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Name: A Course of Action Not Recommended
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Chapter 1 to 1

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Chapter: 1

Title: A Course of Action Not Recommended in the Auror Manual

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Pairings: Harry/Draco

Rating: PG-13

Warnings: UST, humor, ignores the epilogue.

Wordcount: 5900

Summary: Draco Malfoy needs to be reminded that, though he does hold political power, he will never hold power over *everything*.

Author's Notes: For an anonymous request, *Harry/Draco. Minister!Draco, HeadAuror!Harry. UST, Draco lording his position over Harry. A typical day at the office*. I think I hit all the notes here, and I hope you enjoy it.

A Course of Action Not Recommended in the Auror Manual

"Potter, get in here right now! I want you."

Harry raised his eyebrows and signed the report in front of him before he stood up from his desk. By then, two more memos had come zipping along, hovered in front of him, and, when he ignored them, spoken in Minister Draco Malfoy's voice. A third was approaching as Harry ducked out of the office.

Ron stuck his head out of the office down the corridor and shook his head. "How do you put up with him, mate? I think I'd go spare on the second day."

Harry grinned at him. He didn't get much of a chance to smile openly around Malfoy, because of the limitations of both their jobs, so it was best if he did it now before he entered the Minister's office. "That's why I'm Head Auror and not you."

Ron flipped him off and ducked back into the office. Harry went on his way, thankful that Kingsley's choice of him for Head Auror was long enough ago now that Ron had no more cause to be jealous.

Especially since Malfoy had come in as Minister.

"Come in! You always leave me waiting."

Malfoy talked more than necessary, Harry thought, not for the first time, as he opened the door. Kingsley would have said only the first sentence, brisk and business-like as he always was, and Lucille Camberley, the Minister immediately after Kingsley, would have said nothing at all, because she knew that Harry only came to see her on urgent business. If he couldn't enter the Minister's office right away, then she was either a hostage or dead, and he should use his wand to break down the door.

But Malfoy was…

Different.

Harry still hadn't got used to the changes that Malfoy had made in the office, despite six months to do so. The desk was large and imposing, almost as wide as the room itself. It was made of polished ebony, or some other dark wood; Harry would freely admit that he knew nothing about wood except when he had to learn facts for a case. It had legs with claws on the ends of them, each clutching a shimmering enchanted crystal. And it was clear, as always. The Minister liked to boast that he finished his work so quickly that he never had a pile of paper on his desk the way that most other members of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement did.

(Harry knew the truth, that the large jade vase along the left wall was crammed with papers that the Minister would sign in an hours-long race each evening. The git liked to have the mirror-smooth surface of the desk clear so that he could look at his face in it from second to second and make sure none of his hair was out of place).

The walls were covered with silver shelves, each one holding a single photograph in a frame studded with small diamonds. Here was one of Malfoy on the morning of the election, before he knew he had won, and here were six—no, seven, he'd added another—of him on the evening of the victory party. He also had a photograph of his mother, though none of his father, a diplomatic touch that Harry wouldn't have suspected him of until he noticed it. And there were numerous

pictures of him at charity events, dedicating the new libraries he had funded before he became Minister, walking through the new wing of St. Mungo's that Malfoy money had built, and posing in front of Hogwarts.

Behind the desk was a large map of Britain that Harry knew could become another mirror at the flick of a wand.

Harry sometimes wondered how the vain little git had ever been elected. Then again, he'd spent most of the election undercover in the Muggle world, tracking a dangerous potion that spread a plague-like disease—one of the many cases that Minister Camberley had seemed to think only the Head Auror could undertake—and so hadn't really noticed most of what was going on at the time.

"Potter. I asked for you three minutes ago." Malfoy squinted at him, rapping his fingers on the desk. He cast a spell in the next heartbeat to remove smudges.

"I'm here now, Minister." Harry had found that it helped if he kept his voice even and never said the Minister's last name. Among other things, Harry thought, fixing his eyes on the section of Wiltshire that showed behind Malfoy's head, it helped him control the temptation to burst out laughing hysterically.

