HAPPY H/D HOLIDAYS, FR33BIRD!

Author: Anonymous

Recipient: fr333bird

Title: Anthem of the Angels

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

Summary: In the days after Hogwarts and in the midst of the war, Harry is surprised to find himself developing feelings for Draco Malfoy. At war's end, he is devastated when an unknown curse threatens to separate them forever.

Rating: NC-17

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Warning(s): violence, character death (not Harry or Draco), explicit sex, angst, non-linear storyline

Epilogue compliant? No, extremely AU

Word Count: ~21,000

Author's Notes: This story is very much AU. The events of HBP happen, except Draco is not the one chosen for the mission to kill Dumbledore, so alas, no Sectumpsempra bathroom scene! It is not compliant at all with DH and Harry, Ron, and Hermione did not begin the hunt for Horcruxes until after their seventh and final year. I tried to stick as close as possible to your requests, fr333bird, but there might be a touch more angst than you're comfortable with, though I tried to fit in moments of lightness here and there! The story was inspired by one of my favorite Breaking Benjamin songs, lyrics to be found at the beginning of the fic.

(Anthem of the Angels)

White walls surround us; no light will touch your face again

Rain taps the window as we sleep among the dead

Cold light above us; hope fills the heart and fades away

Skin like it's winter as the sky returns to gray

Days go on forever but I have not left your side

We can chase the dark together; if you go, then so will I

There is nothing left of you; I can see it in your eyes

Sing the anthem of the angels and say the last good-bye

I keep holding on to you, but I can't bring you back to life

Sing the anthem of the angels and say the last good-bye

Anthem of the Angels by Breaking Benjamin

31 May, 2001

Every inch of Harry's body ached. A part of him longed to just head home and crash in his bed. He knew, though, that if he did so, he would not emerge for the entire weekend. There was no way that he wasn't going to go by St. Mungo's before he went home.

Auror training, while it was his dream, was also something of a nightmare. The classes made Hogwarts look like primary school and the exercises were intense, often just as dangerous as when he'd been

fighting Voldemort himself. But as much as he wanted to rest his weary bones, he would never be able to relax until he checked on Draco.

This was a journey that he made every day, and one that he would continue to make until something changed. He ignored the few stares as he made his way down the hall to the Janus Thickey Ward. Since he'd been making this trek every day for the last year or so, the gawking had lessened somewhat. Still, Harry knew the Wizarding world's obsession with him would never go away, not completely. It was something he was trying to learn to live with.

"Harry. You're right on time, I see."

"Hullo, Morag. Has there been any change?"

Morag MacDougal, the night shift healer, gave him a sympathetic look. "No, still the same, I'm sorry to say."

The little spark of hope that always flared on his way into St. Mungo's faded as it always did. He had the same conversation with Morag every day. Harry refused to lose hope, however. Even if Ron and Hermione thought he was wasting his time, nothing would ever make him give up.

"I'll just go in and see him for a bit, then," he mumbled.

"Certainly, Harry. Take your time," Morag said softly. She stepped aside to allow Harry entrance into the room she'd just exited.

Harry had to take a moment to find the courage to go into that quiet, sterile room. Thankfully, he managed to dredge it up from somewhere. The room was dimly lit, but the patient's blond hair still caught the small amount of light, and glowed with its own special luminescence. Harry took the chair that was sitting beside the bed, and spun it around, straddling it backwards. He held on the back of it, and rested his chin on his hands as he gazed down at Draco.

Just a few years ago, it would have been Malfoy, but Harry could only think of him as Draco now. He reached out with one hand and gently traced a finger down the length of Draco's arm. When Harry got to his hand, he covered it with his own, interlacing his fingers with Draco's and giving a squeeze.

"I miss you," he whispered.

3 August, 1998

"Harry! You're here!"

Ron's excited yell roused everyone currently at Number 12 Grimmauld Place. Several Weasleys came pounding down the stairs and embraced him enthusiastically, nearly smothering and deafening Harry in the process. It took Hermione scolding them to get them to let Harry go, and only then could he tell who was who.

Ron, Fred, George, and Ginny grinned at him and Harry couldn't help grinning back. Dumbledore had been insistent that Harry stay one last time with the Dursleys after his final year at Hogwarts, for the blood wards. Harry had thought that he might be able to avoid it, what with the Headmaster's death at the end of his sixth year at the hands of a desperate, newly-marked Theo Nott. Unfortunately, Albus had made his wishes known to Minerva McGonagall, and she had made sure that Harry followed them to the letter. But now he was eighteen and he never had to go back to Privet Drive again.

"Come on to the kitchen! Mum made a cake since you couldn't be here on your actual birthday," Ginny said as she took him by the hand and began pulling him along with her.

Ron, Fred, and George all began talking at once, asking Harry how he'd been, had the Muggles been perfectly terrible, had he gotten the chance to practice Quidditch any since they'd left Hogwarts.

"Ron! Don't be ridiculous! How could he have played Quidditch when he was in the middle of Muggles? The more important question is, did you get your NEWT results yet, Harry? I've been going absolutely

mad waiting for mine! I don't see why it takes so long for them to let us know-"

All the noise and craziness just made Harry laugh, because even this pandemonium was better than being at the Dursley house.

"Cease this racket at once!"

The six of them froze at the sharp words. Harry was stunned. Surely that could not be Professor Snape in the kitchen? At Grimmauld Place?! He had hoped to never see his hated Potions instructor ever again. Deep down, he knew that was unrealistic, as Snape was also a member of the Order of the Phoenix, but it would have been nice if he could have gotten through his first day away from hell without seeing the old bat.

"Honestly, Professor. You should have realized by now that this is normal volume for Gryffindors. I believe you'd have to stun them to quiet them." That utterly bored and superior tone could only be one person, and it was probably the second-to-the-last person Harry wanted to see.

And now Harry's horrible day had just gotten worse. What the hell was Draco Malfoy doing at Order headquarters?

"Just you try it, Malfoy, and see what happens to you!" Ron shouted, his hand hovering near his wand.

"My, was that a threat against Mr. Malfoy, Weasley? Someone who has sought asylum within the Order? What would your mother say?" Snape said with a sneer.

"She would say all of you need to stop aggravating each other, and get back to your chores!" Molly said as she came out of the pantry, a bag of flour in her hands. "That includes you, Severus. You're as bad as the children sometimes."

Snape glared at her so fiercely, Harry was surprised Molly didn't burst into flames.

"Harry! Dear boy, so glad you've finally made it! Oh, come here and let me give you a hug!" Molly said. She set the flour down and walked over to him with open arms.

Harry was nearly smothered again as Molly hugged him hard. She finally released him and stepped back to look closer at him. She put her hands on his cheeks and pursed her lips. "Too skinny, by far," she murmured.

Harry flushed in embarrassment. It would have been bad enough just in front of his friends, but did she have to say so in front of Snape and Malfoy?

She looked up at her children as they snickered. "And what are you lot doing down here? I told you to finish cleaning out the bedrooms on the second floor! Hop to!" she ordered.

"But, Mum, Harry-"

"We only wanted-"

"We were going to have cake-"

"Nonsense! Upstairs, and don't let me see you again until your chores are done!"

The Weasleys moved towards the stairs, grumbling the whole way, Hermione following behind quietly. Harry started to go as well, but Molly pulled him back.

"Not you, Harry. I know those Aurors that dropped you off didn't feed you. You can have some lunch and then go up and help."

"Sure, Mrs. Weasley," Harry said.

He sat on one side of the table, trying not to look at Snape or Malfoy who were sitting on the opposite side. As Molly set a plate piled high with sandwiches and a glass of pumpkin juice in front of him, Harry looked up at her to say thank you. She patted him on the head, and turned to whatever task she'd been doing before having to corral her children.

As he picked up a sandwich and started to take a bite, his gaze met Malfoy's. To his surprise, the other boy was just staring at him with a bland expression, no sneer in sight.

"Erm, did you want one?" Harry asked, as it was all he could think of to say. He wasn't sure why he said it, except that Malfoy didn't seem to be his normal obnoxious self, and Harry felt this weird obligation to be nice to him in return for that favor.

"No, thank you, Potter. I've already eaten," Malfoy said, and he still wasn't sneering.

Harry wasn't quite sure what to make of this situation. He took a bite of the sandwich and chewed silently for a few moments. After swallowing, he felt the need to break the silence again. Besides, he was awfully curious about how Draco Malfoy had ended up at Grimmauld.

"So, how did you come to be here?" he asked hesitantly.

"Is the brave Gryffindor scared of sharing space with Slytherins?" Snape asked, his sneer firmly in place.

"No," Harry said, his face flushing again. "Just curious, is all. Last I heard, you were ready to join up alongside your father," he said, directing his reply to Malfoy.

"It may come as a shock to some people, Potter, but I am not simply a miniature version of Lucius. I

informed him that I would rather not take the Dark Mark, and he showed me the door."

"He kicked you out? His own son?" Harry asked.

"He could have killed me. He should have killed me. That he didn't is my only proof that he does still love me. I'm sure he took a few curses from the Dark Lord for my defection," Draco said stiffly.

"I'm sorry," Harry said softly.

"Yes, your grand display of sympathy has truly touched all of our hearts, Potter," Snape said sardonically. "Come, Draco. There is still plenty of work to do in the lab."

"Yes, Professor," Malfoy said as the two of them rose and headed for the door. Malfoy turned and gave Harry one more look before they exited the room. When he saw Harry's eyes on him, he gave a little smile that wasn't quite a smirk and said, "See you around, Potter."

Harry finished off his first sandwich, and reached for another as he contemplated the fact that Draco Malfoy, the boy that had started every sentence back at Hogwarts with 'my father says', had defied his sire and was now apparently working for the Order. Not to mention the fact that he and Malfoy had just talked for at least five minutes without getting into a fist fight! Life was just downright strange sometimes.

1 June, 2001

"Harry. Harry, wake up."

The soft voice in his ear was accompanied by a gentle shake of his shoulder. Harry lifted his head from the edge of Draco's bed and looked up at Morag with bleary eyes.

"Did I fall asleep?" he asked.

"Yes, you did," she said with a kind smile.

It wasn't the first time he'd sat so long by Draco's bedside that he'd drifted off. Harry appreciated the fact that Morag didn't chase him off precisely at the end of official visiting hours. He wasn't sure if it was because he was the Boy Who Lived, or if she just remembered him fondly from their school days. Either way, he was glad that Draco's healer was someone who understood how much Harry needed to be here as often as he could.

"What time is it?" he asked, as he tried to stifle a yawn.

"Almost gone four in the morning. I figured I had better wake you and give you time to get home and get some proper rest before you have more training tomorrow…er, today," she said.

"Thanks," Harry said quietly. "For everything, Morag. I don't know what I would do without you."

"It's my pleasure, Harry," Morag said. "You'd better get moving, though. My replacement comes in at six, and she's not nearly as nice."

Harry smiled at her gentle teasing, and stood up, pushing the chair back against the wall where it had been before. He leaned over the bed to kiss Draco on the forehead. He didn't kiss Draco's lips. Something about that seemed so very wrong with Draco being unable to respond. But he couldn't stand not to show his affection somehow, so a tender kiss on the forehead would have to do until Draco woke up.

Harry had to believe that Draco would wake up. He didn’t know if he could make it through his days if he didn't have that hope.

"I love you," he whispered, for Draco's ears alone.

He was waiting for the day when Draco would say it back.

31 October, 1998

Harry carefully pushed open the tiny window in the attic that led to a small roof. He climbed out, shivering in the cool autumn air, before he pulled the window almost closed. Although he had no desire to join the small party downstairs, he had no wish to get locked out on the roof either. Making it look like the window was closed would hopefully discourage anyone who thought to seek him out.

With a sigh, he sat down and pulled his knees into his chest, wrapping his arms around them and tilting his head back to stare at the star-filled sky. Harry wasn't sure how long he sat there, but his skin had a fair number of goose pimples, not that he noticed.

Sometimes he regretted the knowledge that Halloween had always been his favorite holiday. It was the one time he'd usually been able to escape the Dursleys and participate. After they went out with Dudley, leaving him at home, Harry would sneak out of his cupboard and do his own trick-or-treating. All he had for a costume was a Frankenstein mask from an old Halloween outfit of Dudley's, but it was enough to get him candy at most houses.

