Songlines by silyara

Summary: Draco is assigned to help Harry and Hermione find the Grangers in Australia. But along the way, the two are bonded, which changes everything.

Categories: harry/draco Characters: Draco Malfoy, Harry Potter

Challenges:

Series: None

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Story Notes:

To: joanwilder

Pairing: Harry/Draco, Ron/Hermione (side), Neville/Luna (implied)

Warnings: EWE, dom/sub

Request: Slash, post-war fic, romance, sex toys, consensual BDSM, Dom/Sub roles, sex in odd locations, desperate!sex, forced magical bonding, claiming and marking, EWE, united begrudgingly by a purpose

Author's Notes: First off, thank you to my beta, C. I tried to fit in as much of the request as I could, but the boys didn't want to do everything. They had their own ideas, and I followed along for the ride. I enjoyed it, and I hope you will too.

Entry tags: bondage, fic, h/d, mentor snape, multi-chp, nc17

Chapter 1 by silyara

Chapter One

"Remind me why he's here again," Harry whispered in Hermione's ear as they hiked across the Outback, where her parents apparently liked to spend all their free time since moving Down Under.

"Mandatory community service," she snapped back quietly, as Malfoy walked about fifteen feet above them on the trail. Considering how much of a crybaby he had been, he had been doing remarkably well, but even that got on Harry's nerves.

“But why with us?” Harry persisted. Understandably Ron had opted into staying behind, what with Fred’s funeral and all, but Hermione had wanted to find her parents as soon as they could leave, which had been after the trials. Harry had naturally come. But right before they left, Kingsley Shacklebolt had sent them an owl telling them Malfoy would be coming, giving a rather slim explanation.

“He knows more magic about finding people, Harry,” Hermione explained wearily. Camping had not been like this because they had Apparated, not hiked. And it was cold, as what Harry thought of as summer were actually the winter months on the other side of the world. “And,” she continued, “it will help teach him about Muggles.”

“So that he can hate them from experience rather than in abstraction?” Harry continued whining. The Muggles they had dealt with were not the most helpful.

“He’s done better than you,’ Hermione snapped, “You have no idea of trying to get information out of people. He politely inquired about them to the Muggles working in their office. He was the one that found out they were out here.”

“And I so appreciate being out here,” Harry snorted.

“Finding them was never going to be a walk in the park,” Hermione said.

“Compared to saving the Wizarding world? It should be,” Harry rubbed his gloved hands together.

“It takes patience,” she emphasized, as Hermione did every day.

“Potter, Granger,” Malfoy called from ahead, “there’s something here. Something magical.”

“What? What is it?” Harry demanded as he sprinted up to Malfoy, except there was nothing around them. And he was looking at the ground. “Well what is it?”

“I’m not sure,” he looked up annoyed, “I’m trying to figure it out.” He crouched on the ground and brushed around, as if the bare ground would tell him something.

Harry tapped his foot impatiently. “Is this going to help us find Hermione’s parents?”

“As I do not even know what kind of magic it is,” Malfoy repeated, not looking up, “that would be a bit difficult to determine.”

“You’re the ‘specialist,’” Harry spoke angrily, not appreciating spending any more time in the cold than necessary, “figure it out.”

“We’re across the world Potter, and I am eighteen years old,” Malfoy replied sounding superior, “you cannot expect me to know everything about the magic here.”

“Does it even matter? We just need to find her parents,” Harry pushed.

“If you will not let me try to figure out what it is,” Malfoy sneered, “I suggest you do not use your wand. There’s no telling what might happen.”

“Is that a threat?” Harry asked. He had been wary of giving Malfoy his wand back but did so in the end.

“It’s the truth,” Malfoy stated.

“Yes, because as you do not know what it is, you know it will do something,” Harry laughed.

“Since we don’t know, it could do something,” Malfoy defended his statement.

“Whatever,” Harry rolled his eyes, pulling out his wand.

“Potter, are you a complete idiot?!” Malfoy shouted, and Hermione began to come closer to split up another potential fight.

“I want warm hands,” Harry shrugged.

“So do it over there,” Malfoy shrieked.

“I don’t feel like it,” Harry ignored the annoying blond and did a warming charm.

Then it felt like the world exploded or something. He felt the magic radiating up from the ground, and it grabbed him – not physically – but in some way he did not understand, and Harry did not like it. He felt heavy, as if he were being overloaded with magic beyond his own, and he fell to the ground, whereupon opening his eyes, he noticed Malfoy was down as well. What the bloody hell had happened?

“You idiot!” Hermione screamed at him from right above him, “Malfoy’s an arse, but he knows more about this than you did! Now, does anything hurt? I have essence of dittany.”

“No,” Harry spat back. And nothing hurt, though he the heavy feeling was still there, though slowly lessening. Or his body was growing used to it. Had he gained magical powers? Why did he feel…more magic? And it was definitely foreign, not his kind.

“Fucking idiot,” Malfoy swore, getting up and brushing his pants off. “I don’t want to be anywhere near you in case you decide to try to kill us yet again.”

“Sounds like the first decent idea you’ve come up with,” Harry retorted, getting up as well. He glared at Malfoy’s back as it continued on the hiking trail. They had been an estimated hour away from the

campsite Hermione's parents were at, if they kept up the pace. Checking to make sure his glasses were not broken, a shot of pain ran up his back and he dropped them with a shout.

"Fucking A!" Malfoy shouted from ahead. Harry had never known how vulgar he could be.

"What'd you do, git?" Harry shouted back at him.

"Nothing," Malfoy shouted back, returning to them, "I was just walking, and suddenly my entire spine felt like it was on fire."

"Yours too?" Harry asked, shocked.

"The magic in the ground clearly did something," Hermione stated, as if the two were really that dense.

"We can go find you a library after we find your parents. We've been hiking all day. I do not want to have to do this again," Harry told her, "Malfoy and I can…just stay within that distance of each other until then."

"And not kill each other?" she asked.

"I have never killed anyone," Malfoy pointed out in his defense.

"Harry?" Hermione asked.

"I'm not going to kill the git, okay," he rolled his eyes. He hadn't even used a killing curse to kill Voldemort!

“Right,” she said calmly, “I think I will still stay between the two of you to make sure of that.”

“The sun is going to go down in a little over an hour,” Malfoy commented, “can we just keep a fast pace and set up the tent tonight and look for her parents tomorrow?”

“Yes,” Hermione replied immediately. “Let’s go.”

Sometimes he would ask about useful things, such as the charms she used during their time camping during the school year, but mostly he just kept talking, which was an attempt to keep his mind off Lupin’s and Tonks’ and Fred’s and everyone else’s deaths. Malfoy occasionally snapped, asking for some peace and quiet, but Harry did not pay him much mind. Malfoy had to be with them and lacked authority.

The sun set a few minutes before they arrived at the camping site. Hermione paid the fee (though the money had come from Harry’s bank account, as she had emptied hers for the trip the year before) as the two boys began pitching the tent.

“Do you ever just shut up?” Malfoy asked as they held the two poles up inside the tent and Harry charmed his to stay there.

“Why does it matter?” Harry quipped back as he walked out to begin slamming the stakes into the ground.

“You can’t hear anything if there is constant noise,” Malfoy called out of the tent, and Harry looked at his silhouette against the tent wall.

“Perhaps Crabbe and Goyle were not the best conversationalists,” Harry began, slamming the next stake in, “but generally I talk with my friends.”

“We are in a foreign country with strange foreign magic that, if you did not notice, has already done

something to us," Malfoy hissed out. "There could be more things like that."

"Well, magic set off whatever that was. I wasn't doing any spells," Harry called back, thinking Malfoy really had his boxers in a twist.

"Yes, but what it did to us could be setting something off. And in silence, you could hear if something was approaching," Malfoy continued, just as stubborn.

"You think it summoned something to come after us?" Harry asked. He had dealt with enough dangerous people and beasts as he saw it, as least for a few months until Auror training.

"I have no clue," Malfoy repeated from earlier, "but it's better to be cautious."

"If you're scared that the boogey man is going to get you, relax. I'll save your delicate arse," Harry laughed.

"This is old magic, Potter, not some Beedle the Bard tale," Malfoy warned him, releasing the pole, as there were enough stakes to hold it. He left Harry to finish the others to secure it while he set up wood for a fire.

Harry laughed at Malfoy's comment, considering one of those tales had proven correct and had been horribly important at that. But he could never explain that to Malfoy, even if the wand's identity had been shouted in the middle of his duel with Voldemort. Hopefully that would fade into the category of myth and rumor, so that no one would attack him to try to win the wand. Harry wanted to die undefeated, so that the wand would no longer be able to be used.

Hermione finally walked into their campsite, shivering slightly, so she sat near the fire where Malfoy was. Harry joined them as she pulled out food from the cooler she had expanded internally and shrunk externally so as not to take up so much room. "We can find them tomorrow," she stated, "then when we all return to the city, you two can look into whatever happened to you while I spend some time with them."