Malfoy had replaced the Minister's traditional robes of office with bright silver ones that glowed with comets and shooting stars, as well as the images of faces cheering him on. His hair had become the color of platinum—not naturally, Harry was sure—and hung with equally unnatural straightness to either side of his face. His nose was permanently pointed at the ceiling. Harry had more than once stumbled on him trimming his nostrils of hair with a pair of small scissors. At least he had enough common consideration to decide that people who had to view that nose should see a clean one, Harry thought.

And he took himself utterly seriously. That was the thing that made Harry keep silent and go along with Malfoy's outrageous requests. He wanted to see how long the whole glittering edifice could last before it all came tumbling down.

"You need to be here *faster*." Malfoy's finger tapped on the table, as agitated as the leg of an overturned insect. Harry swallowed his grin and tried a little bow, deciding that he might as well see what that could do.

When he straightened, Malfoy was staring at him. He opened his mouth to say something, then swallowed and went on, "I hate being *teased*."

He paused after the words, eyeing Harry expectantly. Harry smiled blandly back. He knew what sort of conversational gambits Malfoy favored, and he wasn't about to respond the way Malfoy wanted him to.

"I'll try not to do so, sir," he replied.

Malfoy sat back and appeared on the edge of pouting. But since he caught sight of his reflection in the table just then and leaned nearer to admire, the pout never appeared. Harry grinned without restraint this time. There was something so *entertaining* about the prat that, so far, Harry hadn't lost his temper. And from all accounts, he was an effective Minister, even though no one understood exactly how. Perhaps he had a split personality and the other, efficient one, who had won the campaign, took over at night.

Malfoy sat back up, and Harry stood at attention. Malfoy tapped his fingers on his knee for a moment before he cleared his throat.

"I have a special case," he said. "An important case, that needs your personal attention."

Harry nodded, unsurprised. Kingsley and Camberley had had cases like that for him in their time. "Of course, sir. What is it?"

"Someone," Malfoy said, leaning nearer and lowering his voice, "is sending me *threatening messages.*" He took a silver key from his pocket, unlocked a drawer, stared into it, muttered a few words, unlocked a second drawer, fumbled through a pile of paper, slid something that made him flush out of sight, and finally produced a piece of parchment that he waved triumphantly at Harry.

Harry took it, and blinked. The message was that usual shite about how pure-bloods couldn't be Ministers, how all the Malfoys were unrepentant Death Eaters, and how the Aurors couldn't find their arses with both hands, but someone had thoughtfully drawn a caricature of a hanged man next to the top paragraph, with crossed eyes and his tongue sticking out of his mouth. They'd also added scribbled blond hair to the head and drawn an arrow from the picture to the name Malfoy so that no one could miss the point.

"I'll get involved in hunting down the sender at once, sir," Harry promised.

"Oh, no, that's a task for a junior Auror." Malfoy waved a hand. "I would never abuse your talents like that."

Harry thought his disbelief had to have showed in his eyes for a second—it was too great not to—but Malfoy kept going. He probably hadn't looked up at the right moment to catch it, Harry thought.

"I want you to be my *body*guard." He leered as he emphasized the first part of the word and all but fluttered his lashes as he looked up at Harry. "My very. Own. Personal. *Body*guard." He said the last word with a flourish and a lick of his lips, his eyelashes lowered and his face flushing all over with the sweet pink tinge that had intrigued Harry more than once.

Harry thought for a moment of what would happen should he accept Malfoy's proposal. There were times when he thought…

But no. More than he was dedicated to accepting Malfoy's intriguing little invitations, Harry was dedicated to making sure that the Minister knew who was the *real* power around the Department, and that he couldn't do anything he pleased.

"But, sir," he said, "I would have to bring along my paperwork."

"Your what?" Malfoy stared at him.

Harry nodded seriously. "Yes, sir. There would be so much paperwork to attend to, if you want me to start my bodyguarding duties right away, that I would have to take along at least the last few reports you wanted me to finish writing. Because I'm a dedicated servant of the Ministry and I couldn't let my work waste away like that. And I'm not as clean as you are, sir. I know how much you like a spotless desk." He nodded to the desk and then leaned back, hands clasped behind his spine, waiting.