He simply kept the Dursleys in his line of sight, usually staying a couple of houses behind them. Once he saw them heading for home, Harry would hightail it back and put himself in the cupboard, making sure to stash the mask and the pocketfuls of candy he'd been able to get in the cramped space as far under the stairs as he could reach. Uncle Vernon had never caught onto that little trick of his, Harry remembered with a small smile.

Once he'd found out that his parents had lost their lives on Halloween, the holiday had lost its allure. Ironically, this had happened once he was at Hogwarts and able to have more candy than he'd ever be able to eat in a dozen lifetimes. He'd managed for the most part to hide his new distaste for Halloween from his friends. As much as Harry appreciated Ron and Hermione, there were some things he just couldn't explain to them.

He figured that it had been at least a couple of hours that he'd been out here contemplating the night sky, and Harry was thinking that the festivities were probably about over. He should probably go in before Ron and Hermione really started looking for him.

The window suddenly swung open with a loud squeak and Harry jumped in surprise. A second later, Malfoy's head popped out and he smirked at Harry.

"Hiding, Potter?"

"Actually, yes, Malfoy. I'm not in the mood for company, so if you wouldn't mind," Harry said, as he jerked a thumb back towards the house.

Malfoy ignored this, naturally, and crawled out onto the tiny space, sitting himself down right beside Harry. He shivered and said, "Damn, it's cold out here." He pulled his wand out of his sleeve and cast a quick warming charm over the two of them.

Harry hadn't thought to do that, and muttered, "Thanks."

"No problem," Malfoy said with a grin.

He didn't say anything else and the two of them sat in silence for a few minutes, before Harry grew impatient.

"So what are you doing out here?" he asked.

"I think I'm the one who should be asking that question. I thought you'd be down at the party, lording it over your adoring fans."

"I don't have fans, Malfoy, I have friends. You probably have no idea what that's like, I know," Harry said.

"Oh, that's harsh, Potter. I did have friends. I left them all behind when I decided to join your Order."

Malfoy was looking up at the sky he spoke, but Harry could hear the touch of hurt in his voice, and immediately felt guilty. He knew that the Slytherin had given up a lot to join the Light side, including defying his own father, probably for the first time in his life.

"Sorry," Harry muttered. "It's just, Halloween is a kind of a rough time for me, and it's irritating having to put on a mask for everyone and pretend."

"Masks can be difficult to deal with, yes. But sometimes they're helpful in getting through day-to-day life."

Harry wasn't quite sure what to make of that. Was Malfoy trying to give him advice? He hadn't really had much contact with the other boy in the couple of months since he'd arrived at Grimmauld Place, so at least they hadn't fought, but that meant they'd never really talked either. Malfoy seemed to stay down in the potions lab with Snape most of the time, and Harry and his friends were preoccupied with finding Horcruxes.

"Had a lot of practice in wearing masks, have you?" he asked, rather flippantly. He had the feeling he was missing something that Malfoy was trying to say, and wished he would just stop being so cryptic and say what he meant.

"Sometimes I feel like the mask is my true face, I've worn it so often."

Frustrated, Harry said, "What are you talking about? You and Snape, and all the Slytherins, why can't you ever just come out and say what you mean?"

Malfoy turned and looked at Harry then, and he was surprised to see the sheen of tears in the other

boy's eyes.

"I got a letter from my mother today. My father was killed this morning. I thought if anyone would understand about losing their parent on this of all days, it would be you."

"I'm sorry," Harry said automatically, even though he wasn't sure if he really was or not. Lucius Malfoy was an utter git who probably had deserved whatever he got, but he was Draco's dad. Harry knew what it was like to lose someone you loved. He still missed Sirius every day.

"No, you're not," Malfoy said, with a small scoff.

"I'm sorry on your account, for losing your father. And having to find out by letter can't have been very nice."

"No. No, it wasn't," Malfoy sighed.

There was silence for a long moment, and Harry wondered whether he should break it or if he should just let it linger. Less chance of an argument that way. But he couldn't help being curious.

"How did it happen? Do you know?" he asked hesitantly.

"The Dark Lord was extremely angry over a failed mission and went a little too far in his punishment. My mum said in her letter that he hadn't really been the same since he got out of Azkaban," Malfoy said bitterly.

Harry wasn't sure if that bitterness was directed at Voldemort for killing Lucius, or at Harry himself for causing Draco's father to have been sent to Azkaban in the first place. Either way, he decided not to risk disagreement by just staying quiet. He wanted to think about Lily and James Potter right now, not Lucius Malfoy.

They might have sat there for another hour or two, just appreciating the company of another person as they contemplated their individual grief, but the wards suddenly went mad. They both jumped and looked at each other, before scrambling to their feet to rush back through the attic door. There was a momentary struggle as they both tried to go through at the same time, which Malfoy won as he'd been a bit closer.

By the time they clambered down the stairs into the living room where the rest of the Order had been partying, there was shouting and wands out everywhere. Harry went up on his tiptoes to try and see over the crowd. He hated being short, because he couldn't see anything. Just then, the people in the living room shifted and he caught a glimpse of pale blond hair.

Malfoy gasped and said, "Mum!?" His wand clattered to the floor, forgotten in his haste to get to his mother. He shoved his way through the mob of people and fell to his knees in front of Narcissa Malfoy. She was sitting on one of the sofas in the room, or perhaps it was more accurate to say that she was propped on the sofa. Harry had never seen Mrs. Malfoy looking less than perfectly put together, but she was a mess at the moment. Her hair was tangled and flying wildly about her face. Her clothes were torn in places and Harry thought he saw blood in several spots. She was also trembling uncontrollably.

Harry reached down and picked up Draco's wand, figuring the other boy wouldn't care for it to be trampled on. He moved closer to the sofa now that the crowd around them had thinned a little.

"What happened?" he asked, directing his question at Arthur Weasley.

"We're not sure. She just appeared a few minutes ago in the middle of the room. I believe she has one of our emergency Portkeys, although I'm not sure where or how she got hold of it," Arthur replied grimly.

Harry looked around the room and was surprised at the frowns and looks of outright suspicion on most everyone's faces. He shoved his and Draco's wand into his pocket and stepped forward to grab one of the fluffy afghans that rested on the back of the sofa.

"She's obviously hurt, so why aren't one of you helping her?" he said in irritation, as he wrapped the

afghan around Narcissa's shoulders. She started in surprise and looked up at him. Harry tried to smile at her in encouragement as he pulled the afghan closed in front of her. Her hands, still shaking, reached up to hold it in place as she returned his smile with a weak one of her own.

"Thank you, Mr. Potter," she said faintly. He could barely hear her as the wards were still wailing and Harry wondered why someone wasn't taking care of that, as it was extremely annoying.

Harry nodded, and then looked at Draco, who was watching him with gratitude shining out of his eyes.

"We weren’t sure if it might not be a trick of some kind," Hermione said, though she sounded unsure of herself now.

"Does that mean you can't be decent human beings and help someone who's in pain?" Harry snapped. "Where's Snape?"

"He was summoned a couple of hours ago," Remus said.

"She probably needs some healing potions. Malfoy, can you-"

Harry was cut off as the Floo suddenly flared and Severus Snape emerged, his cloak billowing just as it always had at Hogwarts. He also managed to exit and keep moving without losing his balance or getting ash all over him. Harry was at once impressed and envious. Of course, Harry still thought he looked like a giant bat as he swooped over to Narcissa. He took her face in his hands and raised it so that he could look at her more closely.

"Draco, blood replenishing potion, healing potion variant number three, and Murtlap Essence from the lab, now," he said sharply. Draco stood immediately and turned, but stopped when Snape spoke up again. "And the pain-relieving potion that I keep in the black cabinet."

"Wh-what? But that's…that's for-" Draco stammered, his eyes wide.

Snape tore his eyes away from Narcissa to bore into her son. "I know what it's for. She needs them sooner rather than later, so if you could hurry, it would be appreciated."

"Yes, sir," Draco whispered and left the room almost at a run.

Harry still sat beside Narcissa on the sofa, wondering whether he should just move out of Snape's way. He was rather afraid to move, as he really didn't want to catch the man's attention. It was never a good idea to be in Snape's focus when he was in this sort of mood, as Harry had learned by hard experience. Snape didn't seem to even notice he was there though, as he turned to look at the Order members standing around dumbly.

"Bill Weasley!" he shouted.

Ron's oldest brother stepped forward warily. "Yes?"

"You're the Secret Keeper for the headquarters, are you not?"

Harry blinked in surprise. He had never known who was made Secret Keeper after Dumbledore's death, but he supposed that Bill would make sense. Not as obvious as one of his parents or Kingsley Shacklebolt, and he had numerous contacts through his work as a cursebreaker with Gringott's.

"I am."

"Please let Mrs. Malfoy in on the secret, unless you're enjoying the delightful refrain of the house's wards as much as I am."

Bill stayed where he was, his uncertainty showing on his scarred face. "I think we might need some

explanation before I do that."

Snape glared and then bit out, "Mrs. Malfoy denounced the Dark Lord because he killed her husband this morning. In return for her show of defiance, he allowed his Death Eaters to torture her and then he himself placed her under the Cruciatus Curse several times over, for nearly a minute each time. I know this because I was there and witnessed every moment of it."

There was a wave of shocked murmurs throughout the room, and Bill Weasley, so white-faced now that his scars were standing out vividly, stepped forward to stand in front of Narcissa. He pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket and handed it to her, saying quietly, "Read this aloud, please."

Her hands were still shaking so badly that she couldn't hold the paper still enough to read it. Without thinking, Harry reached over and held them steady for her. He ignored the slight rise of Snape's eyebrow at the gesture.

"The headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix can be found at 12 Grimmauld Place," Narcissa read softly.

Instantly, the wards went quiet and everyone in the room breathed a sigh of relief. Draco came running back into the room then, his arms full of potions bottles. He set them on the sofa on the other side of Narcissa and then hovered there for a moment. Snape sent a fierce glare at Harry, who frowned in confusion before he realized that he was still sitting beside Draco's mum and holding her hands.

"Oh, sorry," he said as he released her hands and started to stand up. Before he could, Narcissa grabbed his arm with one hand.

"Your kindness is much appreciated, Mr. Potter," she said, still managing to sound regal despite the fact that she was in pain.

"You're welcome," was all Harry could think to say in reply. She let go and Harry stood up, Draco immediately taking his place.

"How did she end up here?" Bill asked.

Snape had begun administering the potions to Narcissa and it was a few seconds before he answered. "I was able to slip her my emergency Portkey and whisper the password to her. Unfortunately, I didn't have the opportunity until after she'd faced the horrors that the Dark Lord and his Death Eaters inflicted."

Finally, everyone in the room began to put their wands away, and the atmosphere of the room relaxed somewhat. Still, they all just kind of stood around, as if unsure what they should do next. Snape stood up and spoke to the room in general.

"She needs somewhere to rest. Is there a room available?"

"There's one on the third floor that's not being used. It'll take some cleaning first, so why don't you put her in our room for now," Molly offered. She looked at Narcissa, chin raised as she said this, seemingly expecting Mrs. Malfoy to sneer at her.

"That would be acceptable," Snape answered for her, as Narcissa's eyes had already begun to drift closed.

Molly, of course, rounded up her children to get them started on the cleaning, much to their dismay as it meant the party was over. Harry went with the Weasleys to help. He glanced over his shoulder as Snape leaned down to lift Narcissa in his arms, Draco still lingering right at his shoulder. As they trooped up the stairs to do yet more cleaning, Harry looked again at Snape, Draco, and Molly as they went down a hallway on the first floor. Just as he was about to turn away, Draco turned to look at him. Harry paused on the steps, wondering if Draco was going to say something. He also wondered why he was suddenly thinking of Malfoy as 'Draco'.

The other boy just gave him a brief nod, and then followed Snape and his mother down the hall. Harry realized he still had Draco's wand. He would have to find him tomorrow so that he could return it. For some reason, Harry found himself looking forward to that.

5 June, 2001

It had become a tradition for Harry to join Ron and Hermione on Tuesday evenings at their house for dinner. They still got together at other times, but Tuesdays had become a regular appointment that wasn't broken for just any old reason. Still, Harry didn't feel bad about telling Ron that he wasn't going to be able to make it tonight. Not that Ron was understanding once he found out the cause.

They were in the locker room at the training center, changing out of their work robes, and Ron was complaining bitterly. Harry was doing his best to ignore him, but it wasn't working very well.

"Tuesdays are supposed to be special, Harry. It's supposed to be our day to remember the way it was at Hogwarts when it was the three of us against everything. Can't you put off seeing Malfoy until tomorrow?"

