationalise things or to leave everything to the Gods. The Romans were much the same, which is, of course, to be expected, since a lot of their civilisation was based on the Greek model –"

Draco cleared his throat loudly.

"Try to keep to the point, Granger."

She flushed slightly.

"All right, I won't go into that. Anyway, the point is that there was a lot of magical lore in the Library, and it was all lost."

She paused to take a deep breath.

"We now come to the really important part. The story of the Library being burned down is well known, but there are at least four separate stories of its destruction at different times. No one knows which, if any, is true. The fact that there are said to be four separate incidents, however, suggests that the Library

was not destroyed after the first attack, which was Julius Caesar's fire. Not completely, anyway. Draco's preliminary research suggests that it did survive, at least partly, to be subjected to all four attacks. And, if it did, there is no reason why parts of it, or, more probably, traces of it, shouldn't have survived that final attack and have remained hidden for hundreds of years."

Granger sat back triumphantly.

"That's what we're searching for: the lost Library of Alexandria."

Potter raised his eyebrows slowly.

"That's quite an expedition." He glanced at Draco. "I can see this expedition must be very important to you."

Draco nodded shortly and they sat in silence for a few minutes, contemplating the possibilities ahead of them. Then a young bored-looking witch rose from her desk at the end of the room and announced in a singsong voice,

"Alexandria, please. All passengers for Alexandria to Fireplace 9. The connection to Alexandria is now open."

She sat down again and began examining her nails without interest.

"Well," said Draco, rising to his feet. "Shall we go?"

Excitement was rising in him, as it always did when he felt he was on the way to discovering something special. However, his face and attitude remained calm as the three of them walked to Fireplace 9.

Draco stepped into the green flames a minute after Granger and emerged, after a longer than usual

journey, in the small Flooport of Alexandria. A single attendant was standing nearby looking harassed, as Granger talked complicatedly about passports and hotels and luggage. He smiled rather desperately at Draco.

The Floo sounded behind him and a warm solid body was abruptly pressed against Draco's back. Arms wrapped quickly around him and squeezed lightly.

"Sorry," Potter whispered in Draco's ear. "I tripped."

He moved away with a satisfied look on his face. Draco narrowed his eyes at Potter and shook his head. He knew perfectly well that Potter had not stumbled out of a fireplace for years.

Draco turned the page of the book he was reading and tried to ignore Potter, who was prowling around the room in frustration again. This had been Potter's daily ritual for most of the past three weeks; while Draco and Granger worked their way through endless piles of dusty books, Potter did his best caged lion impression, his expression a permanent scowl. It was very distracting, Draco found, and meant that he was getting rather less work done than he would have liked.

Almost every day so far had been spent in the Archive, and they had found nothing that looked as if it might lead to any fieldwork. Mr Soliman, the chief archivist, had left them alone in the archive with great reluctance; clearly he had a low opinion of foreign researchers and was very protective of his books. After a lot of argument, Draco had secured for them the use of a small room in the Magical Archive's main building. It was old and dark and smelt musty but was relatively cool, and they had access to all the books and manuscripts they wanted.

They were working with modified translation charms, since the standard charms they had tried had changed the meaning of the texts so much that it was impossible to get any sense out of them at all. The modified charms were considerably slower and the accuracy was reasonable but not perfect. The whole thing was like wading through literary treacle.

Potter approached the desk and looked at them hopefully.

"Found anything yet?" he asked.

Draco shook his head. Granger, her eyes still glued to the page, murmured,

"Oh, this is fascinating."

Potter, whose face had fallen again, perked up. He looked like a dog that was desperate to go for a walk and whose owners were ignoring it.

"What is?" he asked, poised to take immediate action.

"'It is said,'" Granger quoted slowly, as the translation charm worked its way across the text, "'that the greatest of all wizards from the land of Arthur spent many years in Alexander's City, and endowed the Library there with a number of books –'" She broke off and turned the page. "It's only a small mention, but I think it must mean Merlin. That would suggest the Library was around when he was."

"And when, exactly, was that?" Draco asked, watching Potter's returning frustration with amusement.

Granger sighed.

"Of course, no one knows exactly, do they?"

Draco shook his head.

"But at a very rough estimate, probably somewhere between 400 and 600 AD," he said. "Which bears

out my original theory about the Library surviving at least until the final attack in the seventh century." He grinned at Potter and turned back to Granger. "Potter thought you were on to something exciting that would give him some danger to confront."

Potter huffed and slumped down in a chair.