Malfoy stared into the distance, no doubt conjuring the horror that would be Harry surrounded by large and unwieldy piles of paper in the middle of the spartan rooms he liked to keep. And dipping his quill into his inkwell. And scattering drops of ink across the carpet. And getting ink and crumbs from his hasty meals on Malfoy when he tried to touch him.

Malfoy shuddered a little and grew green. He nodded. "Perhaps you should investigate the sender, and I'll choose a bodyguard from among the Hit Wizards," he said.

"It would be best, sir," Harry said gravely.

"You won't forget that I chose you first, though?" Malfoy looked up, eyes so intense they felt as if they were burning small holes in Harry's skin. "Before anyone else. You've always been my first choice."

There, right there, was the delicacy that was a relationship with Malfoy offered most temptingly, if Harry chose to take it. But it was too soon, and Malfoy would crow and get above himself if he did.

"Of course, sir," Harry said. "I remember perfectly that you were kind enough to confirm me as Head Auror right away when you came into office. You called me in and congratulated me first thing."

Malfoy scowled at him. "That's all you remember?"

"Should I remember some other distinction, sir?" Harry gave his Minister his best bovine stare.

Malfoy hunted about as if he wanted something to throw at Harry, but everything in reach was either too large or too valuable. "Get out," he said sulkily.

As Harry left, he heard Malfoy mutter, "How in the world am I supposed to flirt with him if he won't flirt *back*?"

Maybe remember that it's not always your choice to initiate the game, Harry thought cheerfully.

"Potter!"

Harry glanced up. Malfoy was standing in the doorway of his office, hands tight in fists at his sides. Harry blinked, surprised. Most of the time, Malfoy wouldn't stoop to coming to Harry himself. He would think it beneath his dignity, and sure to result in Harry getting the wrong idea about who was the servant and who was the master in this relationship. Something must have happened to anger him.

"Yes, sir?" Harry asked cautiously.

"Your Aurors are incompetent." Malfoy sneered at him. "I thought I could trust you to run the Auror Corps. It's increasingly likely that you've got a big head and that some of your Aurors only obey you because they think that your reputation is impressive."

"I wouldn't deserve the impressive reputation if I didn't occasionally do impressive things," Harry replied, refusing to be riled. He thought he had a slight idea of what had happened, given that Auror Corson had had a smirk plastered on his lips in the queue for tea that day. Harry leaned back in his chair and prepared to enjoy the story while giving Malfoy his Very Serious expression. "What happened, sir?"

"One of your *Aurors* had the audacity to stop and lecture *me* about taking up your time with trivialities." Malfoy unclenched his fists and spread his fingers out so that Harry would have to admire his perfectly manicured fingernails. Harry defeated that tactic by keeping his attention on Malfoy's face. With nothing to do, Malfoy glared at him in bafflement and folded his fingers up again. "He didn't seem to understand that the Minister's time is never wasted with trivialities, and anyone who does it deserves to be sacked."

"I see." Harry nodded. "And did you sack him, sir?"

Malfoy's eyes narrowed as though he didn't understand what Harry was saying.

"Such baseless accusations against the Minister are surely a triviality," Harry said.

Malfoy gave a harsh sound in the back of his throat that might have been a noise of confusion. He was puzzled that Harry denied him outrage, Harry knew. Well, that was because Malfoy would win if he showed him outrage, or showed any concern about his Aurors in interactions with the Minister, for that matter. Harry was determined not to give him that. He just smiled blandly back and waited.

"My constituents must be allowed to express their concerns," Malfoy said. "And he had the audacity to approach me in a public place."

Harry let his face assume a fake expression of alarm. "Oh, but sir, you'll *have* to sack him if that's the case."

"What do you mean?" Malfoy was quiveringly alive in seconds, eyes fastened on Harry as if he assumed that he was about to get a torrent of rage.