Frankly, Harry thought that Ron was putting a bit too much emphasis on the 'Golden Trio' nonsense that had followed them since the end of the war. While he enjoyed the weekly dinners with his best friends, Draco was important as well.

"It's Draco's birthday, Ron. I can't leave him alone in St. Mungo's today of all days."

Ron pulled a clean jumper over his head, and then slammed his locker closed. "Look, I've done my best to accept that you and Malfoy had this thing, but honestly, it kills me and Hermione to see you throwing your life away at that hospital. You need to move on, for your own health and happiness."

Harry had to take a deep breath to keep his anger from erupting at Ron like flames in an explosion. When he thought he might be able to speak without a hex coming from his lips, he turned to his best friend.

"So if it was Hermione that had been wounded in the final battle, you would have just moved on and left her behind, is that it?"

Ron shifted uncomfortably, and he seemed aware that he might have gone too far, but then he raised his chin pugnaciously and said, "That's different. Hermione is my wife. I'd never leave her."

"And you think that if I could legally make Draco my husband, I wouldn't?" Harry said. He had to consciously keep himself from shouting, not wanting to draw any more public attention to his private life. It didn't matter that they were in a locker room, there were always curious eyes and ears on the Boy Who Lived.

"You'd want to marry Malfoy?" Ron said, and his nose wrinkled in disgust.

"Yes, I'd want to marry Draco!" Harry shouted, and then tried to calm himself. "I love him, Ron. I love him the same way that you love Hermione, and we didn't just have a 'thing'. We are a couple, and I will never desert him. Not as long as there's still breath in my body or his."

Harry slammed his locker closed just as Ron had, and had to turn away for a moment to compose himself, before he said something he would really regret. When he turned back around, he said, "Look, I'm sorry if you feel I'm not being a good friend, but it's one Tuesday. It's Draco's birthday and I want to spend it with him."

"Honestly, though, Harry, do you really think that he'd be happy, living as he is now? Don't you think it would be kinder to let him go?"

Harry's jaw dropped in astonishment. "Are you fucking kidding me? I can't believe you just said that! Every time I think you can't possibly be any more insensitive, you prove me wrong. So, I should just let them 'pull the plug' on Draco? Let them take him out behind the proverbial shed with a shotgun and put him out of his misery!?"

"Pull the plug, what's that even mean?" Ron muttered.

Harry let out a yell of pure frustration. He grabbed up his bag with his notes and books and threw it onto

his shoulder. "I'm done with you for the day. I may see you next week and I may not. Until then, don't talk to me."

He stormed out of the locker room, ignoring Ron's calls to wait. By the time he got to St. Mungo's, he had calmed down a little, but he was still seething over Ron's words. "Bastard!" he growled under his breath. An old lady walking the opposite way gave him a dirty look, but Harry didn't care. He was about ready to have Draco moved to a facility anywhere else in the world, and leave England behind.

When he was outside Draco's door, having given Morag his customary greeting, ignoring her curious look at his mood, Harry made sure to take a few deep breaths to completely calm himself. He didn't want to bring negativity into Draco's room, especially not today.

His anger fled as soon as he saw Draco lying so still on the bed. Sadness rippled through his body and Harry almost fell into the chair beside the bed. As much as he didn't want to bring anger into Draco's room, he didn’t want to bring tears either. Who knew how much Draco could hear and understand, after all? But today, he couldn't help it. Ron's words had touched a raw nerve and Harry found himself sobbing onto the mattress. He reached out to squeeze Draco's limp hand, needing to feel his lover's touch, even if Draco couldn't feel him.

"Please come back to me," he whispered helplessly. "I don't care if I'm being selfish. I can't let you go, I just can't."

14 January, 1999

Grimmauld Place always had an air of sadness surrounding it, but today, it was particularly somber. The raid had been risky, but the Order had felt they couldn't ignore the information they'd received. Unfortunately, the entire thing had been an elaborate ruse planned by the Death Eaters, and the Order had fallen for it. They had lost a number of good people, and the survivors had only barely managed to escape.

Harry hadn't been on the raid, as he, Hermione, and Ron had been busily searching for Horcruxes, but they had returned to disaster at Order headquarters. Severus Snape had apparently been suspected as a double agent, and the purpose of the trap had been to draw him out. It had worked only too well, and

Snape had given up his life in shielding the others' escape.

Harry honestly wasn't sure how to feel about the potions master's death. On the one hand, he had protected Harry countless times, sometimes when Harry wasn't even aware. On the other hand, he had never liked 'Potter', and had made Harry's life absolutely miserable whenever he had the opportunity.

Feeling rather uncomfortable with the obsessive analysis of what had gone wrong that was taking place in the dining room, Harry headed upstairs. Ron had looked longingly like he wanted to follow, but glanced over to Hermione who was listening attentively and gave Harry an apologetic shrug. Harry really didn't mind, as he didn't exactly feel up to company at the moment, not even that of his best friends.

As he passed by one of the bedrooms on the third floor, he heard the muffled sounds of someone crying. Harry hesitated, knowing that it must be Draco, and wondered if he should try to say something. He shook his head, and started to pass on by. Harry Potter would be the last person Draco wanted to see right now. Although the two of them had shared some civil conversations since Halloween, starting when Harry had returned Draco's wand the next day, they still weren't what Harry would call friends.

But then a low moan of obvious anguish filtered through the door, and there was no way that Harry could ignore someone in that kind of pain, even if Draco would probably just scream at him to go away. Taking a deep breath, he slowly opened the door.

"Malfoy?"

The crying stopped abruptly with a choked sob, and Harry had to squint into the darkness to see where the other boy was. The only way he finally spotted him crouched beside the dresser in the corner was the faint gleam of platinum blond hair.

"Go away," Draco growled.

"I will in a minute. I just wanted to make sure you were okay."

"Are you daft? Of course I'm not okay!" Draco said angrily. "But there's nothing you can do, Chosen One, so go away!"

Harry could hear the scorn in Draco's voice, but at the same time, he could also hear the desperate pain that he was in. He moved into the room and quietly shut the door behind him. He ignored Draco's grunt of disgust as he made his way over to the bed and sat down on the edge of it. He looked down at Draco as the other boy glared up at him from the floor.

Harry had no clue what he was doing. He was probably the least qualified person in the world to try and comfort someone, but he couldn't leave the situation alone for some reason.

"Were you there? Um, on the raid, I mean?" Harry asked.

"No, I was brewing down in the basement. They don't let reformed Death Eaters go on the important raids, Potter," Draco sneered.

"D'you want me to go get your mum, then?" Harry offered.

Draco gave him a look of utter disgust. "God, no, Potter! What, do you think I'm some whiny infant who needs my mummy whenever I'm upset? I came up here to be alone," he said, giving Harry an look as if to say 'do you get my point, idiot?'

"You and Snape were very close?" Harry asked, and then winced. He was making it worse with every word he spoke!

Draco gave a sigh, and Harry supposed he must have figured that he wasn't going to get his solitude back any time soon, and he answered quietly.

"He was my godfather."

"Um, wow. I didn't know that."

"Why would you? It was none of your business. Still is none of your business," Draco said sullenly. He turned his head to stare at the wall, seeming to ignore Harry's presence.

Harry was beginning to think this had been a monumentally bad idea, and was wondering if he should go, when Draco abruptly broke the uncomfortable silence.

"It's just so unfair! Those bastards down there didn't appreciate the depth of the sacrifice he made for them. Not just today, but all the time. Do you know how many curses the Dark Lord routinely throws at his Death Eaters, Potter? Severus took that, every day, and they didn't care. He died for them today, and all they're worrying about is they lost their precious spy! Not that they lost Severus Snape, they lost their spy! That's what matters to them!" Draco shouted.

Harry watched helplessly as the other boy's eyes filled with tears. Draco cried out in frustration, pounding his fists against the floor, before he dropped his head to his knees and was sobbing again. Harry's body was moving before his brain was aware that it was doing so. He dropped to the floor beside Draco and wrapped one arm around his shoulders.

He had feared that he would be rejected, but Draco accepted the comfort, and even leaned into Harry just a bit. Harry didn't say anything else, as his track record for consoling words thus far was rather pathetic, and just tried to be a reassuring presence. Draco cried hard for a few minutes, but eventually, his sobs slowed to just an occasional sniffle. Harry was still afraid to try and say anything, so he waited to see if Draco would.

"Everything is so fucked up," Draco muttered.

"Why do you say that?" Harry asked, careful to keep his voice soft.

"I didn't cry at all when my father died. I loved him, but…he wasn't much of a father, really. Other than not killing me for refusing the Dark Mark, what the hell did he ever do except make my life a nightmare?"

“I don’t think that’s so fucked up. Snape was the one who was there for you every day. Course you’re going to take his death harder. I miss my father, but I never really knew him. Missing Sirius is like a hole in my chest sometimes.”

“Yeah. That’s kind of how it feels, you know? Like there’s this huge wound in me. Feels like it’s never going to heal,” Draco said.

“It gets easier. I’m not really going to say it gets better, but it does get easier.”

Draco let out a shuddering sigh, and the two of them sat quietly for a long time.

“Feel like beating me in a game of chess?” Harry asked, after his bum had started to grow numb from sitting in one place for so long.

“Not right now. Think I’d like to be alone for a bit,” Draco said.

“Sure. You can talk to me if you want, you know. Anytime. I don’t mind,” Harry said as he struggled to his feet. He stomped on the floor a couple of times, trying to get the blood flowing back into his legs. Not knowing what else to say, he headed for the door.

“Potter,” Draco called, just as Harry’s hand touched the doorknob.

“Yeah?” He glanced back to where Malfoy was still sitting on the floor.

“Thanks, Harry,” he said, a sort of half-smile turning up the edges of his mouth.

“You’re welcome…Draco,” he replied, and as he turned around to leave, Harry felt a tiny curl of satisfaction in his chest that he'd been able to help, even if it was only for a few minutes.

6 June, 2001

Harry was sitting in the training center's library, studying for the exam that was scheduled for the end of the week. He glanced down at his watch, deciding that he would give it another half hour before he quit for the day and headed to St. Mungo's.

"Hello, Harry," a voice said softly from nearby his right elbow.

He turned his head to look at Hermione for a moment before giving his attention back to his books. He knew why she was here.

"Ron sent in the big guns this soon? Normally, it takes him at least a week before he begs you to fix things for him."

Hermione sighed and sat down across from him. She was working with the Department of International Magical Cooperation, hoping to become an Ambassador in the future. Harry had no idea how she and Ron planned to work that out regarding their marriage since Ron was training to be an Auror here at home, and right now, he really didn't care too much.

"You know that he means well."

"No, as a matter of fact, I don't know that. What I know is that he thinks I should just forget about the man I love and 'move on with my life'," Harry said bitterly, making air quotes with his fingers as he said it, because he knew Hermione found that pretentious. He was so angry with the both of them, that he

welcomed a fight at this point.

She ignored that, however, and spoke gently to him again. "I don't want you to forget about Draco, Harry, but you do have to face reality. And the reality is, he's been comatose for more than a year. He may not ever wake up, and even if he does, he may not be the same Draco you knew."

"Do you think I haven't thought of that!" Harry yelled, and then quieted when several other people in the library hissed hushing noises in their direction. "Do you really think that I'm not painfully aware that I may never get him back the way he was, if I get him back at all? But what am I supposed to do, Hermione? He could never wake up, but then again he could wake up tomorrow. I would hate myself if I wasn't there when he did. He has no one but me now."

"I know, I know, Harry," Hermione said, and reached her hand across the table to cover his. "Ron feels terrible about what he said."

"Yeah, well, he should," Harry said stubbornly.

"I don't think either of us realized until now exactly how much he does mean to you."

"He's everything to me," Harry said quietly, glad that his friends seemed to be finally taking his relationship seriously. "I love him, Hermione. Forever kind of love, no different than you and Ron."

"I get it, Harry, I do. We both just worry about you."

"You don't need to worry so much. I'm fine."

Hermione gave him a knowing look, which he conveniently ignored.

"So, we both know I'm going to talk you around eventually. Can we just skip to that part, so we can get it

over with?" she said with a smirk worthy of a Slytherin, and playfully pinched his hand before she let it go.