Harry took the food from Hermione to cook over the fire – the experience with the Dursleys actually coming in handy since they had food to cook. Hermione had grown better at charming food, but there were too many Muggles nearby. No one really had much to say. Hermione felt scared about her parents' reactions to what she did, but she never wanted to talk about it in front of Malfoy, and Harry did not much feel like talking to him at the moment, and he felt similarly about Malfoy as well.

They ate silently before entering the tent, closing the front flaps and performing a few charms to make the ground more comfortable. Then they slept in their usual order – Hermione between the two boys. Ron probably would not like hearing about that, but she insisted it was better than the two of them throttling each other in their sleep.

The morning came quickly, crisp and cold, demanding a few layers for each of them. Having only one tent, the boys first faced the flap, not talking, while Hermione changed before she left to prepare breakfast while they silently changed. Harry could never bring himself to say anything about the scar on Malfoy's chest, from the incident in Sixth Year, but the two had grown better at ignoring awkward moments. Harry pulled a Weasley sweater over his head, along with a jacket, gloves, and a warm hat and left the tent without saying anything.

Hermione had made some sausages and bacon, and it actually tasted decent. She was getting much better at cooking. Everyone's eyes were looking out – as if her parents could walk by at any moment. They ate quickly, before the meat got cold, and began to wander around the campsite. Having woken up early, many people were still sleeping. Those that saw them mostly ignored them and went about their business – mostly leaving on some day hike.

A middle-aged fellow was at the tap in the middle of the camping grounds, fetching some water. Most of him was covered – for the cold weather – but Hermione gasped, recognizing how he walked. Apparently it was her father. Trying not to appear like stalkers, they followed him long enough to see where the campsite was, where her mother was cooking pancakes. Her hair looked exactly like Hermione's.

Her eyes looked over at Harry, "Do I do it now? Or…or should I wait?"

Never having had parents, Harry felt at a loss of what to suggest. He had never had family, true family.

And he froze.

“We should come back after dinner,” Malfoy said, “everyone will be more awake. And we’ll seem less like we’re stalking them.”

“But we are stalking them,” Harry pointed out.

“Yes, git,” Malfoy sneered, “but they will probably feel a bit less like that if we come later in the day.”

“Why?”

“We got here late last night, and the very next morning we find them?” Malfoy asked, “there’s no way that could be a coincidence. It will put them off and not want to trust us.”

“Okay,” Hermione whispered quietly, “So, um, what shall we do all day?”

“I think I’ll study for my N.E.W.T.s,” Malfoy replied, “as I will actually be taking them.”

Hermione gasped, “Oh Merlin, I must be so behind! I’ll never be ready to take them in time.”

“I am sure they’ll understand, Granger,” Malfoy drawled, “you were a bit busy saving the world with Potter. It took up all your study time.”

“I should have brought more books with us,” Hermione moaned, “all those boring camping nights. I could have been learning stuff!”

“You’ll do fine,” Harry said in rote. She had performed a N.E.W.T. level charm in Fifth Year. She could not

be that far behind. But stuck with two people who would rather study than play exploding snap or wizarding chess, Harry soon succumbed to the book reading. Even if he had been given a pass on the required N.E.W.T.s for Auror training based off his having killed Voldemort, he supposed that it would be good to try not to be behind the other students in the entering class.

Except for a lunch break, studying was all they did all day. Hermione grew nervous if her brain was not occupied with something else, and Harry could not distract her well enough with talking, so she kept with the books. Harry had grown bored and gone outside a few times, but it was cold enough that he always came back.

Harry cooked dinner after Hermione had barely been able to pick up the cooler without shaking. Malfoy told her that her parents loved her and still would, while Harry cooked and felt slightly jealous that they both had loving parents. Still, he could hardly have desired his parents to have gone through what Malfoy's had (as he heard in the trial and saw in Voldemort's mind) or have to hide them away like Hermione had done for their own sake. And he had been able to talk to them that one time, when he thought he would die. Harry would never forget that one conversation he had with his parents, the only one he would ever have.

They made their way over to her parents' campsite, where the older couple sat reading books next to each other by the campfire, having finished eating as well. Harry felt butterflies, and he was pretty sure Hermione was nauseous. Malfoy looked collected, but he was the most innocent in this situation.

"Wendell and Monika Wilkins?" Hermione asked, which came out a bit squeaky.

"Yes?" her father looked up, confused.

"You sound British," her mother commented, "I know we had a little trouble with our passports, but everything cleared."

"It's not about that, ma'am," Malfoy spoke up, "but if we could speak inside, that would be much appreciated." He spoke with such authority, the kind that only someone born into a higher position could talk, and despite the age difference, Hermione's parents went along.

Hermione failed at saying anything as they settled inside the tent, sitting on the hard floor. So Malfoy kept going, “We are from Britain, and we have some difficult news to tell you, some of which you may think is false. Please let us finish; then you can ask any questions you may have. You moved here about a year ago as Wendell and Monika Wilkins. You are not, actually, Wendell and Monika Wilkins.”

He held up a hand as her mother opened her mouth to interrupt. “You had some memory damage,” he continued, “and it was thought you would be better off here. So you were given what you needed to get your lives going again because that was the best option at the time. However, we are here to fix the problem. We are going to help restore your memories.

“That sounds incredibly odd, but we know more about this area than you do, so I need you to simply trust me on this. The process will not hurt. Please close your eyes,” Draco spoke with authority that Harry had only seen from Lucius Malfoy. And they… submitted, closed their eyes and waited.

Malfoy looked over at Hermione, nudging her to go. As she had performed the charm, she was the best choice for undoing it. She pulled out her wand, trembling, but Malfoy gave her an affirmative look. Saying the words and waving her wand, she finished the spell before either parent doubted Malfoy’s authority and peeked. She then grabbed Harry’s arm and waited.

They opened their eyes, and their mouths gaped open. “You’re a witch!” “I have a daughter!” “How could you do this!” “You erased our memories!” “What kind of daughter could do that to her parents?!”

“Mom, Dad,” Hermione called out weakly, “please listen.”

“Mr. and Mrs. Granger,” Malfoy began again, trying to use the authority he had earlier, “please listen to her.”

Her mother looked his face up and down, “Why should we listen to you? You never did anything but hurt our daughter.”

“And look what our daughter did to us. Our entire lives… gone. I hate camping!” her father shouted.

“Please, please!” Hermione begged.

“She did it because she LOVED you,” Malfoy bellowed over the many voices. Everyone stopped. “You were not there to see the war, and neither of them saw what happened when you had family in England. But I saw, so before you get overly upset, perhaps you would like to hear what would have happened.

“They did not just kill you. No, that would be too kind, too painless. Most muggle-borns and their family were caught and tortured, actually tortured for hours. Others were given to Fenrir, a werewolf who likes to… have his way with children before biting them. Others were given to the Dementors, so that they became less than human. And these were muggle-borns and their families that were doing nothing more than existing. She was off with Potter trying to save the world. They would have done anything to you to get to him through her – torture, maim, and if you had been lucky, kill.

“You are on the other side of the world with nothing other than your profession linking you to who you were before. You were safe. So appreciate that you are not even in a condition to be able to be angry at her,” Malfoy finished, orating it with a voice worthy to inspire masses. Harry had never known he could do that, much less have guessed he would help Hermione’s parents come to an understanding.

They sat there, not speaking, for a few minutes, just staring across the tent at the three of them in shock. Finally, her mother spoke, “We would have left, Hermione, if you told us.”

She shook her head, “I wasn’t sure. And, he…Voldemort would have found you anyway. He killed people all across Europe. And the only way you could fake it believably was if you believed it.” She was sniffling.

“Just,” her father said, “never do anything like that again. I know you’re a witch now, and you can do things we’ll never be able to do. But we are still your parents, and you shouldn’t be making decisions like that for us. We’re adults.”

She nodded, “Of course. I’ll never, ever again.” And tears burst out of her eyes. “I’m so sorry, I didn’t know what else to do,” her shoulders heaved. Harry gave her a hug, but her mother came over and

pulled the witch away from him. Harry and Malfoy slipped out of the tent and sat on the ground outside.

“Thanks,” Harry said, “I didn’t expect that.”

Malfoy kicked the ground, “It was all true. It was better if your family was gone, no matter who you were.”

Harry nodded, but Malfoy knew Harry had seen him sometimes. It had come out in the trial. They sat there in an uneasy silence, though Harry’s respect for him had grown intensely for what he did in there.

Chapter Two

The Grangers preferred to talk with only their daughter, which gave Harry and Malfoy time to try to figure out what in Merlin’s left pants’ leg had happened to them. The Ministry of Magic located itself in Sydney; it was attached to the National Floo Registry, to make it more accessible, but neither wizard wanted to risk even a couple seconds of being separated more than twenty feet. So they talked with the hotel manager for apparation instructions. The apparation point was a single room connected to the floo entrances, so that entry was still restricted for safety but not convenience.

They stood in the lobby corner, arguing – not even capable of an hour outside of Hermione’s presence without some bickering. “I have apparated much more than you,” Malfoy argued, “Therefore I can bring you along.”

“I do not need to be helped like a baby,” Harry argued.

“And I do not trust you to get me there in one piece,” Malfoy smirked.