"Other people saw him humiliate you, of course." Harry leaned forwards and folded his hands on his desk. "We can't have anyone who publically humiliates the Minister near him. It might rouse certain dissident members of the community who believed the election was rigged and think that you won't make a strong Minister."

It was wonderful, watching the conflicting expressions that took over Malfoy's face on at that, Harry thought. Malfoy wanted to believe Harry was on his side, and he probably did really want the Auror who questioned him gone. On the other hand, to let Harry believe that he had lost, or lost enough face to require the dismissal of someone who had opposed him, was intolerable for him.

"I…may have won the confrontation," Malfoy said at last.

"And not been humiliated, sir?" Harry stood up and came around the desk to grip and pump his hand. "I'm so relieved to hear it! We're shorthanded right now, and promoting a trainee too soon would have caused resentment in the ranks. We need all the Aurors we can get." He lowered his voice and leaned nearer to Malfoy than he usually did, aware of the way that it made Malfoy breathe. "But not ones who commit crimes like the one that you told me almost occurred."

"What crime would that be?" Malfoy's eyelashes had drifted shut, and he looked as if he would have liked to lean forwards in turn and fasten his mouth over Harry's. And he only too obviously expected that Harry would say it was a crime to confront the Minister in public.

"Who betray their training by yelling, instead of voicing their criticisms in a quiet and reasonable tone." Harry shook his head mournfully. "The temper of some young people these days! But I'm sure that you'll understand, sir. You were like that when you were young, and you confronted some pretty prominent people."

Malfoy narrowed his eyes as if against strong sunlight. "I'm sure that I never spoke to someone with authority over me in such a manner."

"Not even someone with a scar and a reputation as the savior of the world?" Harry asked in apparent wonder. "Really?"

Malfoy tore his hand free and stomped down the corridor to his office.

Harry chuckled and sat down behind his desk. Now that that confrontation was over for the day, there was a chance he might finish some of his reports.

"I want to know why you haven't made any progress on the case."

Harry, blinking sleepily from the Malfoy firecall he'd received at three in the morning, nevertheless knew better than to show any weakness. He knelt down in front of the fire and nodded helpfully to Malfoy.

"The one with the threatening letters being sent to you, sir? Oh, yes, we did. We caught the man responsible as he was writing the next letter, and he's in the holding cells now. I suspect the Wizengamot will wish to try him. A very serious crime, writing threatening letters to a Minister, however much you might not care for his politics."

Harry watched as Malfoy's mouth fell open—and it did, before he caught himself. Doubtless he would try to say later that that hadn't really happened, but it would be a little hard when Harry had the memory of seeing all the way to the back of the Minister's throat.

It did make Harry wonder, more than idly, where Minister Malfoy had learned to open his mouth that wide, and if he ever objected to sticking certain things inside. But he kept his not-so-idle speculation to himself. Malfoy didn't get to win all the games, and Harry had no intention of giving up this one so easily.

"Was there anything else, sir?" he asked. "Only I should get some sleep before the interrogation of our prisoner tomorrow morning."

"Yes—no—wait!" Malfoy was spluttering, and Harry privately thought it was adorable. However, it also wasn't the time for that. Malfoy had been the recipient of both compliments and insults his whole life; Harry thought it only fair for him to work for the ones he wanted now. "There's another case, that string of murders down in Cornwall—"

"Yes, I was a bit late getting back from that one, which is why I didn't firecall you right away about the letter-writer." Harry let a huge yawn crack his jaws. Hermione could tell him that he didn't know how to manipulate people and he would never understand the subtleties, but he did so; it was just that there weren't many people worth the effort. "But it's been taken care of, sir. You'll find a full report on your desk in the morning."

He could practically *feel* Malfoy scrambling for ways to prolong the conversation. Harry smiled at the ceiling and waited. He was awake enough now to be curious about Malfoy's next try. Would it be a completely new and unexpected case, or would he dredge up something from the past that the Aurors had failed to solve and set it before Harry as the next impossible challenge?

"Your house is filthy, Head Auror."