"Ow," Harry said, even as he couldn't keep the grin from sliding over his face. He and Ron had really hit the jackpot when they decided to go and rescue a fellow first year from a troll. She just had a knack for making both he and Ron see sense. His anger at Ron still lingered, but he couldn't stay truly mad at either of his best friends for long. The fact was, he knew they really only had his best interests at heart, and it hurt them to see him hurting. Ron simply had no tact.

Harry heaved an exaggerated sigh. "I suppose so, but you can tell Ron that he's buying the drinks at the pub for the next month."

"You can tell him yourself. I found a new recipe for pork roast that I want to try."

Harry gathered up his books and papers and shoved them in his bag. He walked beside Hermione towards the exit doors. "Are you sure that's a wise idea, after the Cornish hen incident?"

Hermione smacked him on the arm. "That could have happened to anyone!"

Harry laughed, and it felt good to laugh, as he hadn't done so for a while now. He couldn't wait for the day when he could hear Draco's laugh again.

"No, that could only have happened to you, Mione," he teased as they headed for home.

14 February 1999

Harry sat staring intently at the chess board in front of him. He heard his opponent give a deliberate yawn, but ignored him. He would make his move when he was good and ready, damn it.

"Some time this century, Harry," Draco said in an annoying sing-song voice.

Harry just grunted in response, refusing to be rushed. He also wasn't sure what to make of the funny little twist in his belly every time Draco said his name. Finally, once he'd managed to calm his fluttering stomach, Harry made a move. He grinned up at Draco expectantly.

"Oh, Harry, Harry, Harry," Draco said, shaking his head. "You are exceptionally bad at this game." He moved one of his pieces and said, "Check."

"Damn! I'm never going to be able to beat Ron," Harry whined.

"Of course you can. Isn't that what we're doing here? I'm teaching you. Though I do have to admit, you're a terrible student," Draco said with a grin.

"Shut up, you," Harry grumbled. Together, they began moving all the pieces back to their starting positions, preparing for another round.

Harry had been grateful to Draco for keeping him company today, seeing as Ron and Hermione were being all coupley and mushy thanks to it being Valentine's Day. If Harry'd had to hear one more epically bad poem from Ron's mouth, he might have lost it completely. Normally, Hermione was a very sensible girl, but today, she was eating that mess up. It was revolting.

Now, however, as he'd gotten trounced at chess four games in a row, Harry was wishing he'd just read a book or something. There was always research to be done on the Horcruxes, after all, but no, everyone had decided to take a break for love today. Everyone but Harry, that was. He had been starting to feel a little sorry for himself when Draco made the offer for chess, so perhaps he hadn't been thinking clearly when he agreed to play against someone who never lost.

"You know what? I think I need to adjust my instruction methods. After all, if the student fails, perhaps it's because of the teacher."

"Someone should have told that to Snape," Harry muttered without thinking.

Draco smacked him on the back of the head. "Be nice to my godfather's memory," he said.

Harry immediately felt badly for what he'd said. "I'm sorry."

Draco shrugged. "It's okay. I can admit he wasn't the best teacher in the school."

Now Harry felt terrible because Draco was starting to look sad again. "So, am I a completely hopeless case, Professor Malfoy? Or can I be taught?" he asked, waggling his eyebrows in an exaggerated fashion.

"I think it will take every ounce of my skill and patience, but yes! You can be taught, Mr. Potter!" Draco said dramatically, getting into the silliness of the moment. He hopped up from his chair and came around to Harry's side of the table. "All right, here's what we're going to do. I'm going to play from your side, and as we go through turns, I'm going to talk you through the possibilities. You have to learn to think several moves ahead, Harry. And not just your own moves, but your opponent's as well."

"All right, I guess we can give it a go," Harry said. He was trying not to be distracted by the way Draco was leaning down and whispering almost directly into his ear, but it was very difficult.

After a little while, Harry managed to put Draco's nearness, and the fact that it was an issue at all, out of his mind as he concentrated on listening to the chess instructions. Then Draco casually draped his arm over Harry's shoulders and he was instantly intensely aware of Draco once again. Harry didn't know what to do. If he asked Draco to move away, he worried that it would be insulting. If Draco kept touching him like that, Harry worried that he was going to do something very embarrassing.

He hadn't even thought of the possibility that he might be attracted to boys before. Admittedly, there had been a lot of other things on his mind. But he had always been aware of Draco. No matter where they were or what they were doing, whether they'd been enemies or almost-friends, Harry had often fixated on Draco. The problem was he had no idea how Draco felt about him Sure, they'd become almost

friends lately, but Harry had no clue if Draco was inclined the same way that he found himself leaning.

Determined to put this out of his mind for the moment, Harry concentrated on the instructions that Draco was giving. The constant repetition of Draco's rules seemed to be sinking in as Harry made a move that had his teacher giving a 'yes' of delight. Pleased with himself, Harry turned to grin at Draco, only to find his face mere inches from his own.

Their eyes held as if magnetized for a long heartbeat. Just as Harry was wondering if he should be the first to back away and break the moment, Draco leaned in and pressed his lips to Harry's.

It was probably the briefest kiss in the history of kisses, as Harry was so startled that he failed to respond. Draco backed away quickly and Harry saw that his face was flushed with embarrassment.

"Sorry, I'm sorry! I-I don't know why I did that," he stammered.

"I didn't mind!" Harry said quickly, because Draco was backing away and Harry definitely didn't want that. "You just, um, took me by surprise, that's all."

"Oh," Draco said, and bit his lip nervously as he looked down at the floor. When he looked back up at Harry, there was a cautious hope in his eyes.

Harry had never seen Draco Malfoy acting so unsure of himself. It was rather appealing.

"Maybe we could-" Harry started, and then broke off as he heard his name being called from the hallway.

"There you are! Hermione and I have been looking all over for you," Ron said as he and Hermione walked into the library. "Oy, Malfoy, what're you doing in here? Is he bothering you, Harry?"

Harry rolled his eyes at Ron, as Draco's face fell into the sneer that the Gryffindors were more familiar

with. "Ron, don't be an idiot. He was trying to teach me how to play chess," he said as he gestured towards the board.

"Why didn't you ask me, mate? You know I'd be happy to teach you," Ron said, pouting a little.

"I was trying to get Draco to show me how to beat you," Harry said.

"That's not fair, getting lessons from a Slytherin! Did he teach you all the sneaky moves, then?"

"Honestly, Ron, you're being ridiculous," Hermione said. "I, for one, think it was nice of Draco to try and help Harry learn a bit of strategy." She gave Draco a smile and Harry wanted to hug her for trying.

Draco, still wearing his Malfoy sneer, didn't reply. Although Harry thought it was a plus that he didn't outright insult her.

"I've got potions to brew. Thanks for the entertainment, Potter," Draco said as he headed for the door.

"Hey!" Harry called. Draco paused and looked at him with a questioning lift of his brow. "I'd really like to do this again sometime." He gave Draco an intent look, hoping that his message of wanting to continue both the chess and the kissing was getting through.

To his delight, Draco grinned and winked at him. "I'll look forward to it."

Harry knew that Ron and Hermione were wondering about the silly grin on his face, but he couldn't have erased it for anything.

13 June 2002

Harry was walking out of the classroom when he heard Auror Beatty call to him.

"Potter, I need a word with you."

With an inward sigh of resignation, Harry turned around and walked back up to their instructor's desk. "Yes, sir?"

"Your work today was not up to your usual standards. In fact, I've noticed a steady decline in your performance over the last few weeks. Care to explain what's going on with you?"

"I've got some things going on in my personal life, but I will work harder to make sure they don't interfere with my training."

"Aurors don't have the luxury of personal lives, Potter. Dark Wizards don't care whether you're worried about something at home, they'll just curse you and move on."

"I understand, sir," Harry said, trying not to grit his teeth. He'd already sacrificed his childhood to fighting Dark Wizards, so he certainly wasn't going to do the same for his future. He wanted to do his part, to help keep the Wizarding World safe, but not at the cost of his own happiness.

"I'm not sure you do. Maybe if you spent more time studying and less time at St. Mungo's, you might begin to," Auror Beatty snapped. He didn't give Harry a chance to respond before he was striding out of the room.

Harry stood there in shock for several minutes. He knew perfectly well that many of the other Auror trainees had boyfriends, girlfriends, wives, husbands. Some of them even had children! Once again, it seemed as though there were one set of rules for everyone else, and special rules for the Boy Who Lived. He wasn't allowed to do anything except fight against evil, apparently.

In disgust, he finally turned and left the training center, defiantly heading straight for St. Mungo's. He gave his usual greeting to Morag, got the same depressing news that nothing had changed, and sat down beside Draco's bed.

"I'm not going to do it, Draco. I'm never going to give up on you, because I know that you're going to wake up. If I have to quit Auror training..." Harry trailed off, thinking about how being an Auror had been his dream since fifth year at Hogwarts.

At the time, he had thought it was a hopeless dream, because he really hadn't expected to survive the battle with Voldemort. It wasn't until he'd met Draco again at Grimmauld Place that Harry had dared to dream he might have an actual future. It wasn't until then that he'd realized how much he wanted a future. And he wanted it with Draco Malfoy.

Part of him was still in disbelief that the person who should mean the most to him would be the same prat who'd made him miserable from the time they were eleven years old. It was true, though. Draco was more important to Harry than anything else in the world. If he had to give up Auror training, Ron and Hermione, if he had to give up the Wizarding World itself, Harry would do it in a heartbeat.

He took Draco's hand in his, pulling it to his mouth to kiss it gently. Even with all the potions and medicines, he could still smell the essence of Draco himself. Harry had always loved the way Draco smelled. One of his favorite things to do after sex had been to curl up and put his face in Draco's neck, inhaling as deeply as he could. Draco would squirm and protest, because his neck was ticklish, but he would eventually give in and let Harry have his moment, though not without considerable teasing.

Harry smiled at the memory. He chuckled softly as he pictured Draco's cries of mock outrage at Harry's silliness. The smile slowly faded as he focused on Draco's face now, quiet and unnaturally still. It was like a knife to his heart every time he had to come into this room and see Draco lying there.

"I'm not going anywhere, I swear. If I have to wait forever, then I will," he vowed. He didn't know if it was possible, but he liked to think that Draco heard him.

1 July 1999

Harry gasped and arched into the body pressing down into his. Draco's mouth had found that sensitive spot right under his ear than always drove him mad. They were both naked from the waist up, but as of yet in their fledgling relationship, they hadn't ventured below the waist other than frotting through clothes. It was hard to find the time and the privacy to pursue their explorations of each others' bodies, but they stole moments here and there whenever they could. It was even harder keeping it a secret from everyone else in the house.

Harry felt fingers teasing the snap on his trousers, and opened his eyes to look into Draco's. The face above him was alight with excitement and lust.

"Will you let me, Harry? I want to feel you. I need to feel you," he whispered.

Harry nodded his head dumbly. He wanted that, too. Right now, he wanted it more than anything. Draco grinned and two seconds later, he had Harry's trousers open and pushed downwards, his hand diving into Harry's pants to wrap around his cock.

Harry cried out and bucked up against Draco. He had never known anything could feel so good. Draco laughed softly and shushed him.

"Quiet, Harry. We don't want everyone knowing what we're up to, do we?"

"You've got your hand on my prick. If you want me quiet, you might have to gag me," Harry gasped.

To his surprise, Draco wore a thoughtful look for a second, then shook his head and said, "Maybe later. Seriously, though, Weasley and Granger are down the hall."

Harry snorted. "I think our Silencing Charms will hold and anyway, I'm pretty sure they're up to the same

thing we are and aren't going to hear a thing."

"Ew, don't make me have such horrible thoughts when I'm making love to you."

Harry's heart skipped a beat at Draco's description of their actions. He hoped that it was a sign that Draco took what was happening between them as seriously as Harry did. He was pretty sure that he was on the verge of falling for Draco Malfoy completely. But he feared being the first one to say something if Draco was just having a bit of fun, so he covered his reaction by lifting his head and kissing Draco fiercely.

Draco moaned and pushed his hand further down Harry's pants to cup his balls. Harry spread his legs wider instinctively and he screamed again, though since it was into Draco's mouth, the sound wasn't as loud in the otherwise quiet night. They were both panting loudly when the kiss ended.

"Fuck, Draco, you may have to gag me after all. There's no way I can keep quiet when you're doing that."

"If you think that's good, wait until you feel this," Draco whispered. He pulled away and sat up on his knees, ignoring Harry's whimper of protest. Draco grabbed the waist of Harry's trousers and pulled them completely off, pants and all.