"I want something to do," he moaned. "It's boring, just sitting here doing nothing. I can't even wear my hat because we're inside all the time."

"We are not doing nothing, Harry," Granger reprimanded him. "It is vital to conduct research prior to action, so that one has all the facts one needs. Besides, we don't know where to start looking."

Potter sighed loudly.

"We haven't even seen any lewd hieroglyphs," he complained.

Draco drew something on a piece of parchment and then threw it over to Potter.

"There you are," he said. "There's a lewd hieroglyph."

Potter looked at the parchment and grinned.

"Why, Draco," he purred. "Is this a proposition?" He gave an exaggerated pout. "But it's not moving," he said. "The ones you drew at Hogwarts always moved."

Draco waved his wand in Potter's direction.

"One moving lewd hieroglyph, as ordered," he said. "Maybe that will keep you occupied for a while."

Potter was examining the drawing closely. He licked his lips.

"Which position would you prefer?" he asked.

Draco blushed slightly and buried his nose in a book.

Twenty minutes later, Potter sighed again. Evidently, the lewd hieroglyph no longer held his attention. Draco eyed him closely; magical energy was starting to crackle in the air around him.

"Potter," he said. "Why don't you go off somewhere and get rid of some of that UMT? You'll feel much better afterwards."

"What's UMT?"

"Unresolved Magical Tension," Draco replied. "It's when you get a build-up of too much magical energy and there's nowhere for it to go. You need the magical equivalent of a good fuck."

Potter instantly put on a seductive smile.

"Magical equivalent," Draco repeated firmly. "And no, I'm not interested. Go and find some poor defenceless market trader to hex."

Potter looked around the room moodily and then mooched out. He took the lewd hieroglyph with him. Draco turned to find Granger looking at him with an amused expression.

"What?" he asked.

She glanced at the door through which Potter had just left and then back at him.

"Nothing," she said innocently, and turned back to her book.

Three days later, Potter was still frustrated and his magic, which had calmed down slightly after his solitary excursion, was still volatile. Granger had finally been provoked into scolding him and he had subsided into a chair and sulked for some time afterwards. Draco and Granger, however, were in high spirits, since Granger's discovery of a text describing the first fire in the Library.

"It fits exactly with the description," Granger said, her hair bushier than ever. "It's the only thing it can be. 'Great serpents and other demonic shapes seemed to leap from the flames to devour all those within their reach.' That's a perfect description of Fiendfyre."

"Yes," Draco agreed, "but Fiendfyre destroys almost everything it touches. And we know at least part of the Library survived, a sizeable part, judging from the later accounts. Then, there's the mention of the same thing happening during the second recorded attack. 'Eagle-like flames surrounded the building.' Very vague, but, taken together with the first mention of Fiendfyre, it is suggestive."

Granger pursed her lips and tapped them with the end of her quill.

"That suggests either the same method used in an attack, which is unlikely, since the first fire was said to have been an accident, or..." She looked at Draco with a puzzled frown. "Some kind of ward?"

He nodded slowly.

"It's possible. Although it would be rather stupid to set wards that triggered Fiendfyre, especially around a library. Let's keep going and see if we can find anything else. Now that we have an idea of a possible lead, it may be easier."

Draco reached for a book and Granger for an old parchment scroll. There was a pitiful sigh from the corner.

"Potter," Draco said with exasperation. "Why don't you go and find yourself something to do?"

"Oh," Granger breathed beside him. "That's ingenious."

Draco and Potter both ignored her.

"I want to be on hand if anything turns up," Potter explained. "I don't want to go off and leave you to fall victim to some ancient curse."

Draco rolled his eyes.

"I'm not likely to do that. If we find anything that needs de-cursing, we'll wait for you."

Potter stood up and paced around the room.

"If you find anything," he said. "That's rather the point."

His magic was starting to flare up again. Draco tried to ignore his rising attraction. He had always had a thing for powerful wizards.

"If there is anything of the Library here to find," Potter went on, "why can't we find it now?"

He kicked a bare patch of wall in frustration. There was a deafening bang and a streak of lightning, which seemed to come from Potter himself, hit the wall.

Draco and Granger leapt to their feet, wands drawn. Where the wall had been was the entrance to a narrow dark passage. Granger stared at Potter accusingly.

"Really, Harry," she said, shaking her head. "You should try to control yourself."

Potter looked sheepish.

"Well," he said. "I have found us something. I thought this was an outside wall, though. There's a window there."

He pointed to the window a few feet away from the passage, through which they could see a dusty street that led towards the harbour.