Harry laughed aloud in genuine delight. Malfoy hadn't gone for either of the expected routes, then, but for something entirely new and strange.

"I know it is, sir," he said, smiling at Malfoy, who was blinking at him in a baffled manner and obviously trying to decide whether he should be upset about Harry's laughter. "That's what comes from working late cases all the time and having charge of so many Aurors and so much paperwork. I spend more time at my office than I do here. I'll tend to it right away when I have time, though."

Harry could see Malfoy struggling between the pleasure of continuing to harass Harry about his dirty house, so that he could claim he had won one of their constant little struggles, or ordering Harry to continue coming into the office so that he could see him more often. Harry liked to see the little line that appeared on the Minister's forehead, between his eyes. It meant he was thinking, and in Harry's opinion, he didn't do enough of that.

"I could come over and give you tips about cleaning," Malfoy said at last. His voice had descended to a dangerous purr, and he was watching Harry's dress robe with longing eyes, as if he hoped that the tie would fall open from sheer force of will. "In fact, I think that's best. We can't have our Head Auror getting sick because of his dirty house, can we?"

"But we can't have our Minister getting sick, either!" Harry said, and hoped that his face showed the intense alarm he wanted it to show and not the laughter that kept threatening to break through. "And your health is more important than mine, sir, *so* much more important. I only have one Department to run. You've got a whole nation."

Again Malfoy seemed to waver, though this time between gratification at Harry's concern and a pout that Harry had effectively kept him away once again. In the end, he roughly cleared his throat and looked aside. "Don't undervalue yourself, Head Auror Potter. You're as important to us in your own way as we are to the nation."

The royal "we," as if he's a king. Harry nodded obediently and bit his lip so that he could control the yelps of glee he wanted to emit. "Was there anything else, Minister?" He hoped that he could show, this time, a gentle hint of reproach coupled with his eagerness to serve the Minister.

Malfoy stared at him for a few minutes, chewing his lip. He sometimes lost himself in contemplation of Harry like that, and Harry usually liked it as a tribute to Malfoy's enthrallment with him, but this time, his eyes *were* drooping. He yawned again.

Malfoy snapped back to reality. "No, of course not," he said. "I only wanted to mention that I'll be gifting you with a house-elf to help you tidy up your place. As I said, we can't have the Head Auror living in dirt."

"My friend Hermione will object," Harry said mildly.

"Your health is more important than her twisted ideals," Malfoy snapped, and disappeared from

the fire.

Harry lay on the floor in a long fit of merriment before he could get up and go back to bed. When he got there, his dreams were extremely pleasant.

"I think Malfoy's gone mental, mate."

Harry looked up curiously. So far, Ron hadn't said anything like that. He had only shaken his head over Malfoy's election and told Harry that Malfoy was shamelessly ordering him around and taking advantage of him. Harry knew that last part was true, but since he enjoyed frustrating Malfoy's efforts to get into his pants, he didn't mind.

Now, though, Ron had a hush to his voice that made him sound serious. Harry looked around to make sure that no one else was near his office door, and leaned closer. "What do you mean?"

Ron stepped into the office and shut the door behind him. Harry whistled under his breath. This must be worrying him. Ron hadn't done that so far because he didn't want other Aurors worrying that he was getting better gossip or better treatment as the Head Auror's best friend. Harry took out a parchment and a new quill, ready to make some notes if Ron's information was honest and true.

Ron lowered his voice to the kind of murmur that even spies standing right outside the office door with Extendable Ears would have trouble hearing. "He came in this morning with his hair uncombed."

Harry closed his eyes. He didn't think Ron would like it much if he succumbed to tears of laughter. He coughed and choked instead, nodded, and then said, "But perhaps we should encourage that? It might make him look more like a normal person."

"*Mate*." Harry looked up to find Ron shaking his head. "What makes you think that we want Malfoy to act like a normal person at all?"

A great bellow of "POTTER!" shook the air before Harry could respond to that. He raised an eyebrow at Ron and stood up, opening the door so that Ron could slip out before he traipsed down the corridor to the Minister's office.