Harry shivered, self-conscious at being so exposed. But it wasn't more than a couple of seconds later that Draco was stripping off his own trousers and pants. Harry gazed at Draco's cock in wonder. He'd seen other boys in the showers at Hogwarts, peeking out of the corner of his eye in curiosity, but Draco's cock was the most beautiful that he'd ever seen. Draco preened for a moment, enjoying Harry's admiration, before he leaned back over Harry on his hands and knees.

"I'm going to give you such pleasure, Harry. Are you ready for it?" he asked, as he teased Harry's mouth with his, sneaking quick little kisses in the middle of his words.

"Yes, yes, please, Draco," Harry said breathlessly.

Draco got a wicked grin on his face, right before he slid down Harry's body and took his cock into his mouth. Harry didn't just scream, he howled, grabbing Draco's hair with both hands. Draco pulled off and reached up to gently touch one of Harry's hands with his.

"Easy, Harry. I have a sensitive scalp, you know," he said. Mortified, Harry let go and dropped his hands awkwardly by his sides. Draco made a tsking noise and said, "I didn't say don't do it, I just said be careful."

"Okay, sorry," Harry said, and carefully put one hand on the back of Draco's head, feeling how soft and silky Draco's hair was.

"Don't be sorry. We're still learning about each other. That's part of the fun of it," Draco said with a soft smile. He didn't give any warning before he sucked Harry's cock back into his mouth. Harry tried to keep himself a bit more under control this time, but Draco was doing things to him that Harry had never even imagined.

In an embarrassingly short amount of time, Harry was about to come. He tried to warn Draco, as he didn't know if it was okay to come in someone's mouth the first time they gave you a blow job or not. To his dismay, Draco released his cock and slithered back up Harry's body to kiss him again. Not that he didn't appreciate the kiss, but he'd rather liked what Draco was doing a moment ago.

But then Draco slipped one leg in between Harry's so that their cocks were perfectly lined up and thrust his hips, causing the most wonderful friction. Harry moaned and wrapped his arms around Draco's body, pulling him as close as he could while thrusting his own hips back against Draco's. Then Draco reached one hand in between their bodies and curled it around both Harry's and his own cock at the same time, and that was even better. Draco lifted his head to stare down at Harry.

"I have to watch you come. I love the way you look when you do. It's become my new favorite thing," Draco whispered, as his hand began to move faster and faster.

Harry didn't have time to be embarrassed at Draco's declaration, as it was only a moment later that he was coming hard. He cried Draco's name and gave a whole-body shudder as his climax rolled through

him, leaving him wide-eyed and gasping for air at the end of it.

"So beautiful," Draco murmured, and then gasped as he reached his own peak. Harry could see why Draco loved to watch him. Draco's face seemed briefly ethereal, his eyes glowing with pleasure. Harry loved the way Draco held his gaze as he came. It was the most intimate moment they'd shared together yet.

"Fuck!" Draco said, and then collapsed onto Harry.

Harry didn't care, as it was the most wonderful feeling to have Draco's limbs all entwined with his own. He turned his head to kiss Draco and found his nose pushed against Draco's neck. Intrigued at the delicious scent that was pure Draco, intensified after their intimacy, Harry breathed in deeply.

To his astonishment, Draco giggled and raised his shoulder. "Stop that, I'm ticklish there," he said.

"I can't help it. You smell so good," Harry said, trying to get his nose back into contact with Draco's skin.

Draco resisted, which resulted in a brief wrestling match. But it was the middle of the night, and they were both too tired, and satisfied, to pursue it for long. They ended up lying down on the bed, facing each other, arms wrapped around each other's waists. Draco smiled and Harry returned it. Even though the world was going to shit outside, right here, in this moment, Harry thought he'd never been happier.

16 June 2001

Harry jerked awake and sat up. For a moment, he was confused about where he was, then he heard the muted beeping of the monitoring spells and realized he'd fallen asleep at Draco's bedside again. Squinting at the clock on the side table, Harry gasped when he saw that it was nearly seven in the morning. Thankfully, it was Saturday, so he wasn't late for training, but he preferred to avoid the dayshift healers and nurses.

He'd grown used to Morag's understanding and had found much less of that with the staff that was there during daylight hours. The few times he'd had an encounter with one of the day people, it started with them gushing and adoring of the Boy Who Lived. Until they found out the patient he was there to see. He could see the looks of disapproval in their eyes, hear it in the tone of their voices, and it infuriated him.

He wondered why Morag hadn't awakened him, as she normally chased him out by three or four in the morning. Giving a quick stretch to loosen cramped muscles where he'd been propped on the side of Draco's bed for hours, Harry stood. He gave Draco his customary kiss on the forehead and whispered his love, before turning and walking to the door.

As he was about to open the door, he heard voices on the other side. Sighing softly in frustration, Harry waited for them to pass. Unfortunately, they were lingering by Draco's door.

"Good morning, Alice." Oh, that was Morag. Harry wondered where she had been.

"Morning, Morag. Anything urgent I need to know about?"

"I just spent the last couple of hours calming Warren Barrington. He had a really bad episode." Well, that explained why she hadn't been around to wake him up.

"Got him all calm now?"

"Finally! If you're lucky, he'll sleep most of the morning."

"Well, better you than me," Alice laughed. "What about this one?" Harry was taken aback at the way her voice changed, the venom practically dripping from her words.

"Malfoy? Still no response to anything. I think Healer Matthews is going to try some new spells today. He

was talking about that before he left last night anyway."

"Waste of time, if you ask me," Alice said with a sniff. Harry wanted to punch her in the face. The only reason he didn't step out the door and curse her insensible, is that he was worried they might take away his visiting privileges. Plus, Morag bent the rules enough for him as it was. He didn't want her to lose her job.

"Now, Alice, that's hardly fair," Morag said, and Harry could hear her discomfort with the conversation.

"So? If it were up to me, I'd quit all this treatment and just let him waste away." Now Harry wanted to kill her. It took everything he had not to open that door and blast her into oblivion.

Fortunately, they moved on down the hall at that point, and Harry couldn't hear them anymore. He took several deep breaths, trying to calm his anger, and then fear began to creep in. What if more than one person felt the same way as this Alice person? Was Draco really safe here at St. Mungo's? Harry wondered again whether he should attempt to have Draco moved to some other facility. The problem was, he wasn't Draco's family, or Draco's husband, and he had no say over Draco's care. Morag was kind enough to let him have extended visiting hours, but when it came down to the reality of it, Harry was helpless to do anything for Draco.

He peeked out the door to make sure the hallway was clear, and then slipped out. His head was whirling as he took the lift down to the first floor. He had a lot of things to think about.

29 November 1999

Harry eased the door to his room open, not wanting to wake Draco. There were more people staying in Grimmauld Place now, due to increased attacks by Voldemort and his Death Eaters. Space was growing scarce and Harry had volunteered to share with Draco. Of course, no one knew that they regularly transfigured the two twin beds into one giant bed, and they certainly had no idea of the things that he and Draco got up to in that bed. No, Ron had just been glad that he didn't have to be the one to room with Draco Malfoy.

As a matter of fact, Harry was really fortunate, because Ron and Hermione were finding it increasingly difficult to find any alone time now that his parents were living here. Hermione was sharing with Tonks and Ron was crammed into a room with both Fred and George. All in all, Harry considered himself pretty lucky.

Or at least he had, until the light came on and he was face-to-face with a furious boyfriend.

"Draco! I'm sorry, I didn't mean to wake you," Harry said.

"I'm sure you didn't. You meant for me to not even know that you were gone, didn't you? Sneaking out as soon as you think I'm asleep, and then crawling back in the middle of the night. Do you take me for an idiot?"

"I just didn't want you to worry," Harry said.

"That's just rich. Am I a child, then? Too fragile to handle bad things happening? Let me tell you something, Harry Potter. I can deal with life and all its messiness. Do you think it was easy for me to turn my back on my family and go to McGonagall to ask for asylum? Do you think it was easy for me to face losing the one man who'd been there for me all my life? And then to know that my father was killed by the Dark Lord and my mother was tortured? Where, in all of that, do you see a delicate flower that needs to be protected?" Draco snapped.

Harry moved into the room and tried to embrace Draco, but his lover backed away, holding up a hand to ward him off.

"I don't think that, Draco! I just knew that you would worry about me, and it physically hurts me to think of you in pain. I can't stand the thought that I might be the one to cause you pain."

"And what if you'd been hurt or killed on this mission? What if I'd lost you and I never got the chance to say good-bye?" Draco said, and Harry wanted to die at the anguish in his voice.

"It wasn't that kind of mission. We were just following up a lead on a Horcrux. It was utterly boring," Harry protested.

Against Ron and Hermione's wishes, Harry had told Draco about the Horcruxes several months ago, arguing that Draco's knowledge of Dark Arts could only be a help to them. And he had been helpful, much to Ron's chagrin. It was thanks to Draco that they'd been able to find Hufflepuff's cup.

"This time! You are at the top of the Dark Lord's list! Any time that you leave the protection of this house, you're taking a risk," Draco shouted.

Harry couldn't help his own anger coming to the forefront. "So, I'm supposed to cower in this house for the rest of the war? Afraid of my own shadow? I'm the one who's got to face him in the end, and I don't know about you, but I'm ready for this to be over. I want to get on with the rest of my life."

"I want the same thing, only, you know, I'd kind of like you to be around for the rest of our lives," Draco said angrily.

Harry was angry himself now, so Draco's exact words didn't really register. "What does it matter to you anyway? Does anyone really care if I live or die so long as I kill the bastard before I go?" he said sarcastically.

"Yes! I fucking care, you idiot, because I'm in love with you!"

Harry's anger melted away immediately and he stared at Draco, stunned into speechlessness. When he was capable of words again, they were less than eloquent. "You what?"

"I love you, Harry. I want you to live, because I want to spend the rest of my life with you," Draco said. When Harry just continued to stare at him wordlessly, Draco said sharply, "I've put myself out there and said it. If you don't say it back, I'll kill you myself and to hell with the Dark Lord."

Waking up to the fact that Draco had just said what he'd been longing to hear for months, Harry surged forward and tackled Draco, both of them falling onto the bed with a thud. Before Draco could protest, Harry was kissing him. When their lips eventually parted, Harry looked down into Draco's eyes.

"I love you, too. I've been in love with you for months and I've just been too scared to say it."

"Why?" Draco asked, as he caressed the side of Harry's face with one hand.

Harry unconsciously leaned into Draco's touch as he answered. "I was worried you didn't feel the same. It would have devastated me to find out you were just having fun."

"Oh, I'm having fun, there's no doubt about that, but this is serious as well. You're the one I want to be with forever, Harry."

"I want that, too, Draco," Harry said and tried to kiss Draco again.

Draco stopped him by putting one finger on Harry's lips. "But you need to stop trying to protect me. I can take care of myself, and I have my own reasons for fighting this war. It's not just you against Voldemort," Draco said, and Harry was proud of him for finding the courage to say the name. "This is everybody's war. We're all fighting alongside you."

"I understand," Harry said, once Draco had moved his finger. "I'll do better, I promise."

"Yes, you will. Right now, you'll make it up to me with a fabulous blow job, followed by some serious worshipping of every inch of my body. Plus, I want a foot massage later."

"A foot massage, too! Don't you think that's a bit too much penance?" Harry asked, even as he started working on the buttons to Draco's pajama top.

"Absolutely not. And if you backslide and do this again, it'll be a foot massage every night for a month," Draco said haughtily.

Then he didn't say anything else for a long while as he and Harry were much too busy.

24 June, 2001

Harry had thought it over carefully, and he'd made his decision. He was going to get Draco out of St. Mungo's before something happened 'accidentally'. He'd spent the last week preparing everything. He bought a small isolated Muggle house and put every ward he could think of over it. He would have made it unplottable, but you needed a second person for that, and Harry honestly didn't feel like he could trust anyone else with this, not even Ron and Hermione.

He'd also spent the last week watching carefully everything the staff at St. Mungo's did for Draco, memorizing the order of potions, asking about spells under the guise of concern and curiosity. He wanted to be able to care for Draco just as efficiently as St. Mungo's did now. It was a fine hospital; it was simply that Harry didn't trust all of them any longer to take care of Draco. And it would only take one person with a grudge to wreck Harry's world. He considered it unbelievably lucky that nothing had happened before now.