"Wizarding Space, Potter. And the wall's very thick," Draco replied absently, moving forward to examine the passage. He hesitated and bit his lip thoughtfully. "You know, this part of the building is very old. Do you think... I mean, Potter did say, when he kicked the wall..."

He looked at Granger; she was frowning.

"Don't go exploring just yet," she said. "I agree this is an old building and it could, just possibly, be... something really exciting." Neither of them wanted to say exactly what they hoped it was. "But we don't know what sort of wards it might have. Harry's magic may just have broken through the initial spells that kept it hidden. Old magic does tend to get brittle if its not renewed occasionally, but it doesn't just disappear. And I've found..." She looked down at the scroll she had been reading. "I don't know what,

exactly, but it might be relevant."

Draco turned to Potter.

"Well, you're the curse-breaker," he said. "Time to start working. You can at least see what we're dealing with at this end of the passage."

Potter nodded and began casting revealing spells. Granger was sitting down again, her brow creased, staring at the scroll.

"That must be what it means," she whispered. "But in that case..."

She looked up to see the others making their way slowly into the passage.

"What are you doing?" she cried, leaping up to follow them. "We don't know what we're dealing with at all! There could be anything in there."

"There are no wards or hexes at this end of the passage," Potter said, still moving forward. "I do know my job, Hermione."

She hesitated in the entrance and looked back to the scroll on the table.

"You mustn't go in," she called at last. "Come back at once! It's too dangerous."

"What did I say about taking over, Granger? This is my expedition and I'm in charge. We'll stop if there's anything too dangerous or difficult," Draco's voice called back to her. "You carry on reading and see if you can find any reference to a hidden passage."

She walked quickly back to the table and ran her eyes over the scroll once more.

"I wish these translation charms were more efficient," she murmured. "It's so hard to get the exact meaning when it's not in the original language."

The passage had turned into a steep downwards staircase. Draco was peering at the walls with the aid of a Lumos; in places there were rough symbols, most of them rather decayed. He pulled Potter to a halt and pointed to one.

"There's a genuine lewd hieroglyph," he said, delighted to see Potter's eyes widen.

"Wow," Potter said. "Did they really do... things like that?"

"Obviously, since they were drawing pictures of it."

Potter moved on again.

"I thought only Slytherins were that deviant," he remarked with a chuckle.

"Potter," Draco growled. "You take –"

His words were cut off abruptly as they came to the bottom of the stairs, turned a sharp corner, and were faced with another doorway. It opened into a large room, filled with boxes, shelves and tables. Every surface was covered with scrolls, tablets and books, some roughly made, some fine and ornately

decorated.

"Oh," Draco breathed, overcome by the sight. "Oh, my."

He made to move forwards but Potter held him back.

"I need to check this end as well," he said, moving his wand in complicated gestures. After a moment he strode forward into the room. "Well, it seems to be –"

There was a sudden roar and flames shot up from the floor between Potter and the passage. Potter leapt out of the way just in time as the flames dived towards him. He was forced further into the room and the flames spread fiercely until a fiery circle surrounded him.

Draco shrank back into the darkness before steeling himself and moving forward to help. He fired off every anti-fire spell he could think of but nothing seemed to have any effect. The flames, now forming themselves into the horribly familiar creatures of Fiendfyre, seemed to taunt them, encouraging them to exhaust themselves in the effort of resisting. Potter was attempting to fight them from his side and having even less success than Draco. Whenever he tried to approach a momentary gap in the flames, he was forced back by a gaping fiery mouth.

Desperation and panic were fighting for dominance in Draco. He wanted to run back up the stairs and put as much distance between himself and the Fiendfyre as possible. Memories of the Room of Requirement welled up and tried to choke him. At the same time, he would not – could not – leave Potter, and Potter's hold on him was stronger than his fear of the Fiendfyre.

Draco heard Granger's voice behind him, but a gap in the flames – a way to Potter – decided his action before he had time to think about it. He cast the strongest Protego he could and leapt through the gap. He felt the heat, the flames seemed to close around him, and then he was through and falling heavily against Potter.

"You idiot!" Potter shouted at him, shaking him roughly by the shoulders. "What the hell do you think

you're doing?"

Draco quickly scanned Potter's body but could see no injuries.

"I'm not leaving you alone in here," he shouted back.

A chimera swooped down at them and Draco shrank back into Potter's chest.

"Idiot," Potter repeated, more quietly, holding him close. "There's nothing you can do from here. Nothing either of us can do."