It was in disarray—well, disarray for Malfoy. The mirror-desk had two pieces of parchment on it, and the signature on one was simply a blobby scrawl, nothing like the neat handwriting Harry had become accustomed to. One photograph lay on the floor as though Malfoy had knocked it down and not bothered to retrieve it. And Ron had been right; his hair was mussed in the way it might have been if he'd slept on it.

Harry raised an eyebrow and bent down to pick up the picture, keeping an eye on Malfoy all the time as he did. He hadn't been inclined to take this seriously, but it might be. "Sir?" He made sure

to render his voice mild and inquiring. "There was something you wanted?"

Malfoy stared at him. He had a frightening glare when he wanted to use it, Harry thought. He wondered if that had been part of what won Malfoy the election, at least in private parties. Harry had never seen a publicity photo of him where he wore less than a shining smile.

"I'm dying, Potter," Malfoy announced.

"I'm sorry to hear it, sir," Harry said calmly. "What's the disease?"

Malfoy stood up and circled around the desk. Harry kept an eye on him. He made it a matter of policy never to let Malfoy come too close. First, he might lose his hold on sanity and give in if Malfoy touched him, and that wasn't how they played the game. Second, it was more fun this way.

But Malfoy stopped moving and leaned against the desk. Harry blinked. He hadn't immediately turned around and cast a spell that would Vanish the print of his arse against the wood. Yes, this *was* serious.

"I'm dying, Potter," Malfoy declared, "of sexual frustration. The *least* you could do is give me a blowjob to cure me. Of course, the surest cure would be a good fuck." He stared at Harry from beneath lowered eyelids.

This was more open than he had been so far, and Harry chose his words carefully. "I'm sorry, sir, but I'm not actually sure what you want me to do. You know that I can't do that for you. You're my superior, and you move in exalted social circles that my foot can never touch. It wouldn't be right. So you must mean something else."

"Fuck right," Malfoy said. "At the moment, I care less about all the pure-blood ancestors that my parents could dig up than the fact that I want your cock."

His stare was heated, and Harry swallowed, feeling that heat creep down his back and into his groin. How was he supposed to resist this? He had kept away from Malfoy partially to show him there were some things he couldn't have—it was good for him—and partially because he wasn't about to let Malfoy basically command him into sex. But if Malfoy was offering to meet him on equal ground…

Malfoy gave him a narrow smile, obviously well-pleased with the effect he had. "Even the Head Auror," he said, "has to learn his place."

Harry took a deep breath and shook his head, feeling as though he had been dragged out of smoke he'd swallowed. So they were back to that, were they? Well, Harry owed more to his Aurors than to become the Minister's pet. He owed more to himself than that. When he and Malfoy had sex, it would be with the titles forgotten and left behind, or it wouldn't be at all.

And besides, it was *fun* to watch Malfoy sulk, and pout, and act upset when he didn't get what he assumed he had a right to.

"I know exactly where I stand, sir," he said. "Stand, not kneel. And as it happens, I have some recommendations that can ease your problem."

Malfoy leaned forwards, widening his stance so that Harry could easily see his groin. "I hope that you're not about to suggest wanking," he purred. "I've tried that, and all it gets me is a sore wrist and increased frustration."

"Not at all, sir," Harry said, with a respectful bob of his head. "This is a solution I've often used myself." He Summoned the ink and parchment from his office and scribbled down a few addresses, while Malfoy watched him with an open mouth and heavy breathing involved. Then he handed them over.

Malfoy glanced at the top line Harry had written and stiffened—and not in the good way, Harry thought, momentarily disappointed that he wouldn't get to see that. "This appears to be instructions for hiring an escort service," he said in a strangled voice.

Harry nodded helpfully. "I've gone to them many and many a time, sir. Some of the boys are experts, and you deserve only the best to heal you."

Malfoy's mouth hung open, his forehead wrinkling moments before his face flushed. Harry knew what thoughts were battling in his head: outrage that Harry would suggest such a thing or use the services himself, followed by the images of what Harry would look like entangled with a fit young thing.