He chose the early morning hours of Sunday, as that was usually when the hospital was the quietest. The chaos of Saturday night in the emergency ward had died down. The patients were generally either asleep or quiet in their rooms. The staff made a round at 3:00 and didn't do another for at least an hour, unless someone's alarm went off. Harry could only hope that didn't happen tonight. He had pretended to leave right after the 3:00 round, telling Morag that he would return the next evening as usual.

However, he really only ducked into a broom cupboard around the corner and pulled his Invisibility Cloak out of his bag. He was going to use a disillusionment spell on himself, but he really didn't want to cast any spells on Draco, as he wasn't sure if it would interfere with any of the treatments he was being given. Once he had Draco secure at the house, he would be able to research a little more. The Invisibility Cloak was to cover Draco, and since Harry would have to carry his full weight, he took a strengthening potion so that he would be able to manage it without giving them away.

He vanished the strengthening potion vial after he'd taken it and then cast his strongest disillusionment spell on himself. Exiting the broom cupboard, Harry kept one eye out for any staff as he made his way back to Draco's room. When he slipped inside and closed the door behind him, Harry breathed a sigh of relief. That was the first step taken care of.

The next part was tricky, as he had to undo all the monitoring spells on Draco without setting them off, which would only bring everyone running to them, and that would put an end to his whole plan rather quickly. He glanced at his watch. He had about forty-five minutes before Morag was due to make her rounds again. Hopefully, that would be enough.

Harry set to work on the spells, carefully disengaging them one by one until the last one fell silent. His body slumped in exhaustion for just a moment, as that had been more intense than he'd even thought it would be. He tilted his head to listen for a second and all seemed to still be quiet, so he thought he'd been successful. Next, he loaded up all the potions that were set aside for Draco's use into his bag. He winced as a few of them clinked together, the noise sounding very loud in the still of the room.

He snuck over and did a quick check on the hallway after he'd collected all the potions and it was still clear. Finally, the most important part. Harry leaned over Draco and kissed his cheek. He carefully draped the cloak over Draco, then Harry pushed his arms underneath his back and his knees and lifted Draco off the bed. With the strengthening potion, it was like he was lifting a small child, and Harry hoped it would last until he could get past the anti-Apparition wards of the hospital.

Draco's head was nestled into his shoulder, and Harry had to blink back tears for a moment. It reminded him of when they used to lie together in their bed at Grimmauld Place. Harry hadn't touched Draco with more than his hand or a gentle kiss on the forehead in more than a year. To feel his body pressed up against Harry now was nearly overwhelming.

Harry shook his head, clearing his thoughts and refocusing on his task. This was the real moment of truth. Would he be able to sneak out of Draco's room and all the way out of the hospital without getting caught?

"Yes, I can do this. We're going to make it, Draco, I promise," he whispered.

He checked the time again, and knew that he had no time to waste. Morag would probably be around here in less than ten minutes. He slipped out of Draco's room and made his way carefully and steadily down the hall. He had decided to take the stairs rather than the lift. The entrance to the stairs in the lobby was tucked into a far corner, whereas the lifts opened right in front of the reception desk. They'd probably find it odd if the lift doors opened on their own.

By the time he was walking down the pavement away from the hospital, Harry was breathing hard and fast. It was partly from the stress of worrying about discovery and part elation that he'd gotten away with it. As soon as he reached the end of St. Mungo's wards, Harry Disapparated.

He took care not to stumble as he usually did after Apparition, not wanting to drop Draco. Hurriedly, because he could feel the strengthening potion wearing off, Harry went to the bedroom and placed Draco gently on the bed. He pulled the cloak off and then dispelled the disillusionment spell. He stared down at Draco for a moment, and then couldn't resist. He lay down beside him and gathered Draco into his arms. He could feel the tears running down his face as he buried his face in Draco's neck.

He was so tired. It had been so long since he'd been able to hold Draco. Harry knew it was time for some of the spells and potions to be done, but honestly, he couldn't have gotten off that bed if his life depended on it. Before he knew it, Harry was sound asleep.

18 May, 2000

There was an air of fevered excitement running through Grimmauld Place, firmly dispelling the gloominess that normally filled the house. It was time. All the horcruxes except Nagini had been destroyed and they'd just received word of Voldemort's presumed location. There would be no way of knowing if the information was good until they got there, but they couldn't pass up this chance.

Harry and Draco sat next to each other in the library as Kingsley Shacklebolt briefed each team on their individual missions. No one was staying behind this time, as they would need every last man and woman in the Order to defeat the enemy. Voldemort had been recruiting dozens of new Death Eaters, and the odds were definitely going to be stacked against them.

Finally, Portkeys were passed around and people started disappearing from the room in groups of two or three. Harry was with Ron and Hermione, of course, but Draco was assigned to be with Remus and Tonks. Draco and his cousin actually got along fairly well, to everyone's surprise, so Harry wasn't worried about Draco working with her. Remus didn't have a vindictive bone in his body, so there was no cause for concern there, either. He wished that Draco wouldn't have to go, but after their huge fight several months ago, he knew better than to voice that opinion.

"Harry, it's our turn," Hermione said, urging him forward with a wave of her hand.

Harry looked at Draco, and wished that he could give him the farewell that he really longed to, but they had both decided it would be best to keep their relationship under wraps until everything was over.

Instead Harry gave him a warm smile and said, "Be careful, Draco."

Draco smiled back and said, "You, too, Harry."

"Harry! Now!" Hermione shouted.

Harry hurried over to touch the Honeyduke's chocolate wrapper that Hermione and Ron were holding onto. He tried to look at Draco one more time, but it was too late and he was being pulled away. They landed in a clearing in the middle of a dark forest.

The information on Voldemort's hideout had been good as several skirmishes had already broken out by the time they arrived. The three of them didn't waste any time and skirted around most of the fighting in search of Voldemort and the snake. The battles quickly grew vicious and bloody. Several times, Harry, Ron and Hermione had to fight their way through opposition rather than sneaking around.

By the time an hour had passed, they were seemingly no closer to finding the snake than they had been in the beginning, and each of them bore a few battle scars. Thankfully nothing serious, but they were starting to get desperate. Voldemort couldn't be defeated until they found and killed the snake. They had

just dispatched a couple of Death Eaters who'd barely missed a killing curse at Ron, when they heard an anguished cry from somewhere to their south.

Harry leapt up in horror. He knew that voice. Without a word to Ron and Hermione, he took off running towards Draco. They shouted in surprise and gave chase after him, but he didn't notice. When he got to the top of a hill, Harry looked down and saw Draco kneeling beside a still body.

"Draco!" he shouted and ran to him. To his shock, Draco was leaning over Narcissa, and she had the familiar glazed eyes of one who'd been struck with the killing curse. "Oh, no," he whispered. He dropped to his knees beside Draco, who was prostrate over his mother's body, sobbing loudly.

He touched Draco's shoulder. Draco jerked in surprise and looked up at Harry. When he saw who it was, he threw himself into Harry's arms, and all Harry could do was hold him and let him cry. By this time, Ron and Hermione had caught up to him and they looked at the scene with the same shock that he had.

"Blimey," Ron whispered suddenly and pointed to another body that Harry hadn't noticed lying several yards away. "That's Bellatrix Lestrange!"

Harry looked over Draco's shoulder and grimaced at the bloody mess that had once been Bellatrix. He couldn't contain a brief smile of satisfaction and thought viciously that Sirius had been avenged.

"Harry," Draco said through his sobs. "Harry, my mum. My mum is dead!"

"I know, Draco. I'm so sorry," Harry said. "Can you tell me what happened?"

Draco leaned back out of Harry's embrace, but grabbed hold of his hand as he used his opposite arm to roughly wipe his face. He was obviously trying to calm himself and Harry squeezed the hand he was holding, wanting to reassure him in any way he could.

He told the story in fits and starts, having to pause a few times to calm himself the best he could. "She

and Aunt Bella were fighting, screaming at each other about the honor of the Black family when I came upon them. I rushed in, wanting to help Mother, but Bellatrix hit me with a curse before I got halfway across the clearing. She started taunting Mum, saying she was going to take away the thing she loved best. Me."

Draco rested the hand that wasn't holding Harry's on the curve of his mother's cheek. He gently closed her eyes before continuing. "She'd disarmed me and had me on the ground. Before Mum could do anything, she shot the killing curse at me."

Harry, Ron, and Hermione all gasped. Draco closed his eyes and shuddered before speaking again.

"I saw it coming at me. Horrible green light," he said in a low voice. He opened his eyes and looked at Harry. "The next thing I knew, Mum had thrown herself in its path, and she fell dead at my feet."

"Oh, Draco," Hermione murmured in sympathy. Even Ron looked ill at what Draco had had to endure. Harry swallowed and squeezed Draco's hand even harder.

"Mum's wand was still in her hand. Aunt Bella was laughing. She'd killed her own sister and she was laughing," Draco said in disbelief. "I grabbed Mum's wand and...I killed her. Sectumsempra. It's a curse that Severus invented. Good for enemies," he finished in a daze.

He stroked Narcissa's hair tenderly. "It's not fair, Harry. She went through so much to escape him, to be with me. Why did this have to happen?" he asked.

"I don't know. It really isn't fair. But I do know this. Your mum loved you so much. She gave her life for you, so that you could live. Just like my mum did for me. In a way, we're very lucky, to have had mothers that loved us that much."

"Yeah, I guess. But it still hurts," Draco said quietly, his gaze still on his mother's body.

"It does. It hurts like hell. But you listen to me, Draco Malfoy," Harry said sternly. He let go of Draco's hand and grabbed him by the shoulders. Startled, Draco tore his eyes from Narcissa to look at Harry. "She gave her life so that you could live. And I swear to you, when I've killed that bastard, and this is all over, you and I are going to do that. We're going to live."

"You promise?" Draco asked faintly.

"I promise," Harry said with a nod. Then he pulled Draco to him and kissed him soundly. Draco melted into the kiss and wrapped his arms around Harry.

Vaguely, in the background, Harry could hear Hermione's startled squeak, along with Ron's emphatic 'bloody hell!' but he didn't care. When they finally broke apart, Harry smiled gently at Draco.

"It's going to be okay. We're going to make it through this."

Draco nodded, still dazed. When they tried to stand, Harry realized that Draco was injured, with a nasty looking gash on his upper thigh. He was seized with panic for a moment as to what to do. He couldn't leave Draco here on his own, but he had to find Voldemort and the snake soon or they were all doomed.

Just then, Remus and Tonks came running out of the woods on the opposite side of the clearing. Harry nearly sagged in relief. They quickly filled Remus and Tonks in on what had happened, and the couple volunteered to Apparate Draco to Hogwarts, as they were using the school as their field hospital.

Once the three of them were gone, Harry, Hermione and Ron moved in their search.

"Um, Harry," Ron said hesitantly, as they walked swiftly through the trees.

"Yes, I'm gay, or at least bisexual, I'm not completely sure. I am sure that I'm in love with Draco and we're together. Have been for more than a year."

"A year!?" Ron and Hermione shouted at the same time.

"Yes, sorry I kept it from you, but can we talk about this later?" Harry asked irritably.

"Certainly we can. You're going to have a ton of explaining to do later, Harry Potter," Hermione said, sounding very cross.

A few minutes later, Harry stopped suddenly and threw a hand back to warn Ron and Hermione. He turned to look at them with his finger on his lips and then gestured ahead of them.

There, standing no more than fifty feet away, was Voldemort himself, Nagini curled around his feet. There were no more than three Death Eaters with him and Harry wondered if he was that confident in his victory. He nodded to Hermione, who pulled the sword of Godric Gryffindor out of her ever-expanding bag and handed it to Ron. Harry turned to Ron and nodded to him as well. Hermione snuck off to the left, and Ron snuck off to the right. Harry stepped into the clearing and prepared to face his destiny.

"Harry Potter. I am so pleased that you could join us," Voldemort said, a slight hissing evident in his words.

Instantly, a dozen more Death Eaters poured out of the woods and Harry's heart nearly stopped. It was a trap. A few minutes later, two Death Eaters pulled a struggling Hermione out of the woods, her wand held tight in the hand of one of them. He waited for them to bring out Ron, but it appeared that he'd been able to elude them. Maybe their plan could still work after all.

Voldemort had decided that he wanted a one-on-one duel with Harry, perhaps to make up for the embarrassment of Harry's clever escape after the third task. The Death Eaters were ordered not to interfere. The two opponents faced off and began throwing curses. While Harry still wasn't quite a match for Voldemort's strength, he was more prepared than he had been at fourteen. He'd learned a few things in the years since the graveyard, one of which was how to dodge efficiently.