“I can apparate just fine,” Harry growled.

But Malfoy did not retort, simply grabbed Harry and went.

“Merlin’s arse, you bastard,” Harry growled and pulled away, “do not do that again.”

Malfoy said nothing.

“You aren’t going to argue?” Harry asked.

“I…can’t,” Malfoy answered, looking as perplexed as Harry. They looked at each other, both thinking the same thing – the magic in the Outback.

Shuffling through took little time, as most people had come to work already. Approaching the help desk just inside, Harry coughed, not sure how to begin the conversation. The middle-aged witch’s eyes stared at his face, making him feel self-conscious, and slowly spoke, “Harry…Potter. You just saved Britain right? What are you doing down here?”

“We need to speak to someone about a magical incident that happened when we were hiking,” Harry said firmly.

“Oh, we can’t help you with that,” she said kindly.

“Why not?” Harry demanded.

“That’s aborigine magic,” she explained, “it’s all very secretive. Their wizards and witches are dying out, but they refuse to let us record anything about their magic for the library or anything. In return, they only use it among themselves. But we do not go in the Outback near their areas. Never know what might happen.” She gave him such an apologetic look – the one that doctors gave dying patients.

“Could we talk to one of these aborigine wizards?” Harry asked.

“Well, they're very hard to find,” she said, whispering as if telling a children’s story, “but they’re pure black – completely black, not the shiny-black of Africans. I heard that there’s one who sells artwork over in Kiwi Plaza, dodgy place. But that’s all I know.”

Malfoy sighed, as if she was a waste of his time, “And how can we get to this Kiwi Plaza?”

“Go out the street exit, go to the end and take a right. Then it should be off of that street connected by a small alley, which is hard to see, but it’s on the left. I avoid that place. Most decent folk do,” her eyes flitted back and forth between them, “there are dangerous wizards and witches there.”

“Thanks, and you’re staring at the wizard who defeated You-Know-Who twice, once in diapers,” Malfoy sniped back, rolling his eyes. “Let's go, Potter.”

Harry glanced over with an odd look as they exited, “Okay, first you don’t argue, and now the hero worship?”

“That was not hero worship. Your credentials are just a tad more snazzy than mine,” Malfoy quipped back.

“Right,” Harry laughed, “just a tad.”

Outside, a burst of cold wind made them button up and pop the collars of their winter coats, so their necks were protected. Few people were on the streets – both due to weather and the time of day. But Harry watched everything in his peripheral vision and noted Malfoy doing the same.

The further they traveled, the less pristine everything looked. Fewer people traveled about, and the

shopkeepers watched those on the street behind old windows. His hand instinctively went for his wand, which he gripped under his hand mostly and up his sleeve, easy to slide down and perform a spell. But nothing happened until they reached the small alley connecting the plaza to the more-welcome street.

Shadowy characters flitted against the walls, barely moving and barely visible. An old witch with a single eye came up, trying to rub her hands on Malfoy's cloak, begging for alms. "Please sir," she coughed, "just a few small coins."

Harry held his wand in front of her face, "Muttering words under your breath, and your wand is up your sleeve. Leave before I force you not to complete casting." His face held no qualms – his best imitation of Moody he could give. And the witch sank back into the shadows.

"How could you tell?" Malfoy asked in a whisper as they entered the square.

"I'm not sure," Harry answered, just as quietly, "I just… knew."

"Well, thanks," Malfoy muttered, almost inaudibly.

"You've been useful," Harry replied, "and I don't know what would happen to me if something happened to you."

"And you have a big hero complex," Malfoy added.

Harry grinned, "I suppose I do. Comes with the job description."

Their eyes darted about. Most the shop signs were peeling, and they did not even have a name, so Harry looked at the wares for sale in the windows. Mostly the items were hidden, but one shop had canvases with pictures Harry had no clue what of, but they were painted. The shop fit the description the best. Hopefully the shopkeeper would as well.

Inside, similarly hard-to-describe paintings lined the walls, and a small howl sounded out as they entered. From the shadows, a dark man, who simply blended in before, wearing black robes emerged. “I do not describe what the paintings are of,” he began in a deep voice, “prices are attached. See me when you have made your selection.”

Harry looked him straight in the eye, his eyes adjusting in the dark to make out his entire form, “We are not here about artwork.”

“Then why do you come, Brit?” the dark man asked.

“We were in the Outback, when… something happened. My companion felt the magic in the ground beforehand, but we were both thrown to the ground. We were told it is aborigine magic,” Harry explained, never one who had particularly withheld information.

“I cannot tell you about that,” he replied, “I am a mere artist. That is not my place.”

“To whom can we talk to?” Harry asked, while Malfoy continued to check out the place from where he stood next to him.

“Wait here,” the man said without explanation, “I will return.”

“Right,” Harry muttered as the wizard disappeared.

“These are very interesting paintings,” Malfoy commented as they stood in the dim lighting.

“Great, buy one and take it back to your manor,” Harry commented grimly.

“I don’t mean that. There is magic in them, but they are not like our magical portraits. There are no people. It’s… places. Different magic to what was in the ground where we were, but it’s the same kind – aboriginal,” Malfoy continued, moving closer to a painting.

“Get away from there!” Harry ordered through clenched teeth, and the blond popped back, “you do not know what it could do. Whatever happened to being careful? It’s in a dodgy place. You can’t trust it.”

Malfoy sighed, “It doesn’t feel dark, and if it hurt people, he wouldn’t be allowed to sell it. The reason he has such a bad location is because the British came in and took over. The aborigines are looked down upon.”

“Like Voldemort and muggle-borns?” Harry asked.

“No,” Malfoy replied instantly, “they were here before we were. Muggle-borns enter our world. I am not going to argue politics with you, but it’s very different.”

“You’re still making people second-class citizens for something they were born as and can't help being,” Harry argued back.

“I’m not going to argue this with you,” Malfoy stated.

“You actually think Voldemort was right?” Harry asked, “How can you think that?”

“I think both ways are dangerous,” Malfoy stated, “allowing them and trying to take control over them.”

“Explain yourself.”

“The more we interact with Muggles, and the more Muggles find out about us, it’s dangerous. And

muggle-borns are more likely to be weaker magically," Malfoy shrugged.

"Weaker? Would you call Hermione weak – "

"No," Malfoy interrupted, "but she's not the rule. More of them are poorer with magic. They haven't grown up around it. It isn't in their history. It isn't as much a part of them."

"I was raised by Muggles," Harry interjected.

"Yes, and you're a special case when it comes to about everything," Malfoy snapped, "The point is they weaken us. But it's dangerous the other way too. I just heard about nuclear weapons. They could blow up the entire world in one minute if they get too scared. And what does magic have compared to that? Magic isn't about destroying the world, but they could."

"I suppose that could be their last defense," Harry conceded, "So that's why you think taking them over is dangerous?"

"That's just one thing," Malfoy responded, "and if they have that, what else do they have? I would rather not end up blown to pieces."

"So what do you want to do?" Harry asked.

"Live. Survive. Help my parents not die in shame," Malfoy threw out, "that's how fate threw me out here. I had to do community service, but I told Shacklebolt I wanted to do something that would help my family, name and such, even if it was harder."

"Wouldn't you rather hide up in your manor and live off your riches?" Harry asked.

"Eventually a Malfoy will need to get a job. It's not endless money. And until the name is better, that's

impossible," Malfoy explained.

"Why so candid?"

"Well, seeing how secretive everyone is and how far away we can get from each other," Malfoy pointed out sarcastically, "we seem to be likely to spend lots of time together. Might as well see if you are actually capable of a decent conversation."

Harry laughed, "Okay, well, if you're willing to work at not constantly being at my throat, so will I with you."

"Sounds like a deal," Malfoy agreed.

Two men returned from the shadows only moments after Malfoy made the statement, which made Harry's skin crawl. He had not noticed anyone returning. The new man was similarly dressed, rather plain and dark.

"Our magic is our own. You are strangers to us and do not understand anything. I cannot explain anything to you when you know nothing," the man spoke, not leaving the edge of the shadows, "When you understand a part, you will understand the whole."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Harry asked.

"You will understand in time, I hope," he spoke slowly, "Good luck to you both." He slipped away again, and only the artist remained.

"That was helpful," Harry remarked.

"I am a lowly artist," the painter replied, "it is not for me to decide. If you wish to buy a painting, you

may. I cannot help you with anything else."

"Great, thanks," Harry muttered, "Malfoy – you buying anything or can we go?"

"We can go," Malfoy replied, and they turned to exit the shop. The walk out of the shady district went peacefully enough with the residents giving them a decent girth. Once in the side street, Malfoy apparated them back to their hotel.

Fingers cold and frustrated, they sat for tea and waited, as Hermione was still with her parents. Neither said anything, though both understood that any hopes of parting company were clearly demolished until they figured out what happened. And they still had lives to live. But no conversation came up about what it would mean when they returned. Their minds were still wrapping themselves around the idea of being stuck with each other.