Draco clung to Potter. Granger was shouting spells from the passage entrance; they seemed odd spells to use against Fiendfyre, Draco thought vaguely. He tightened his grip and pressed his face into Potter's neck.

"Well, we'll just have to die together, then," Draco said, closing his eyes against the sight of the demons that had haunted his nights for a long time after the War.

Potter's embrace became almost painful.

"Draco..." he began.

"Riddikulus!" Granger yelled at the top of her voice.

The heat died instantly, the flames shrank and disappeared, and the monsters of the fire suddenly transformed into puppets dancing on strings before dissolving away into nothingness.

Draco pulled back slightly and they looked around in bewilderment. Granger's wand was still pointed in their direction, but the last of the puppets was fading and there was no smoke, no ash, no destruction. The room and its contents were just as they had been.

"What happened?" Draco asked shakily.

Potter shook his head, not relinquishing his hold on Draco. Granger lowered her wand.

"This is why you shouldn't go rushing into things you don't understand," she said, trying to sound angry.

Then her face softened and she rushed forward to enfold them both in an tight embrace of bushy hair.

"Don't scare me like that again," she sniffled.

For once, Draco didn't mind her proximity; he slid his arm around her and hugged back.

"Hermione," Potter said after a few moments. "What happened to the Fiendfyre? I didn't think you could use anything like Riddikulus on it."

Granger pulled back, wiping her eyes surreptitiously, and peered around at the dusty tables and shelves.

"You can't," she replied. "But that wasn't Fiendfyre."

"What?!" Draco and Potter asked together.

"It was a leftover ward that triggered the illusion of Fiendfyre. Of course they wouldn't have used real fire, of any sort, in a library, but the illusion – sight and sound and heat – was all that was needed. No

one is likely to hang around to find out whether it is real or not, and I imagine the ward was linked to a charm that would hide the Library afterwards, so people would think it had burned down."

"But I checked all along the passage carefully," Potter protested. "I didn't find any wards at all."

"And you didn't find that odd?" Granger asked incredulously. She shook her head. "Since the Fiendfyre appeared in this room, I would guess this is where the main charm was based. There was probably just a sensor charm in the passage. I think I'm right in saying simple sensor charms can be much harder to spot than full wards."

Potter nodded.

"So this place was probably never really attacked at all."

"This room is underground; there may have been a building above this that really burned down. The passage at the top of the staircase survived, of course, but that was under the wards. It certainly makes sense to keep all the precious books in the most secure part of the building. Maybe there were others above ground that perished. At any rate, I doubt the Library was ever set on fire in the way the accounts have described. Perhaps the librarians were all killed in the last attack – that one was just an attempt to destroy the books – and so no one knew that, when the wards were tripped, they hid the Library. They would just assume that the whole thing had been destroyed."

"What was it you found in that scroll that made you guess about the wards?" Draco asked suddenly.

"It wasn't anything explicit," she replied. "But a merchant who visited Alexandria shortly after the first fire described the Library as looking as good as new. People said that there was talk of powerful magic, or protection from the Gods, guarding the place. He talked to a man who had heard from a friend of his – it's all hearsay, of course – that the librarians were able to walk through fire and conjure and dismiss it with a thought. The friend said that a librarian had told him that mastery of fear was the key to everything in life. That's what made me think of using Riddikulus; boggarts are only effective when you're afraid of them.

"Harry's little outburst back there seems to have completely broken the wards that hide the Library, otherwise I doubt we would be able to see all this. I think, though, it would be a good thing to find that sensor and disable it; we don't want the Fiendfyre starting up again."

Potter walked gingerly over to the door and began retracing their steps back up the stairs, murmuring spells the whole time. After a few minutes, he was back.

"All done," he reported. "It wasn't far from this room, and it wasn't complicated at all, just like a trip-wire, really."

Granger had wandered over to a shelf and carefully taken down a tablet, which was engraved with strange symbols.

"This is a treasure trove, isn't it?" she whispered reverently.

Draco was examining a vellum-bound volume on the table.

"It is, indeed."

There was the sound of voices approaching, and they looked around to see Mr Soliman and several of his assistants emerge from the passage. They stood staring at the scene in amazement.

"What has happened?" Mr Soliman demanded. "I knew I should not have let you roam around freely. What have you done? Where are we?"

"I think," Granger said, smiling and stepping back from the shelf, "we have found the lost Library of Alexandria for you."

Several hours later, they returned to their hotel. Granger was fuming, Potter was amused and Draco was ready to crawl into bed and sleep for a month.