Harry was beginning to tire though, and he feared that Voldemort was going to grow weary of toying with him and finish him off. It would be too soon, as the snake was still living. Out of the corner of his eye, Harry noticed Nagini suddenly slither towards the woods near where he thought Ron might be hiding.

Harry prayed that their meager plan would work. Ron was using some dead ferrets to try and lure Nagini away from her master. A few minutes later, Harry saw Voldemort gasp and nearly stumble. Harry hadn't told anyone else what he'd discovered about the Horcruxes. He knew that he was a Horcrux, and he knew that he had to be willing to die.

He held a vague hope that his luck would somehow hold and he would survive the killing curse a second time, but Harry wasn't sure. He hoped that it was so, otherwise he'd lied to Draco, and he figured that he'd never be forgiven for that.

Voldemort would be furious at the loss of his familiar and the fact that she was a Horcrux was an even greater blow. What Voldemort hopefully didn't know was that the snake had been his last Horcrux. He was more vulnerable now than he had ever been.

Harry fired off several curses at his enemy and yelled, "Time for you to die, Tom!" Lord Voldemort despised being called by his Muggle name. Harry hoped to enrage him enough to inspire the killing blow.

Voldemort turned to Harry with a hiss. Harry lowered his wand. The next thing he saw was the green glow of the killing curse speeding towards him. He thought he heard Hermione call his name and he hoped she would be able to forgive him.

When Harry next opened his eyes, he was lying face-up on the ground. Someone was screaming as if they were being tortured. Carefully, he turned his head and realized someone was being tortured. One of the Death Eaters had Hermione on the ground, and he was laughing as he cast the Cruciatus at her. Two others held Ron as he strained to get to her, yelling at them to stop.

With a surge of righteous anger, Harry rolled to his feet. "Tom, you coward! Stop hurting my friends and

face me!"

The entire crowd of Death Eaters gasped in disbelief. "Impossible!" Voldemort screamed in outrage.

"This is the end, Tom. Your time is over," Harry said.

"Avada Kedavra!"

"Expelliarmus!"

Their wands joined in blinding beams of energy, Harry and Voldemort each strained to get the best of each other. Harry pulled on his love for Draco, for Ron and Hermione, for Remus and Tonks and the Weasley family. It was almost like a helping hand giving him that extra push that he needed to defeat Voldemort. His breath left him in a rush as his spell overpowered the so-called Dark Lord and turned him to ash in front of Harry's eyes.

What he didn't expect was the vicious backlash that swept through the clearing. For a second time, everything went dark.

24 June 2001

When Harry awoke, there was still only dim light outside. He looked at Draco and sighed. He knew it was for the best that he'd gotten Draco out of St. Mungo's, but he honestly didn't know how he was going to be able to hold up, taking care of someone who would probably never get better.

He had dreamed about the final battle again. When he'd come to in the Hogwarts Infirmary, Ron and Hermione had been sitting at his bedside. They'd told him that he'd been out for three days. Harry had immediately asked where Draco was, and felt his stomach sink at the nervous looks on his best friends' faces. Hermione had haltingly explained that something had happened to Draco, but no one was sure

exactly what. All they knew was that he was here in a bed at Hogwarts and he was unconscious.

Harry had demanded to see him, but wasn't allowed out of bed himself for another day. When he finally got the chance to go to Draco, he sat down shakily at his bedside. Draco's leg was long since healed, but he lay there as though he were asleep, and no one could figure out why. Frankly, Harry thought they weren't really trying very hard. Even though he'd been on their side for a couple of years now, Draco was still mistrusted by some members of the Order and the Light side of the war.

Harry had vowed then and there that he wouldn't give up until Draco was well and with him again. That had been the start of his daily vigils at Draco's bedside, and they had continued when he'd been moved to St. Mungo's a couple of weeks later. Nobody understood Harry's devotion, but he didn't care. Stealing Draco away from St. Mungo's was just another step in his vow to take care of Draco, no matter what, as far as Harry was concerned.

He turned over and reached for his wand on the nightstand. Casting a quick Tempus charm, he was shocked to see that it was nearly nine pm. He'd slept more than sixteen hours! Harry knew he had been tired, but he'd obviously reached a level of exhaustion that he never had before. This meant that he'd missed at least two doses of Draco's potions.

"Damn!" he muttered as he rolled back over to look at Draco again. "Not doing a very good job of caring for you so far, am I?" he said. He would make sure he kept up the timetable to the minute from now on. He leaned in to kiss Draco's cheek in apology, and then, unable to resist, nestled his nose in Draco's neck as he'd always loved to do. It couldn't hurt to give in for just a moment, could it?

Draco's shoulder lifted up, shocking Harry. "Shtop, Harry…ticklesh," a slurred voice said from above him.

Harry screamed and reared backwards, which caused him to fall completely off the bed. His arms flailed as he tried to keep himself from falling, but to no avail, and he hit the floor hard. He lay there for a moment, stunned, as he tried to decide if he'd imagined that or if he was perhaps still sleeping and he'd dreamed it.

Draco's head appeared over the edge of the bed, peering down at Harry in confusion. "What the hell are

you doing on the floor, you idiot?"

"Draco!" Harry gasped, unable to believe what he was seeing and hearing.

"Yeah?" Draco asked.

"You're awake!"

"Yes, generally that is what happens when someone finishes sleeping. They wake up," Draco said slowly. "Honestly, what is wrong with you?"

"Me? You…you're here and you're awake, and God, Draco, I've missed you so much!" Harry said, and surged up from the floor to hug Draco, both of falling backwards to land in the middle of the bed. It was really more of a tackle, if Draco's grunt of surprise was any indicator, but Harry was so overwhelmed with joy he couldn't have stopped himself if he'd tried.

Draco instinctively wrapped his arms around Harry to return the hug, but was still asking questions. "Harry, you're really starting to frighten me now. What is wrong with you? Why are you acting like you haven't seen me in forever?"

Harry released Draco from the hug far enough to look at him. He cupped Draco's face with his hands and leaned in to kiss him passionately. Draco responded immediately, questions forgotten for the moment. Harry was in heaven. Draco's lips tasted just as sweet as he remembered and he wasn't sure how he'd survived for so long without this.

Finally, Harry pulled away and let his forehead rest against Draco's, eyes closed, both of them breathing hard.

"Tell me what's going on. Please, Harry," Draco asked quietly.

Harry opened his eyes to see Draco staring intently at him.

"You've been in St. Mungo's for more than a year, in some sort of coma. So, while I've seen you every day, I haven't talked to you, kissed you, held you, or made love to you in more than a year. I have missed you so much," Harry said hoarsely.

Draco looked stunned. "A year? I don't understand. The last thing I remember was Lupin and Tonks dropping me off at Hogwarts during the battle," he said. His eyes widened in horror. "What happened with the Dark Lord? Is he dead?"

Harry smiled, glad to be able to deliver some good news. "He's dead, for good this time. We never have to worry about him again."

"My mother," Draco said, his eyes filling with tears. Harry had to remember that for Draco, losing Narcissa had happened only a few hours ago. "My mum is dead," he whispered.

"I know. I know, and I'm so sorry," Harry said, pulling Draco into a hug once more.

Draco cried quietly for a few minutes before he sat back and took a deep breath, visibly trying to calm himself.

"All right, we need to figure out what's happened here. People don't just fall into comas by themselves, so obviously, someone did this to me on purpose. Have you been trying to find out who might have wanted to harm me? Or maybe someone wanted to split us up?"

Harry was flabbergasted. And a little ashamed. It had never even occurred to him that someone might have purposefully put Draco into a coma. Draco gave him an exasperated look.

"I can see by your expression that you are still a Gryffindor and had no clue that this was malicious."

"I just, I mean, the staff at St. Mungo's never said that it was…of course, they weren't really trying to heal you, either, I don't think," Harry realized with a frown. "I guess it's a good thing I got you out of there, but I wish I'd done it sooner. I'm so sorry, Draco!"

"Wait, what do you mean, you got me out of there? Where are we anyway? This isn't Grimmauld Place," Draco said, casting a look around the bedroom.

"I sort of kidnapped you," Harry said sheepishly. "I overheard a conversation between some of the nurses at St. Mungo's that made me worry you might be in danger there, so I brought you here. I bought this house a week ago just so I could take care of you."

Draco grinned. "Well, maybe you do have a little Slytherin in you after all." He noticed the numerous potions bottles sitting on the desk across the room. "What are all those?"

Harry turned to look where he was pointing. "Those are the potions I took from St. Mungo's. They're supposed to be used for your care."

"Well, that's a good place to start. That would be an easy way for someone to sabotage my recovery."

He swung his legs around and started to stand, but sat back down on the bed as he swayed a bit. "Whoa! Might not be ready to be on my feet yet."

Harry had moved quickly to steady him as he sat back down and looked at Draco worriedly. "Maybe you should just stay here and I'll bring them to you."

"Good idea," Draco murmured, closing his eyes. "Urgh, head still spinning."

Harry hurried over to the desk and gathered the potions bottles, as well as the list he'd made of all the spells that had been used on Draco while in hospital, and brought them over to the bed. He watched as Draco went through them one by one, opening each vial, smelling it, inspecting the liquid inside, and muttering things to himself. Then he looked over the list of spells carefully.

He shook his head when he was done and said, "It doesn't make any sense. All of these potions and spells are perfectly normal things that would be used on a person in a coma, but none of them are for putting someone into one. To have lasted more than a year, it has to be either a spell that had to be renewed periodically, or a potion that had to be administered repeatedly. Are you certain this is everything?" he asked.

"I asked Morag about the daily routine, because I knew that I would need to do it myself. She never mentioned anything else," Harry said, as he gathered the potions vials and put them back on the desk.

"Hold on. Morag? Not Morag MacDougal?" Draco said, a horrified look crossing his face.

"Yeah?" Harry said uncertainly.

"Holy fuck! That bint was practically stalking me for all of seventh year! She had visions of being the next Lady Malfoy and wasn't very willing to take no for an answer. I spent half my year just dodging her. It cannot be a coincidence that she was my nurse at St. Mungo's."

"But she was always so kind. I can't believe that she'd want to hurt you," Harry said, sitting down on the edge of the bed beside Draco.

"Trust me, Harry, what you see is not what you get with that one."

"I'm such an idiot! I'm so sorry, Draco, I've done everything wrong from the beginning of all this," Harry said miserably, hanging his head in shame.

"Don't get so down on yourself, love. She is a Ravenclaw and terribly clever, though she evens that out by being a total bitch." He caressed the back of Harry's drooping head with one hand, before leaning in and kissing his ear. Harry shivered and tilted his head towards Draco, hoping for more.

"It occurs to me, that if I've been asleep for a year, that means I've gone without fucking you for just as long. And that's plain criminal, Harry," Draco whispered. "Think we can remedy that?"

"Are you sure you're feeling well enough for, um," Harry asked, while frantically hoping that the answer would be yes, because he positively ached to get naked with Draco, as soon as possible.

"I don't know about 'um' but I will always be feeling well enough for sex, Harry," Draco teased.

"Prat," Harry muttered, right before Draco kissed him. Harry sighed in contentment at the glorious feel of Draco's tongue against his after so long. The kiss grew heated and more intense, and soon, wasn't nearly enough. Harry's hands moved to unbutton the top of Draco's hospital pyjamas. He bumped into Draco's hands, which were trying to pull at the bottom of Harry's jumper to get it off.

The kiss broke as they looked at each other and grinned at their mutual eagerness.

"Let me first," Harry whispered. Draco nodded and dropped his hands. Harry made quick work of the pyjama top and tossed it away, before pressing one hand against Draco's chest, giving his nipple a quick tweak. Draco shuddered and arched his back.

"My turn," he said and swiftly pulled Harry's jumper over his head. "Ridiculous hair," he said as he ruffled one hand on Harry's head, where the jumper being pulled off had caused it to stand on end even more than usual.

Harry ignored the jibe and leaned in to kiss Draco again. Together, they fell backwards onto the bed, holding each other close as they continued to kiss. Their bodies strained towards one another, desperate to be as close as possible after being apart for so long. Harry's hand trailed down Draco's back, curving around his buttocks and pulling their groins into contact.

Draco moaned and thrust his hips into Harry's. He slipped one hand in between their bodies somehow and stroked Harry's cock. Harry broke the kiss because he couldn't stop himself from throwing his head backwards and crying out.

"Fuck, Draco!"