Chapter Three

"I can't believe Dumbledore knew nothing," Harry muttered, as he opened yet another record of British wizards in Australia. In the two weeks since arriving back in warmer weather, they had not found anything – even after talking to Dumbledore and Snape (well, Harry talked to Dumbledore, and Malfoy talked to Snape as privately as possible). They could comfortably be one room apart from each other for an hour or so, which made washing and other private activities slightly more tolerable, but he had not been able to see Ginny yet. She had flipped out when she heard the two of them were still near each other.

Malfoy laughed, which he liked to do a rather lot at Harry, "He didn't know everything, Potter. And aboriginal magic was not his specialty. Just keep reading."

Harry grunted in reply. Nothing he said to Malfoy came off the way he wanted and could always be twisted so as to make him look stupid. And he only had a month until Auror training.

“Mm,” Malfoy hummed, “this is interesting. A young couple experienced something similar.”

“And,” Harry looked up, “what happened to them?”

“It’s some kind of bond. They, too, could not part from each other’s company for two years. The witch apparently wore the pants of the relationship just slightly beforehand, always getting her way, and that trait in the relationship grew more pronounced,” Malfoy paused.

“What? What happened after those two years?” Harry asked.

“It…doesn’t say. They fought and nearly killed each other twice; well she almost killed him. He apparently couldn’t stop it. But the record stops after those two years. There’s nothing else about them,” Malfoy pursed his lips, not looking very happy.

“And they began the…bond or whatnot liking each other?” Harry asked rhetorically, “Damn. That doesn’t look like we have much of a chance.”

“If there was this one case, there should be another,” Malfoy snapped, “Keep reading.”

Harry sighed, rather bored. Hermione and Malfoy would have gotten along wonderfully, except from the blood and House issues, he mused, for all the research they threw themselves into. His readings only touched on the aborigines, whom those recording were apparently frightened of, though the dark-skinned wizards had never seemed to harm anyone. The rather fairy-tale reports about them made Harry want to scoff at their stupidity. But he supposed he should not, as he had (at one point) owned all three Deathly Hallows, which were supposed to be a children’s tale.

“Huh,” he spoke aloud by accident, and Malfoy’s piercing eyes looked up at him, “this man is afraid of the desert. There is some ‘ancient power’ his group heard about that bound people together until they went mad and the one with power killed the other. He feared it forced slavery upon one of the parties, while the other had control. But the aborigines loved it for their own use. He often heard of males and females bonded together, occasionally two warriors. He doesn’t know what happened to the aborigines who did

it though.”

“So it’s an aborigine magical bond that we don’t know much about, and they won’t tell us because we aren’t aborigines and therefore not supposed to be bonded,” Malfoy commented dryly. “Great deal of good that does us.”

Harry sighed, “There has to be something good about it, or the aborigines wouldn’t do it.”

“It appears to be a great way to break up any relationship,” Malfoy joked.

Harry looked up at him and sighed, “I am trying to be serious here.”

“I can’t live with you if you’re always going to be serious,” Malfoy commented, twirling his quill between his fingers.

“Since when did you make jokes?” Harry asked, confused.

“I thought 'Weasley is Our King' was quite genius,” Malfoy laughed.

“It was rude,” Harry crossed his arms.

“But funny. It was just an example,” Malfoy looked across the table and sighed, “Potter, when were we ever not at each other’s throats? There is a lot about each other we don’t know, but I am betting we are going to have to. Now, I’d rather live with you than be dead or in Azkaban for killing you. And looking at the history, you get to yet again break another record. You survived the killing curse twice, so think you could try to survive this bond?”

Harry felt astonished, “You’re…serious?”

“No, choke me now,” Malfoy sighed.

“Okay, okay,” Harry backtracked, “I hadn’t thought that far.”

“Do you ever think ahead, Potter? Or is that why you usually travel with Granger?” Malfoy smirked.

“That’s…very…” Harry sighed, “...funny if I choose to laugh at myself.”

“You know, Potter, living with a hero has perks,” Malfoy looked at him, and his whole face looked like it was laughing.

“What’s that?” Harry asked, waiting to be another punch line.

“You just drop the hero status, and you keep getting what you want,” Malfoy remarked, holding a hand up to Harry’s fish face. “Those records are private,” he imitated Kingsley. He then copied the face Harry gave Kingsley that read, “I saved the entire world. Certainly I could have such a small favor as this…”

“Yeah, yeah,” Harry waved at the air, “I needed to know. This was – is – potentially a life or death situation.”

“I’m not complaining, since they’re helping me,” Malfoy remarked with a smirk.

“Back to being serious,” Harry scratched the back of his neck nervously, “I, uh, still want to become an Auror. So since we’re still living together it seems, you’ll need to train too.”

“And how are you going to get that done? I can see Rita Skeeter’s headline already – ‘Death Eater gone

Auror?’” Malfoy rolled his eyes.

“Just what you were saying,” Harry laughed, “I'll drop the hero card.”

“And how are you going to explain it to Shacklebolt this time?” Malfoy asked skeptically.

“You always accuse me of having a hero complex,” Harry began.

“And you do,” Malfoy interjected.

“Yes, so I’ll use that charming complex on you,” Harry laughed.

“You’re going to save me from, what, the evil influences of my father?” Malfoy glared.

“You never had much of a chance to choose anything but Voldemort. You’ll be an excellent example to show that we don’t need to persecute all of the Death Eater’s children. Their family shouldn’t make them a victim as well,” Harry spoke, getting more wrapped up and emotional as he did.

“Okay, calm down Potter,” Malfoy looked relaxed in his chair, “I’ll be your little poster child publicly. But I don’t need to be reformed. So don’t bother trying in private.”

“And we’ll just…have to live together the rest of the time,” Harry concluded, “but I still want to be able to have my friends over. You don’t get to drive them away.”

“And my friends?” Draco asked. His mouth closed as confusion washed over him, “Why for Merlin’s left nipple did that come out as a question? I was…demanding.”

Harry – in a flash of understanding, as it usually seemed to come to him – laughed, “Oh Merlin’s butt cheek. I cannot believe it.”

“What, Potter?” Malfoy snarled.

“I am the one with the power,” Harry explained, almost doubling over in laughter. “You're my…”

“You say bitch and I will hex your sorry face off,” Malfoy threatened, pulling out his wand.

Harry pulled himself together, barely gaining control of his laughter, “This is how people end up dead. Look, I don’t want us to end up dead, so I sadly can’t egg you on. But you have to admit, it’s funny.”

Malfoy glared.

“I laughed at myself earlier today!” Harry insisted, “you can make fun of my hero complex as much as you want.”

“Yes, but that’s a part of who you are, not something thrown onto you by some spell,” Malfoy pointed out.

Harry disagreed. The notes about the bond said it brought out and magnified previous power relations, so that meant Malfoy had been like that to some degree even beforehand. And that made him laugh so hard.

“Alright,” Harry said, choking on his laughter, “I guess we’re done here.”

“There could be more,” Malfoy pointed out, glaring, except it felt more like a guilt trip. Since when had Malfoy been able to guilt trip him?

“Fine,” Harry sighed, as he settled in for a long read. He woke up sometime later to Malfoy tapping him, “Ministry’s closing, hero boy.”

“Mmrmph,” Harry responded groggily, “Do we have to go? I was sleeping.”

“It didn’t look very comfortable,” Malfoy pointed out.

Harry felt his side, “It wasn’t.”

“Time to go and talk with Shacklebolt,” Malfoy prodded, “he wants to talk to you anyway, since this research was such an important matter to you. I trust your skills at BSing will help you through this?”

“That,” Harry stood slowly, “and a nice long repetition of ‘Dumbledore’s wishes.’ It worked last year.”

“Yes, but you were on his orders last year,” Malfoy pointed out, “not so true at the moment with this bond…thing.”

“But he wanted to save you,” Harry sleepily argued, “he wanted to help you get out of the Death Eater mess.”

“How do you know that?” Malfoy snapped, stepping back.

“I was there, git,” Harry replied, “under my invisibility cloak.”

“As always,” Malfoy sighed, “I couldn’t be humiliated without you watching.”

“You lowered your wand,” Harry argued, his mind waking up, “You weren’t going to do it.”

“So much good that did,” Malfoy threw back.

“You were going to accept his offer. That means you were not fully belonging to Voldemort. You were there out of fear for your family,” Potter argued.

“One point to Potter for recognizing the obvious,” Malfoy quipped.

“But that’s how I can convince Shacklebolt. Do you think you can sit in the waiting area right outside his office, and neither of us will collapse while I talk to him?” Harry asked.

“If you start feeling something,” Malfoy muttered – his Slytherin brain working tricky schemes faster than Harry’s could, “just demand I come in and show my arm. I don’t have the mark.”

“You don’t?” Harry asked, shocked.

“You never peeked in all the time we’ve spent together?” Malfoy asked.

“No, I just…assumed…”

“The Dark Mark was an honor, and I was a failure,” Malfoy spoke calmly, but Harry could sense the emotion underneath.

“Well, a failure for Voldemort is what you want to be right now,” Harry commented, trying to make it lighter.