"I can't believe Soliman chucked us out like that," Granger said for the fifth time since they had left the Library. "He had no right –"

"Technically, Hermione," Potter put in, "he had every right. It is his library."

"If it hadn't been for us," she retorted, "he wouldn't know anything about it and therefore wouldn't have it. It's the most important discovery since I don't know when and that silly little man tries to pretend that we, who actually found it, have nothing to do with it. I shall certainly complain about our treatment. He won't get away with this."

Potter seemed to notice at this point that Draco was looking even paler than usual.

"You do that, Hermione. If I were you, I should start sending owls off at once. Strike while the iron's hot, and all that."

"I'll go and do that now," she said. "Wretched little man; he won't know what's hit him. I'll see you two later."

She marched off purposefully and Draco closed his eyes in relief. When he opened them, he saw Potter looking at him with concern. He put his arm around Draco's shoulders and led him along the corridor towards Draco's room.

"Come on," he said gently. "You need a rest."

Draco allowed himself to be taken into his room. When Potter tried to pull away, however, Draco held on.

"Don't – don't go just yet," he whispered. "I – I can't – I'll be fine in a minute – just –"

Potter stroked his hair.

"It's all right," he said. "It's okay to be vulnerable if you need to. I understand completely –"

Draco pushed him away, a sudden rage welling up in him.

"I know that," he hissed. "You don't have to tell me that I'm allowed to be a fucking wreck after what happened today. That seeing you almost burned to death by a roomful of Fiendfyre – real or not – is bound to upset me after that business at Hogwarts. And why the hell aren't you a gibbering idiot? How come Harry Potter doesn't get affected by danger? I suppose that's part of the whole Boy Who Lived package. What's a little Fiendfyre here or there? It's all in a day's work for Hero Potter."

"Draco," Potter said, his voice low and angry. "Shut up."

"Make me."

It was a stupid schoolboy retort, the sort of thing Draco would have been ashamed of hearing himself say if he had been in his right mind. Perhaps a subconscious part of him was hoping Potter would do what he did, in fact, do. He kissed Draco.

It was a hard, angry, desperate kiss, the sort of kiss you get after escaping from great danger. It was the sort of kiss you need after escaping from great danger, the sort of kiss that reminds you that both you and the person you're kissing are wonderfully alive. That sort of kiss nearly always leads to more, and this one was no exception.

After several minutes of attempting to devour each other's faces, when the kiss was becoming less desperate and more passionate, Potter pulled back and grinned.

"Is that an ancient scroll in your pocket or are you just pleased to see me?" he asked breathlessly.

Draco burst out laughing. He laughed rather more than the joke deserved and Potter looked surprised and a little worried at Draco's excessive mirth.

Draco pulled him over to the bed and pushed him down to sit on the end. Then he reached into his pocket and began pulling items out. Potter's mouth fell open as Draco deposited on the bed a number of greatly shrunken scrolls.

"Draco," Potter said hesitantly. "I was just joking."

"I wasn't," Draco replied with a smile.

Potter picked up one of the scrolls and examined it.

"I'm not going to enlarge them just yet," Draco explained, "because too much shrinking and enlarging will make them brittle and then they'll fall apart, and I'll need to keep them small to smuggle them back home."

"This is technically stealing," Potter commented, not sounding as outraged as he should.

"I prefer to regard it as booty," Draco said lightly. "We found that library; it's the least we deserve to come away with a few souvenirs. And I thought Granger might like them for the Institute."

Potter looked up and smiled.

"She'll be ecstatic."

Draco scooped up the scrolls and hid them under some clothes in a drawer, before returning to Potter.

"But never mind that now," he said silkily, climbing onto Potter's lap. "Where were we?"

Potter's arms went around Draco's waist and pulled him close.

"I'll have to remember this," he said breathlessly, as Draco began working his way down Potter's neck. "I've been trying to get a chance with you for ages. Deadly danger, it seems, works instantly."

Draco raised his head and looked at him: green eyes, flushed cheeks, messier-than-ever hair. Perhaps Pansy had been right to push him so insistently towards Potter. Of course, he wasn't going to tell her that, although it wouldn't stop her from gloating.

"I think one episode of deadly danger is quite enough," he said softly. "I'd be grateful if you didn't indulge in any more. You've got my full attention now, Harry."

Potter's – Harry's, Draco corrected himself – eyes flared with heat and one hand slid down to squeeze Draco's arse.

"I'll have to make certain I don't lose it, then, won't I?" he murmured. "I'm sure I can come up with a few interesting ideas."