"Hopefully, we're getting there," Draco said with a chuckle, as he moved forward to bite at Harry's neck.

"Yeah, we're definitely getting there. These need to be off," Harry said as he pulled at Draco's pyjama bottoms.

"Mmm, yes, you do have the most wonderful ideas," Draco said. They rolled away from each other just long enough to rip off the rest of their clothing, deciding mutually that this first time was too badly needed to take the time to do anything slowly.

Less than a minute later, they were drawn together again like two magnets. They scooted to the middle of the bed, Harry covering Draco's body with his, their hard cocks rubbing and sliding against one another. Harry couldn't get enough of the taste of Draco, after starving for him for so long. He licked and sucked at the juncture of Draco's neck and shoulder. Draco shuddered, sighed, arched his back to get as close to Harry's mouth as he could.

After a few minutes, neither one of them could wait a moment more.

Draco grabbed the hair on the back of Harry's head and pulled his mouth away from his neck to kiss him harshly. Pulling back just enough to talk, he hissed, "In me. Now!"

"Yeah. Need you so bad," Harry gasped. Without conscious thought, he held up a hand and his wand came flying into it. He quickly muttered the spells to prepare Draco, and then tossed his wand, not really caring where it landed. He shifted his weight, raising himself up on one hand as he took hold of his cock with the other. Draco eagerly lifted his legs, pulling his knees towards his chest. Harry didn't waste

another second before he was sliding inside Draco, coming home. It was marvelous, and Harry was so overwhelmed for a moment, that he couldn't move.

"Harry. Please!" Draco said, his voice close to whimpering, though Harry knew he'd die before he ever admitted that.

But Harry couldn't wait any longer either, and began to thrust, driving as deeply into Draco's body as it was physically possible to go. Draco welcomed every plunge enthusiastically, grabbing onto Harry's arse, encouraging him with his body and his words to give even more.

Harry looked down at Draco, feeling a rush of pride that he was able to make his lover feel so good. Draco opened his eyes and looked up at him, a smirk curling the corner of his lips as he mouthed for Harry to 'fuck me harder'.

God, Harry had missed this so much! He honestly had no idea how he'd managed to survive the last year without Draco. He wished that he could just stay inside Draco forever. Harry would give up Auror training, magic, even food and air, if he could just stay right where he was for eternity.

Before he was ready, Harry could feel his climax approaching. Part of him needed to come right now, to feel that ultimate moment while buried deep in Draco's body, while another part of him wanted to make love to Draco for the rest of his life.

But he could hold it off no longer. Harry gasped and threw his head back as his orgasm rushed through his body. He was barely aware that Draco was fisting his own cock, his eyes gleaming with desire as he watched Harry reach his peak. Moments after Harry finally finished spurting deep within Draco, his stomach was being covered with Draco's come.

Harry settled carefully down on top of Draco, nuzzling into Draco's neck, inhaling his scent as he loved to do.

"I love you," Harry breathed into Draco's skin.

"I love you, too," Draco answered as he ran his fingers through Harry's hair.

"Never leave me again," Harry said.

"Never," Draco promised.

Harry knew they had a lot to discuss, especially what to do about Morag, but right now, he just wanted to lay with Draco and dream of better days to come.

25 June 2001

Harry had to force himself not to turn around and run as far away as he could from the Ministry of Magic. He could be halfway across the atrium before anyone would be able to even think about stopping him. He would grab Draco, who was under the Invisibility Cloak just behind him, and the two of them would make a great escape.

Instead he allowed his wand to be weighed as usual. He didn't have to give it over as he had when he was a Hogwarts student. Because he was in Auror training, he was allowed to keep it. After all, they couldn't learn how to defeat Dark Wizards without their wands, could they?

He didn't dare try to communicate with Draco while in the lift because there was always someone else on there at the same time. He felt Draco's hand briefly caress his back, and relaxed just a little. They were going to make it through this.

Ron and Hermione had certainly been shocked when Harry had firecalled them last night. They were lucky that Draco had reminded him to get dressed before he did so, or they would have been even more shocked. Hermione had suggested they contact Kingsley Shacklebolt, Minister for Magic and John Dawlish, Head Auror, after she scolded him for acting so recklessly, of course.

Kingsley, as a member of the Order of the Phoenix, was familiar with Draco and everything he'd done for the Light side of the war. He'd never been particularly warm towards Draco, but he was an honest man and would make sure that nothing untoward happened. Dawlish had to be brought in as Head Auror, but luckily, he had a good relationship with Harry and was willing to give Draco the benefit of the doubt.

Their plan was haphazard, having been thrown together late last night, but at least it was simple. It was also helped along by Draco's absence having been reported by the St. Mungo's staff, so there were no questions when the witches and wizards that worked in the Janus Thickey ward were brought in to the Ministry to be interviewed.

Once they were sitting in an interrogation room, Harry tried to relax. It was still hard for him to believe that Morag might have done this to Draco, and he almost thought that it would come out that she had nothing to do with it. Of course, in that case, they had a serious problem on their hands, as they really had no other suspects.

Harry, Kingsley, and Dawlish sat on one side of the large table, with Draco still under the Invisibility Cloak beside Harry. The St. Mungo's staff were brought in one by one and questioned about what had happened yesterday.

In between a couple of the interviews, Draco poked his head out from under the cloak and winked at Harry.

"You really are part Slytherin, Harry. You pulled this off without anyone seeing a thing! I'm so proud."

"Get back under the cloak, Malfoy," Dawlish said with a sigh as Harry blushed. "And stop snickering!" he ordered as Draco flipped the cloak back over his head.

The tension in one half of the room raised noticeably as Morag MacDougal was led in to sit on the opposite side of the table. Harry consciously tried to relax, but if she was responsible for this mess, he was going to have to keep himself from hexing the hell out of her.

"Hello, Harry. I'm so sorry for all this. You must be devastated," Morag said, giving him a sympathetic smile.

"It's been difficult, but I'm holding up. Thanks for coming in. The sooner we find out what happened, the sooner I can get Draco back."

"Yes, he needs to be back in St. Mungo's as soon as possible. His condition is so fragile."

Harry felt Draco tense beside him and imagined he had to restrain himself from diving across the table. Harry dropped his hand out of sight, and reached over to squeeze Draco's knee, reminding him to be patient and letting him know he wasn't alone at the same time.

"Ms. MacDougal, you were working at Hogwarts during the final battle, were you not?" Dawlish asked.

"Yes, I was," Morag nodded. "I was more than happy to volunteer my services in the only way I could."

"Did you happen to hear or see anything about how Mr. Malfoy got cursed in the first place?"

"No, unfortunately not. We might have been able to bring him out of the coma, if only we'd known what kind of curse he'd been hit with."

"Were you and Mr. Malfoy friends while you were at Hogwarts?" Dawlish asked.

"Not really," Morag said, and Harry noted that a shadow of suspicion drifted over her face, so quickly that he thought he might have imagined it. "We were in the same year, but different houses, so we knew of one another, but I wouldn't have called us friends."

"And how did you feel about Mr. Malfoy once he became your patient?"

"The same as I feel about all of my patients. I care about them, naturally. It's easy to become somewhat attached, especially in a long-term care ward like Janus Thickey. But I didn't care about him any more or less than my other patients."

"So you routinely took extra shifts to provide care for your other patients in the same manner that you did for Mr. Malfoy?" Dawlish asked, his gaze sharp.

"I'm not sure what you mean," Morag said, her voice flat. Harry's jaw tightened as he saw the nervous fear in her eyes now.

"I have here all the logs for each of the residents of the Janus Thickey Ward in the last year. You were Mr. Malfoy's nurse almost every day. The other staff rotated the patients' care, but you were assigned to Mr. Malfoy almost one hundred per cent of the time you were at the hospital. And you say that you had no special feelings for Malfoy? I'm finding that hard to believe."

"I-I may have been a little drawn to him because he was my age, and I knew him in school, but it's not like I'm in love with him or anything," Morag said, her desperation showing clearly now.

"So you didn't kiss him inappropriately, as one of the other staff told us they witnessed?" Dawlish asked, leaning forward as if going in for the kill.

Then all hell broke loose, as Draco suddenly whipped the Invisibility Cloak off his head and screeched, "You did what!?"

"Draco!" Harry and Morag shouted at the same time. Kingsley and Dawlish jumped in surprise. Morag stood from her chair, and it looked as though she was about to go across the table to get to Draco.

Luckily, the two Aurors who had been standing guard behind her, grabbed her by the arms before she

could move.

"Are you fucking kidding me? You kissed me? While I was in a coma?" Draco said, disgusted.

"I couldn't resist, Draco! You were so beautiful lying there. The spell I used was so clever, too. It kept you in a form of stasis so that you'd be just as beautiful when I woke you up, as when I put you to sleep," Morag said, still struggling against the Aurors' hold. "You have to understand, I did it for us, so that we could be together!"

"I don't want to be with you, Morag! I never have, because I am gay! It wouldn't have mattered if you weren't crazy, I still wouldn't have wanted you," Draco said. He took Harry's hand in his and held them up so Morag could see. "This is what I want. And I'm lucky enough that he wants me back, so you never stood a chance."

Morag switched her gaze to Harry and her face became ugly with hate. "You! This is all your fault! If you'd just gone away and left us alone, I was going to wake Draco up so we could be together. You've ruined everything!"

"I think we've heard enough, Andrews," Kingsley said to one of the Aurors holding Morag. "Get her out of here."

They dragged Morag out of the room, though they could still hear her screaming curses at Harry and insisting that she and Draco belonged together for several minutes before she was abruptly quieted, probably from a silencing spell by a no doubt nearly deaf Auror.

"I still can't believe she did that to you. She was always so nice," Harry said, in a daze.

"Apparently, I am irresistible," Draco said, with a wink at Harry.

"And apparently, you are incapable of following orders. You were supposed to stay under the cloak,

Malfoy," Dawlish said irritably.

"Bah, I'd heard enough. And so had you. You knew it was her, or you wouldn't have had all that evidence against her," Draco said with a negligent wave of his hand.

Dawlish looked like he was about to give Draco a lecture, and Harry knew from experience that those were never fun, when Kingsley interrupted.

"Either way, it's all over now. Harry, I would suggest you and Mr. Malfoy take the rest of the day off to recuperate. But I'm sure John will be expecting you back in training bright and early in the morning."

"Actually, we'll probably need at least a week to recuperate," Draco said, somehow making that sound lascivious.

"Draco!" Harry whispered, scandalized at his lover's boldness.

"I don't think-" Dawlish began.

"Fine, a week then. But you'd better be ready to go next Monday," Kingsley said sternly, but when Harry looked at him in surprise, he winked. "I'd get going before I changed my mind, if I were you."

Dawlish threw his hands up in exasperation, but didn't say anything else as Draco stood and dragged Harry from his seat, the Invisibility Cloak held firmly in his other hand.

Once they were out in the hallway heading towards the lifts, Draco dropped Harry's hand.

"Hey!" Harry said in protest.

"Well, you don't want anyone to see, do you?" Draco asked, seeming uncharacteristically unsure for a moment.

The lift doors opened and they stepped inside. There were a couple of people on already, but they didn't pay too much attention to the two young men who'd just gotten on.

"Why would I care if someone saw?" Harry asked.

"I just thought you probably don't want the publicity and the hassle," Draco said, his voice barely above a whisper.

"I love you, Draco. You're worth any amount of hassle that anyone decides to give," Harry said firmly, and noted that the older man behind them raised one eyebrow and was definitely eavesdropping now.

Harry took Draco's hand in his and held on. What's more, he held it all the way through the busy atrium of the Ministry. When people realized that it was Harry Potter holding the hand of Draco Malfoy, a buzz of whispers started running through the crowd.

"See, it's starting already. Are you sure you're ready for this?" Draco asked.

"I'll show you how ready I am," Harry said.

In a move that was talked about in the Wizarding World for years to come, Harry Potter stopped right in front of the Floos and grabbed Draco Malfoy by the shoulders, pulling him into one of the most passionate kisses ever seen. One elderly witch swooned and had to be caught from crashing into the floor by her poor husband, who wasn't quite as strong as he used to be, so she ended up hitting the floor anyway.

When Harry ended the kiss, he looked at Draco and was thrilled to see a brilliant smile on his face. Elated, the two of them joined hands again and walked proudly out of the Ministry and into the rest of their lives.

THE END

Don't forget to go back to H/D Holidays on LJ and leave feedback!