Malfoy sighed but did not argue the point as they made their way to Shacklebolt's office. The reactions they received were rather different. All the witches and wizards smiled at Harry, some of them a bit in the manner Harry had seen boys fawning over Fleur in fourth year, which sickened him. But it was better than the glares and hateful looks directed toward Malfoy. Harry observed him out of the corner of his eye and saw that the blond did not even acknowledge the other people's existences, holding to the Malfoy manner that gave the impression he did not notice them. But Harry knew that had to be impossible. It was an act – a front – to protect Malfoy from showing any weakness, though it did not make him any more loved.

The secretary batted her eyelashes but went for Kingsley immediately, who called for Harry as soon as he heard. Malfoy sat in the chair closest to the door, Harry noticed, but the door shut behind him and Malfoy was gone from him. He felt slightly chilled and a bit empty, but he ignored it to get the conversation done. Harry could not reveal what had happened to Kingsley – he needed the man to believe him.

"Harry, do sit down," the calming former Auror began, "What can I do for you?"

"Hear me out until the end," Harry started, "Don't interrupt me until I've finished."

"Okay," Kingsley's fingers interlocked and rested on the desk.

"Malfoy isn't a bad fellow. He's very witty and snaps out at others to protect himself, which, considering the sentiments toward him, happens about all the time. But he was essential in finding Hermione's parents and convincing them to even give her a chance to explain why she had done that to them. He's proud, but he's extremely talented and far more devoted to developing his skill than I have ever been, except perhaps in Defense. He was thrown into a situation where Voldemort could kill his parents at a whim, and all the pressure was on him. I know that saved him from jail time, but the way society is, I fear that they'll push him in the opposite direction we want." Harry set out the basics that he agreed with, though perhaps before he would not have gone out of his way to fix the situation.

"If he does not get the chance to show his worth and ability to choose good when his parents won't die for it, all the potential for him to become a decent person is lost. He lowered his wand. He wouldn't have killed Dumbledore. If he just gets a fair shot, I think we'll reap the benefits from it as well as him. Almost no one is willing to give it to him, but I want to. I want to show he can become a good person. Thus, I

want to ‘reform’ him or what not. I want him to join the Auror program, with me. We’ll be training partners for everything. I doubt anyone else would want to partner with him. And he’ll move into Grimmauld Place with me, so that I can help him become a better person and watch that he doesn’t slip,” Harry laid out the plan, which he actually liked and on a deep level – despite his promise to Malfoy – hoped would work.

“You may object that he’s a coward and runs away in almost every situation, which isn’t a good trait for an Auror. But more than that, he will do anything for his family, if it will help them. Lucius and Narcissa cannot expect any friends, any prospects of anything besides a socially imposed house arrest for the rest of their lives, unless he does something for the Malfoy name. I believe he spoke to you about that for the community service. And there is nothing greater he could do for his family to help them. And that is the only motivation that can make him fight and risk his neck. And it’s there. He will not have any other option for helping his family because it’s the only way I can help him, and no one else will help him,” Harry defended Malfoy against the easiest allegations that could be thrown at him. Oddly enough, it had stopped being merely a speech but something he – sort of – believed in.

“And it’s a first step. People are completely divided and treating anyone who could be interpreted as helping Voldemort as crap. And while some of them deserve it, others don’t, and they too aren’t getting a chance. If I can show that Malfoy can be a good person, it will give those people a chance as well to prove themselves. But until there is an amazing case no one will believe possible, no one gets a chance. So even if you don’t want to do it for Malfoy, do it for everyone else,” Harry finally stopped.

His head felt woozy, but he ignored it. Hopefully Kingsley would act quickly, or Harry would need to call Malfoy in to show his arm…soon.

“Always the hero, Harry?” Kingsley laughed, “If he gets the marks, and if you can overcome your schoolboy enmity, I can allow it. But he has to get the NEWT marks. You may get to be an exception, but Malfoy hasn’t vanquished any Dark Lords, so he’ll be on the same footing as everyone else.”

Harry grinned. It had worked! “Thank you, sir,” Harry replied loudly.

“And you both will be held to the same standards as anyone else in the training, even if you won’t be rotating partners,” Kingsley pointed out, as if to emphasize he was being fair.

“Of course, of course,” Harry stood.

“I take it you already asked him?” Kingsley looked to confirm the situation.

“Well, I figured that would be the harder part, so yes, I did,” Harry replied jokingly.

Kingsley shook his head, “Now, if you please, I do have other work to get to.”

“Right,” Harry stood to leave, “thank you sir.”

Malfoy was standing and approached Harry as soon as the door opened. He looked a bit pale and not his best. But they did not do more than walk out relatively close to each other until they apparated to Grimmauld place. There, Malfoy almost fell down from the effort of Apparating in such a state. Harry caught him and held Malfoy’s back to his chest.

“Come on,” Harry forced himself to say, despite the stars and birds beginning to appear around his head, “Let's stay up.”

“Mmm,” Malfoy stuttered, “Feels a bit better now.”

“Thank Merlin we now have an official reason to always be together now,” Harry sighed, watching the world return to focus.

“Even being an Auror is better than collapsing like this,” Malfoy remarked.

“Yeah, let's not do that again,” Harry agreed as they stumbled upstairs. They slept in separate beds as always, but they needed to be moved closer after being apart so long. The bond would hopefully not

have many circumstances to do that again.

Chapter Four

“You’re adopting Malfoy?” Ginny roared, coming in through the Floo, where Harry and Draco sat across each other at the table drinking coffee, as well as other breakfast fare that Kreacher had made them.

“He’s been living here a couple months already, Gin,” Harry began to explain again, “And it’s not permanent. It’s a ministry program to help build up society again, rather than it always being splintered and fighting.”

“I’m not an orphan, if anything I’d be adopting Harry,” Malfoy quipped with a smirk, before a look from Harry shut him up. They would both have to pay something for Ginny’s anger when it spiked up, as it often had. She further tested them the most because she demanded having Harry to herself.

“No one’s talking to you, ferret face,” Ginny roared, and Harry then noticed her wand already in her hand.

“Gin – stop,” Harry tried to play as much of a peacekeeper as he could, “What is it you want?”

“I saw this!” she yelled, her anger directed back again at Harry. Her other hand threw the Daily Prophet on the table, which unfurled with a picture of the two taken outside Grimmauld. Kingsley had just announced the project when Auror training was about to begin (Draco had excelled in his NEWTS).

THE CHOSEN ONE ADOPTS DEATH EATER LUCIUS MALFOY’S SON FOR REDEMPTION

Harry didn’t read the article, which he was sure had been twisted in some way. “It’s not going to be forever, Gin, just for training. We’re going to be partners, and he’ll be living here. It’s not that huge a

deal," he replied, sighing.

"Can you part from your…pet project for a few minutes so we can have a private conversation?" Ginny demanded, again. Harry usually turned her down, but this time his eyes connected with Draco's. They could last a few minutes. Harry wouldn't let it last too long.

"Two minutes, Gin," Harry sighed, waving Draco to leave. The latter took his coffee as well as the Prophet with him.

"Two minutes?" she shrieked, and Harry felt certain Draco could hear her anyway, "That's all I'm worth to you now? I thought you actually were invested, actually wanted…something. You were there right afterwards when snogging and shagging was involved. Is that what it takes? Do I need to be willing to shag you in front of ferret face for you to want to be with me?"

"No, Gin," Harry sighed, "It's not that…"

"No normal wizard chooses to go this long without sex! You were gone for a couple months Down Under. And you've been back for months now, and we've barely snogged at all!" she accused him, jabbing her pointer finger of her free hand.

"I went for almost a year without seeing you," Harry defended himself, "I think I've proven myself not to be some sex-obsessed teenager. Look, if you want more snogging and sex, you can say so. You don't need to yell at me to bring that up."

"Don't you want to have sex with me? Do you not think I'm pretty enough for you now that you're a hero?" She accused.

"I've always been considered a hero. You're beautiful Gin, more so when you aren't yelling at me," Harry pointed out, trying his best to stay calm. She really tried his patience – almost as much as Draco did.

“So the fighting is my fault now? No, I don’t suppose the Chosen One could have anything to do with it. You’re too special to have such flaws. I just have to sit by and tolerate it as you replace me with Draco Malfoy,” Ginny spit out the last words with disgust.

“Replace?” Harry looked confused.

“He sleeps in your room! You’re always together. None of us can visit you without him being there. I’m the girlfriend. Shouldn’t I be the one always there, rather than Malfoy?”

Harry felt certain Draco could hear it. And the distance was getting painful. Standing, Harry moved to get more coffee, which was near the door, and reclined against the wall. There, that was a bit better. “Even if this program wasn’t happening, I doubt we’d be living together Gin. Your mother would never approve, and we’ve just begun really dating. You hardly saw me without Ron and Hermione before, and I don’t see how in regards to us dating Draco could possibly be worse than Ron. Ron’s your older brother. And a very protective one I might point out,” Harry replied, slightly amused.

“You’re laughing at me?” Ginny accused, “Look, I’m tired of always being last. Saving the world I get. That is really important. But saving Draco Malfoy? I should be higher on the list than that, but clearly I’m not. So it’s over Harry. I’m tired of being second string.”