And a sneaking wish that he could have seen said image.

"I do not think this will be much of a cure," Malfoy said shakily, but his hand curled around the card anyway. Harry wished he could know why. If he just wanted to hold onto it because Harry had given it to him, then Harry could see this game ending soon. But he was probably thinking of using it for blackmail, and that meant Harry had to go on dancing away. He wouldn't yield himself where he wasn't certain of respect.

"Why not, sir?" Harry gave him a bland look.

"I need a certain mouth," Malfoy said, his voice charged and intense again, his body arching forwards as if he would bridge the distance between the desk and Harry with it. "Only a certain heat and wetness can cure me."

Harry changed the bland look to an understanding smile. Hope leaped into Malfoy's expression like a sunrise.

"I used to think the same thing," Harry said, wagging his head in sympathy. "And then I realized

that one mouth is much like another. Yes, the shape of the teeth and the palate are different, and the strength of the tongue, but when you come right down to it, what differences like those are noticeable in the throes of passion?"

Malfoy crumpled the card this time. "How many people have you been with, Potter?" he snarled, and the strength of the hatred—mingled with longing and lust—in his voice was evident.

"Enough," Harry said, and laughed gently at the look on his face. "You didn't imagine that I was a virgin, did you, Minister?"

Malfoy's eyes glazed over at the thought, and Harry gave a small shake of his head. *This is why I won't allow him close to me—or another reason. He has to be able to see what I am, not his fantasies of me. I would only disappoint him, after those fantasies.*

"I did imagine that you were dedicated to your job," Malfoy said, snapping back to himself. "How often have you gone and seen these escorts on the Ministry's time, Potter?"

Harry sighed gently. "Never, sir. While I'm on your time, I'm yours."

Malfoy came a quick step closer, and then, too-obviously, tried to check himself from showing any eagerness. He still reached for Harry with a hand that trembled, though. "Mine?" he whispered. "My servant?"

Harry held his eyes. He let the silence stretch before he shook his head. "No," he said. "The Ministry's servant."

Malfoy shook his head back. His lips were wet and glistening, and if Harry had been capable of giving in right now, he thought he would have done it. "Not at all," Malfoy murmured, reaching out to lay a hand on his shoulder. "My servant, because the Minister is the Ministry, and you're about the Ministry's business."

Harry watched the hand come, feeling frozen. Then he shook his head and ducked away. "Not right now, sir," he said. "Not just now."

Malfoy dropped his hand and stared at him. "What do I have to do to win you?" he whispered, and Harry had the feeling that the question was an honest one. "Give you whatever you want? I'm not sure I can do that."

Harry blew out a breath. This serious moment in the midst of their dancing little game had come upon him unexpectedly, and he wasn't sure that the answer he gave was the right one, but he tried. "No, sir," he said. "Treat me like an equal, not like the Head Auror and not like a servant."

Malfoy gave him an uncomprehending look. "But I can't do that," he said.

"Why not?" Harry asked, almost exasperated enough to break through the game and just keep

talking honestly like this, rather than pretending not to understand how Malfoy was trying to flirt with him.

"Because you *are* the Head Auror."

But not a servant. Malfoy hadn't added that, and Harry felt his emotions rise again: both the patience and the amusement that continuing with the game would provide, and the hope that, someday, Malfoy would truly see Harry the way that Harry wanted to be seen, not only someone to meddle with and possibly fuck.

"Someday, sir," he said, "you'll learn." He nodded to the card he had given Malfoy. "And someday you'll see that there's more than one way of being with someone. I think you need a bit more experience."

He left the room, not walking hastily. He knew that it would take Malfoy some time to find an object that wasn't too valuable to throw.

"I'm never going to understand you and Malfoy, mate," Ron told him that evening when they went out for drinks, after Malfoy had summoned Harry to his office three more times that afternoon for petty requests, and Harry had baffled them all.

Harry grinned and took a drink. "Don't worry, Ron," he said. "Neither does he."

But someday he will. And I can wait.

The End.