He stood suddenly, forcing Draco to cling on tightly so as not to be dropped. Then Draco found himself on his back on the bed, Harry's weight pushing him into the mattress and providing a delightful friction. He bucked up as much as he could and Harry groaned.

"You'll be the death of me," he managed. "Just can't get enough of you."

He bit down on Draco's neck and thrust hard against him. Draco wrapped his legs around Harry's waist, trying to pull him closer, his hands entwined in Harry's hair.

"Harry," he gasped. "Yes – yes - want more."

Harry wormed a hand between them and fumbled for several minutes, finally freeing both their cocks, so they could slide slickly against one another. The feeling of skin on skin was heavenly and Draco felt himself approach climax embarrassingly quickly. It was all right, though, because Harry seemed just as affected and it looked as though they would be going over the edge together. Harry lifted his head, having left a sizeable mark on Draco's throat.

"Can't – hold – on," he gasped.

Draco was beyond speech; he managed to nod, his gaze holding Harry's. Then he was coming and Harry was coming too, and it was gloriously hot and sticky and messy and altogether perfect.

After a couple of minutes, Harry rolled them to one side, breathing heavily and still holding Draco to him. He pressed a kiss to Draco's hair and sighed contentedly. Draco snuggled closer, not caring about the cooling stickiness and the rumpled clothes that would normally have been completely unacceptable.

No words were necessary; doubtless there would be talking later, but right now everything in Draco's world was just right.

Opening the door without knocking, as he had ever since the Institute had started, Draco strolled into

Granger's office. For once, it seemed not to annoy her.

"Draco," she greeted him, smiling widely. "How are you?"

"Fine, but I don't imagine you asked me here to exchange banal pleasantries," he replied, sinking into a chair and placing the bag he carried carefully on the floor beside him.

Her smile widened.

"No, I didn't." She cleared her throat. "Actually, I called you in to discuss... er, your position here."

He stared at her.

"You're not, I hope, trying to get rid of me, Granger."

"Of course not." She paused again and seemed to be choosing her words carefully. "There was a meeting of the Institute's Board of Directors last night, you know."

"Go on."

"It was decided that, owing to your remarkable research achievements, not just in Alexandria..." She looked up and gazed at him for a moment. "You should be made Institute Co-director."

Draco didn't think his mouth was actually hanging open, but it was a near thing.

"You – I – W-what?" he stammered.

She smiled gently.

"I know the Institute has rather been my own pet project from the beginning, but I think it's time for me to share the running of it, and I can't think of anyone else I'd rather have as a partner. Business partner, of course," she amended quickly. "I don't think Harry is terribly keen on sharing."

Draco felt a slight flush creep across his cheeks and he couldn't help smiling.

"No offence, Granger," he said, "but you're really not my type."

"No," she agreed. "So, how about it? Feel like being Co-director with me?"

Draco didn't hesitate.

"You don't think I'm going to pass up an opportunity like this, do you? I'm immensely honoured, although doubtless I'll find you passing all the difficult decisions and unpleasant jobs my way."

"Naturally," Granger said, laughing. "What else is a partner for?"

"Thank you," Draco said simply. A rarely heard note of sincerity was in his voice. "This means a lot to me; it's a great honour."

"It's a pleasure. I'm glad to be able to do something to recognise all your work. You've made a great impact on the academic world in the past few years; that report on the development of early potion-making, for instance... And you're not too bad to work with, either. I think we could get on quite well." She smiled slyly. "By the way, speaking of getting on well, Harry seems happier than I've ever seen him."

Draco silently cursed the returning blush. His smile was happy, though.

"He does, doesn’t he?" he said lightly. "I've been keeping him well occupied."

"I'm sure." Granger winked knowingly. "Pansy seems delighted with the situation as well," she added.

Draco sighed and nodded. Pansy was indeed having a wonderful time saying "I told you so." He got up to go.

"By the way, Hermione – I hope I can call you Hermione now – I have a little something for you. Let's call it my first gift to the Institute as Co-director."

He placed the bag on her desk and turned to the door.

"Have fun with it."

As he walked out, he heard her astonished gasp.

"Draco Malfoy, you wicked, wicked man! You're the best!"

There was a note waiting for him when he got back to his office. Draco unfolded the parchment and laughed out loud when he saw what it was.

The animated lewd hieroglyph he had drawn for Harry still moved rhythmically on the parchment.

Underneath, Harry had written,

You never did tell me which position you'd prefer. Care to tell me now? I've got all afternoon free. H.

FIN