His jaw dropped, “What?! That’s ridiculous! Would you dump me for being an Auror? This is hardly any different!”

“It’s your entire bloody life!” she yelled, “Goodbye!” She sent a hex his way, which he ducked, and when Harry straightened up, Ginny was gone.

“Damn it,” he swore quietly as Draco made his way back into the room.

“Good riddance,” he commented and took a sip of coffee.

“What?” Harry roared, his anger still fresh, “I love her!”

“Really? If you really loved her, you would have told her the truth as a way to beg her to stay. Then she might think you a complete git but not ranking me above her. By the way, thanks for that. I appreciate it, even if I don’t have breasts for you to grope,” Draco smirked.

“Ungrateful smarmy bastard!” Harry shouted, “you’re driving all my friends away!”

“You seem to be able to tolerate me. They should too,” Draco shrugged, “not my fault if Won-Won can’t take a few jokes.”

“He’s dating Hermione now, you know,” Harry pointed out. Draco made a ‘and?’ face. “That bothers both of them. And Hermione is doing you a lot of favors to try to keep people off our backs. If you could at least drop that for her sake.”

Draco rolled his eyes, “It’s just a joke.”

“A mean one.”

“None of you would have lasted a week in Slytherin,” Draco laughed.

“I’m serious!” Harry shouted, “Look, we have the first day of training. We’ll talk about this later.”

Draco shrugged nonchalantly, and they left for training, which was to be spent testing them in every area possible of Auror training to find their strengths and weaknesses. Harry found it awfully annoying and boring. To most people’s surprise – though not Harry or Draco’s – he was not the superstar of the class. At the end of the day, when the results were posted from having been immediately graded, Draco Malfoy and Michael Corner were at the top of the list, though Harry was decently in the upper half.

Ron grumbled at being near the bottom, but Harry wasn't too concerned, "You missed half the classes for NEWTs. It's expected you'll be a bit weaker."

"You're decent, mate," Ron pointed out.

"Yes, but I've had a bit more…experience than you, that's all," Harry pointed out, trying to stay modest.

"Yes, Weasley here hasn't vanquished any dark lords," Draco quipped from Harry's other side.

Harry suppressed a laugh for Ron's sake, "You know I'd have partnered with you, if it weren't for the program and all, right Ron?"

"Of course, mate," Ron sighed, "Maybe I should meet that Michael Corner guy. Neville said he was pretty active in the DA. I never knew he was so good in everything."

"He is a Ravenclaw," Draco pointed out with a chuckle, "can't expect him to come in under-prepared."

"And I suppose all the Dark Arts you grew up with is why you're up there, Malfoy?" Ron sniggered back.

"Oh of course. Have to learn how to beat other evil bastards if you want to be the best one," Draco replied sarcastically.

"I'm serious, Malfoy," Ron glowered.

"So am I, Weasley. There will be plenty of work for us to do. Death Eaters and other evil doers are going to be fighting to take You-Know-Who's spot while the Ministry is still weak," his piercing grey eyes looked over.

“I suppose your father will be leading one of the factions,” Ron snorted as the three of them left the building.

“If he were, I wouldn’t be here. I have no desire to duel him,” Draco held his own.

“Whatever. Harry, do you want to come over for dinner?” Ron changed the conversation.

“Will Ginny be there?” he asked cautiously. They were soon reaching the point they would break ways.

“Yes,” Ron replied, “you guys can have some time together, though no sneaking off. I have an eye on you.”

“Oh, well, no then,” Harry replied awkwardly, “I doubt she’ll want to see me.”

“What?” Ron looked confused.

“She dumped me this morning,” Harry shrugged.

“Blimey,” Ron was shocked, “Why? Oh, right, him. Well, I suppose that’s all right then. But you don’t get to cancel all the time because of Malfoy.”

“Of course,” Harry replied. And he waved, as Ron turned right, while he and Malfoy went straight on. Dinner was a quiet affair, but the fighting picked up afterwards.

“Do you have to bait all of my friends?” Harry asked.

“It’s not like I see mine much,” Draco pointed out.

“Most of them aren’t in a great spot, Draco,” Harry pointed out, “it would be seen as bad for you.”

“I told you not to try to reform me,” the blond warned.

“I’m not! I just want to be able to hang out with my friends!” Harry shouted, “every time I see them, there’s a fight. You piss one of them off, if not more. I just want a good time with my friends! You aren’t the only person in my life!”

Draco rolled his eyes, “Yes, and your friends, being heroes, have more rights to see you than mine to me because they were actually concerned about living. Blaise fought. And so did many of the Slytherin girls.”

“Not Pansy. And Blaise was the only one of the boys to fight,” Harry pointed out.

“And Blaise thinks himself better than most anyone, so I don’t get to see him on that count?” Draco asked snappily.

“I…” Harry sighed, “I don’t have time for this. I’d like to have a private Floo call, so if you could just…do something about hearing.”

“When your head is in the fire, I can’t actually hear you, you know,” Draco pointed out with a chuckle.

“But you can hear where I’m calling,” Harry said.

“Oh my, will it be Weasley? Granger? Or perhaps Longbottom. My nerves can’t handle the suspense,” Draco retorted.

“Your nerves will have to deal. Do something about it,” Harry ordered.

Draco rolled his eyes, but went over to the couch, where he picked up a book on shield charm theory and waved his wand to create extremely loud music – classical – playing in the room. Harry could hardly hear himself think.

Satisfied, Harry went to the fireplace, “Headmistress’s office, Hogwarts.” The flames changed, so he knew he could stick his head in. It felt weird every time, but Harry was growing more used to it.

Suddenly, the office came in sharp definition, though the angle was a bit annoying. He could see her at the desk, working on some paperwork. “Prof – Headmistress McGonagall?” he asked.

She looked up, “Potter? What do you want?”

“If it’s not a problem,” Harry began, “I need to talk to Snape.”

“Professor Snape, if not Headmaster,” the portrait called out in the same voice of its late owner.

“Professor Snape,” Harry grumbled.

“Important business I presume,” she replied, “for you to oh-so-politely kick me out of my office? Well, you have some allowances these days for the service you did for us. Severus, fetch me when you are done." McGonagall stood with her scrolls and left. Harry specifically looked at the floor when she swept past the fireplace.

“Uh, Professor Snape,” Harry began but paused.

“What is it? I’m not any more telepathic dead than alive, Potter,” Snape threw out. “And I do not give you such special privileges as others deem it right to throw before you, as if your birth gives you right to them.”

“I did kill Voldemort, you know,” Harry pointed out.

“What is your business? I do not want to converse with you more than necessary,” the portrait ordered.

“It’s, er, Draco,” Harry began, “he’s bothering all my friends, and no matter how good an Auror he is, if he doesn’t learn to get along with them, the whole thing will be a failure.”

“The bond or the redemption?”

“Both,” Harry replied.

“Mm,” Snape considered it for a short time, “you’ll have to do what Lucius and I did.”

“Oh, what’s that?” Harry asked.

“Physical punishment of some sort: whipping, beating, or if you have some perverted pleasure neither his father or I had, spanking,” Snape replied matter of factly.

“Whip? I have to whip him?” Harry looked confused.

“Don’t look so unenthusiastic. After all these years, I’m sure it excites you. Anyway, yes, but not just the beating. You have to give it for the wrongdoing that you’re trying to fix – every time, no matter if it’s three times a day. And he has to know it and explain it to you,” Snape continued, as if he were talking about making a student clean cauldrons.

“Um,” Harry gulped, “That’s the only way?”

“You may thank his mother Narcissa for that,” Snape pointed out, “she spoils him so much that indeed it is the only way.”

“That’s going to be awkward,” Harry thought out loud.

“You’ll get used to it. He’ll need to get used to you, but it should happen smoothly,” Snape sounded confident.

“Why?”

“The bond, you stupid idiot. You’ve been marked the dominant one, so you have power over him. He will have to,” Snape explained in an overbearing tone.

“But that’s…like abuse,” Harry objected.

“He’ll consent.”

“Who would consent to that?”

“Draco.”

Harry shook his head, in shock.

“Is that it, Potter?” Snape snapped.

“Um, yeah, it is,” Harry replied, still out of it.

“Well, goodbye,” Snape ended it.

Harry pulled his head out and sat back on the floor in his living room. What a weird conversation. Beat Draco? Hit him? That was…wasn’t that wrong? And to even think Draco would consider agreeing…it was impossible. He didn’t realize it, but Harry stared at the blond, unsure how to think of him with that new information.

Draco waved his wand upon looking up, and the music disappeared. “I know I’m pretty, Harry, but that’s a bit too blatant of a stare for my taste,” he quipped.

“I was thinking – ” Harry began.

“Congratulations– ”

“- that if you behave and don’t piss off my friends, then I’ll tolerate having your friends over,” he finished.

“Define who I get to have over,” Draco pushed.

“Uh, Blaise for sure. Um, Pansy, if she stays on good behavior. She’s on probation, but those should only be in private. Goyle’s not going to be available for that, and it’d look bad if I took you to Azkaban. So not him. Is there anyone else you’d want?” Harry asked.

Draco thought about it for a minute, “I should keep connections with Daphne and Tracy, and at least say hello occasionally to Millicent, even if she’s impossible to socialize with. If this succeeds, they’re the

people I'll have to make friends with. I might as well start now."

"Okay, that sounds fine," Harry agreed.

"I sense some sort of catch," Draco raised an eyebrow.

"Um, right," Harry did not how to bring up what Snape had mentioned, "Well, I, uh, was, um…"

"Spit it out."

"Snape," Harry forced out, "I was talking to Snape." His face felt like it was burning. Merlin, it was embarrassing even thinking about it. Neither of them said a word, and Harry looked off at the wallpaper, which Draco had redecorated.

After a few minutes, the blond spoke, "It works."

Harry's eyes shot up, and his mouth opened, "It does?!"

Draco nodded his head, his face a bit pale.

"Um, okay, so when you…get in a fight with my friends, I'll do it to you?" Harry still couldn't just…say it.

"Mmhmm," Draco nodded, consenting, "That sounds…fine."

Neither one said a thing the rest of the evening, just read or studied more for Auror training. When Harry yawned, their eyes met and silently agreed about bed. They brushed their teeth next to each other and faced away from each other for changing. Then they climbed into their respective beds and turned the

lights off. Harry did not fall asleep for a few hours, and judging from the irregular breathing patterns from the other side of the room, neither did Draco.

Chapter Five

"I don't get you!" Harry roared as Neville and Luna stormed out via the floo, and Draco glowered from the kitchen counter. Kreacher had learned in little time to avoid the masters when Harry yelled. "You never fight with them, not since you explained that the end of fifth year was like having someone prove there were no crumple-horned snorkacks – prove, not just disbelieve. You related it to her, and she understood and gave you a chance. And Neville, seeing that, did too. And you three have gotten along better than you with any of my other friends, save Hermione. It's been months! Months!"

He waved his arms in the air, forgetting about the tea in his mug, which spilled on the ground. Draco ignored it – too busy being ashamed. But he had no right to speak until Harry asked him to after punishment. That was part of the rules, so that he entirely understood what he was being punished for. Harry made him keep to those rules. And they had to be rules – guidelines did not work with Draco. He still hated having to whip him, but it wasn't a matter of choice on his side. He had to enforce the rules.

"I get it with Ron, sometimes, especially as you see him so much at training, though we're supposed to split into smaller groups of four to work intensively for the next three month unit. And I'll understand if you don't want Ron, but we'll talk about that later. Anyway, Ron provokes you, so I can understand that you sometimes lose your self-control with him, but Neville? He did not mean to insult your mother. It was a comment about Bellatrix, who he has every right to hate. And Draco, I just…I don't get it. You're getting better. We see your friends almost as often as mine. You learned! I thought we had gotten better than that!" Harry yelled. He could not help but vent his entire frustration. He was not good with words, but Draco always seemed to pick up the essentials when he rambled.

"Let's go upstairs," Harry growled, "I'm not whipping you down here." His feet stormed angrily up to their bedroom, ignoring the redecorations since Draco moved in. It looked much better with his small touches, but he was so angry that he hated them.

He passed Mrs. Black's portrait (no one had been able to remove that, just as with Sirius's room), and she shrieked at him, but Harry was in no mood to be humored, "I saved your bloody family! They'd all be dead or rotting if it weren't for me, and there's no way I would have lost to Voldemort, so shut your

painted trap!”

“How dare you talk – ”

“Blah blah blah,” Harry ignored her. She always sided with Draco no matter what, and that pissed him off. Draco wasn’t always right. He wasn’t either, but that was not the point at hand.

They entered the master bedroom, where their beds were pressed together but still separate beds. Harry could not even look at Draco and see that body and be able to do what he had to do. It hurt him to do it. Why couldn’t Draco see that?

“Take off your shirt and brace yourself against the bed,” Harry ordered, finding a cat o’ nine tails, the original British type that had three braids each split into three. There were no knots or metal to draw blood, but the horrible offense required him to use something harsher than a regular whip.

“Twenty lashes,” Harry stated, “Count them.” His mind fell away during the whipping, reacting only after each number was stated so that he did not have to think about it himself. It took a different kind of strength to hurt someone willingly submitting to the pain despite not enjoying it than to destroy a murderer. He had cried the entire first month, though he denied it to Draco. Pain, such pain – if Harry had not seen its direct effects, he never could have continued after the first three days. He still could not believe Draco was the top Auror student with how sore his body was outside of class. But Draco had, apparently, been used to playing Quidditch in that form and winning most his games. It cheapened his Quidditch victories, but Draco told him that the fact should not make them less valuable.

“Twenty,” Draco gasped, falling down on the bed and merely lying there, not moving. Harry put away the cat o’ nine tails and went to the bed. Gently, trying to avoid the back, the Gryffindor picked up the, currently, weaker body, holding his bare torso to his front, and his arms wrapped around the waist, which had not been hurt as much. Harry held Draco and rocked back and forth, “Sh, it’ll be okay, it’ll be okay. I’m sorry, I just can’t stand it when you do that.”

“No Blaise tomorrow?” Draco asked softly.

“No, you know that’d be impossible to see him after this,” Harry replied, ignoring the sensation he felt against his thigh. It was…impossible really. He had to be imagining things.

Draco nodded, his head in the crook of Harry’s shoulder. The latter leaned back onto the beds, so that it was easier to support a strong full-grown adult male, even if the support was necessary. They lay there a long time, so long that the feeling against his thigh could not be imaginary. So calm and peaceful it was that Harry groaned and shook his head to swat at the alarm clock in the morning, confused to find his body fully clothed and with terrible morning breath.

“Ugh,” he groaned, as Draco stood, wincing but not commenting further on the wounds, “How long do we have?”

“You pressed snooze twice,” Draco rolled smoothly.

“Merlin’s inner thigh,” Harry swore, “why did you let me?”

“Um,” Draco looked away, “You wanted to sleep?”

“Ugh,” Harry got up to splash water in his face, “don’t let me do that next time.”

“We get the first pick of what partnership we want,” Draco added, “and we have about half an hour to make up our minds.”

“Right,” Harry replied but then spat out water that ended up in his mouth. From behind him, he heard Draco laugh.

“You are too much fun to watch in the morning,” the blond commented.

“Thanks,” Harry replied, as he wet back his hair, “You like Michael Corner right? Well, he and Boot were

both DA members, and Ravenclaws are good. Plus that gives us people from three out of four houses, and we're the official house unity case. So I would be fine with that."

"You aren't even going to bother with making a case for Weasley and MacMillan?" Draco asked, "And when are you going to learn to let me do your hair? I doubt even I could make it perfect, but water is going to do nothing once it dries."

"How about once I don't have to whip you for two weeks?" Harry proposed, mostly as a joke, but even in the mirror, he caught the…peculiar look on Draco's face. He couldn't quite make out what it meant. He turned around, and his eyebrows dipped downward, "What? Explain that face."

Draco looked toward the shower stall and did not speak for a few moments, but Harry knew he would. He had to. "So you were wondering why the scene with Neville and Luna happened. And…" Draco began hesitantly, "I…like it, the whipping, I mean. I really like it when you whip me. It…turns me on." His face had turned almost as red as Ron's got.

"You got turned on by your father and Snape beating you!" Harry felt astounded.

"Oh Merlin, no," Draco looked abhorred, "No, it was just punishment with them. But with you, um, I like it. Father was father. And Snape, really, just no. And you hadn't whipped me for a while, and I really wanted it, so I just…snapped at the first opportunity."

Harry was confused, "If you want me to whip you, just…ask. I mean, I can do it if you want. You don't have to hurt my friends."

"Yes I do!" Draco insisted, "I can't…I have to deserve it. Otherwise it's not enjoyable. And as I learned, I stopped being whipped, and then I missed it, so I broke the rules."

"So," Harry scratched his forehead, "You can still get along with Neville and Luna. And you just need more rules or harder rules, so that way you still get – deservedly – punished?" Sometimes Slytherins made no sense.

“Yes,” Draco confirmed.

“You should have said so!” Harry happily proclaimed, “that would have saved so many troubles.”

“You don’t mind that it turns me on?” Draco asked.

“It’s probably part of the bond, if it’s not natural,” Harry threw out quickly.

“Warriors get it with each other, so the bond isn’t going to force…sex,” Draco countered with what Harry would have three months before said was confidence, but living together for so long let him know Draco was nervous.

“I suppose not,” Harry agreed.

“That means it’s natural,” Draco stated.

“Yes,” Harry could not deny it, not when Draco looked so easily hurt. Wasn’t he supposed to be the one with the power? Then why was it so difficult to use it just how he wanted?

“But you don’t like whipping me,” Draco continued, his words sure of themselves but his body language not.

“No,” Harry admitted, “but I thought you hated it. And, I like holding you afterwards. It’s our most peaceful moments, when we’re most…us.”

“So, do you like me?” Draco asked, practically holding his breath. Harry looked into his eyes, confused. Like him? Like him, like him? Well, he…Harry compared it to Ginny and Cho, and it was not like that. He

had no chest monster, and it was not some broken crying tragedy. But while they flared up as much as he and Ginny had, they always got over it and had that calm period of being together and no longer fighting. Every fight was solved. And that made it better. And he hated hurting Draco. Harry actually wanted to protect him, when before it had been forced accommodations. And he had to admit Draco had an amazing body. They were always men together, and they had agreed not to hide masturbation from each other. And Harry had watched Draco a few times while pretending to read or study, and it really was a beautiful thing.

So did he? Yes, why, when had that happened? “Yeah,” Harry replied surprised, “Yeah, I do.” He laughed, so amazed that he could see the truth. It was true! How many times had they laid in each other’s arms? How many times had Harry tried to ‘kiss things better’ because he had heard mothers did that? But it had stopped being about feeling guilty for hurting and turned into caring somewhere. How had he not noticed? How had he been so blind? “Merlin, I really like you!” he exclaimed.

“Try to get my name right in the future then, Harry,” Draco commented wryly, “It’s Draco, not Merlin.” But he was smiling.

“So you…too?” Harry asked, suddenly worried for a second, though he was still floating on a high about realizing he liked Draco.

“Git,” Draco replied, “you clearly don’t have your glasses on, or you wouldn’t be so blind as to have to ask.”

Harry groaned, “Can’t you just say it? I’m a Gryffindor.”

“Picky, picky,” Draco rolled his eyes, “Fine then, Harry: I like you.”

“Thanks,” Harry grinned stupidly.

“If you walk in there like that, everyone is going to think you got laid this morning,” Draco commented.

Harry scowled, “Fine then. I’ll just glower at everyone until they all hate me.”

“You saved their arses. They don’t have the right to hate you,” Draco pointed out.

“That never stopped anyone before,” Harry argued playfully.

“Either way, we need to eat breakfast now if we aren’t to be late,” Draco pulled at Harry.

Harry came forward, but an arm wrapped around Draco to keep him from going anywhere. He was slightly shorter, true, but he was the more dominant one – that they both knew. He looked into the grey eyes fiercely before his eyes closed, and his other hand reached to Draco’s face and pulled it to him. Their lips touched, softly, and Draco’s back was so sore, but the blond reacted fiercely to any attention there, so that it soon after no longer deterred Harry.

They fell toward the bed, their shirts coming off, though Draco had the self-control to force Harry to keep their pants on. But he resisted nothing else, so Harry made everything his. The flesh was so beautiful and tasty and Draco. He had, subconsciously, wanted it, but finally, at last, his lips and teeth covered everything. The sweet spot near Draco’s ear, the neck, the chest, and his nails scratched everywhere. Harry lost sense of time and place – of everything save Draco – oh Merlin it had been too long since he had been with someone else, and Draco was so much better than Ginny. Ginny had to be in control, but Draco let him have his way.

“Masters?” a small voice called from the door. Harry stood immediately and grabbed his wand, not expecting the intrusion. Kreacher stood there, looking at the floor, “Masters need to be at work in five minutes.”

“Bloody hell,” Draco moaned, “damn it. Shirt, where’s my shirt?”

“Over here,” Harry growled, not in a mood for training. But he pulled his shirt on anyway without saying

anything.

“No breakfast, masters?” Kreacher asked.

“I can heal some of those,” Harry offered to Draco, “oh, no Kreacher. Leave us.”

“You better not,” Draco replied, “I want them. I’ll hex you if you cure a single one.”

“Um, right,” Harry had no time to try to understand Draco’s mind, “Corner and Boot for the rest of our small group?”

“Sounds good,” Draco answered, as they went to the bathroom to fix their appearances. Thoroughly snogged was not a good look when they were Auror training partners; Harry was supposedly reforming Draco, and everyone knew they lived together.

“At least my hair always looks this bad,” Harry joked as Draco struggled to make his perfect.

“Yes, yes, but I will tame it another day,” Draco called out as they ran down the stairs.

They were the last pair in the room, just fifteen seconds late to a cross-looking Williamson, who managed it despite the scarlet robes and long pony tail that reminded Harry of Bill. He glared, but Draco spoke first, “We fell asleep without having discussed which partnership we wanted to have in our group, and you know how hard it is for Potter and I to agree on something like that. We figured it out only at the last minute before coming here. We apologize for being late, but we did make a decision when we needed to.”

Williamson sat on the main desk, next to which a paper and quill were waiting. “So who did our darling house unity societal rebuilding duo choose?” he asked sarcastically, though the quill stood at attention.

“Terry Boot and Michael Corner, sir,” Harry offered up, which the quill wrote down. A few people groaned – Draco and Michael were still the two highest scoring students in the class, and they worked better with their partners than many others.

“Quiet down students,” Williamson ordered, “You do well so that you may choose well. If you’ve dug yourself into a bad situation in the field, you have to dig yourself out. This is just part of the training. So deal with it or get out. Life isn’t fair or pretty.”

Harry and Draco looked at each other with a small grin. Sometimes life was pretty.

Chapter Six

“Ron, calm down,” Hermione ordered firmly as Harry and Draco bit their tongues. Draco had only commented on the newest broomstick – he was going to buy it. And Ron had exploded.

“He rubs it in our faces!” Ron yelled, “You don’t have to work with him every day – ”

“He isn’t your partner, Ron, so neither do you,” Hermione pointed out calmly.

“Yes,” Ron shouted, “I know. I can’t forget. Harry would have been my partner if it hadn’t been for that git! And like it’s not enough that he prances around showing off his borderline magic daily, but now he has to make fun of my family’s lack of money too!”

“George has money,” Hermione interjected.

“That he worked for. Unlike that bit of scum,” Ron held nothing back.

“Ron!” Harry shouted, growing defensive of Malfoy, whom he could feel was barely resisting the urge to – probably rightly – bite off Ron’s head.

“Reformed piece of scum, I’m sorry,” Ron glared, “you choose him over me every time.”

“At least Draco listens to Harry,” Hermione sighed, “You don’t even listen to me!”

“Draco has to listen to Harry,” Ron yelled back, “I’m your boyfriend, not your slave!”

“Ron,” Hermione blinked back tears, “Draco is not Harry’s slave, and I’m not asking you to be mine. Just be reasonable!”

“Reasonable? He made fun of me!”

“He did not. He said he was going to buy a broom,” Hermione sighed.

“That I would love to have but never will because I can’t afford it. This Auror thing is more than just a way to dirty my hands and look good. It pays the bills,” Ron continued.

Draco then spoke, and Harry feared the worst, “If you want the broom, I can get you one. I can even wait until your birthday or Christmas so it isn’t charity.”

“It’s still charity! And I don’t want your filthy money, Malfoy!” Ron pushed the bench back and angrily left through the Floo.

“I’m sorry, boys. I’m really sorry when he gets like this,” Hermione stood after him, “you guys are doing much better than we are it seems. I haven’t heard of you fighting for…four months or so now. That’s impressive. And Draco, does your family have any more books that make mention to house elves’ legal

status? International would be useful too. I just asked for British ones before…"

"We might have a couple about France," Draco replied smiling, "I'll have to frighten another house elf to get them."

"Draco Malfoy, you know I – "

"Calm down, Hermione," Draco laughed, "I just mean that they get scared I'm going to set them free whenever I set them on one of your liberation searches."

She pouted, "Oh. Well, okay then. So they still refuse payment?"

"'fraid so, Hermione," Draco replied. He went along with her S.P.E.W. stuff better than Harry or Ron mainly, Harry thought, because he knew that it was impossible.

"Well, I have to go and…calm him down. Thank you, Draco," Hermione waved and left through the Floo.

Draco looked much less happy after she left.

"Okay," Harry began, "so that didn't go so well…"

"He gives me no respect, Harry, no respect!" Draco exclaimed. "It's not right. It's not fair. I don't do anything to him! So I beat him in Auror training. He would do better if he just applied himself. You improved once I made you practice with me."

"Yeah," Harry sighed, "I'm sorry. I keep thinking he'll come around sometime. I know he will; he's Ron. It takes him a long time, but eventually he'll see you're actually a decent person."

Draco snorted.

“What? You just haven’t known him like we do!”

“Precisely, I know him the way he knows me,” Draco replied, “and he has no reason to change his opinion.”

“Well, I like you,” Harry pointed out.

“You’re ‘saving’ me. That’s all he knows. Once I’m saved, off I’ll be out of his life. He just has to survive the time I’m here,” Draco continued, and Harry could tell he was trying to make a point, “so he has no motive big enough to actually force him to change.”

“Well, I think that’s a bit pessimistic…”

“Does anyone even know about us?” Draco asked.

“You’re with me the entire time,” Harry replied, not quite understanding why Draco would ask such a rhetorical question.

“Exactly,” Draco grabbed an apple out of the centerpiece and tossed it up and down, “No one knows about us. And we’ve been dating almost five months. We have our small spats, but like Hermione said, we’re getting along. It’s a real relationship, not some flimsy little thing.”

Harry was beginning to understand where he was going.

“So I don’t want to be your dirty little secret,” Draco stated, holding up a hand to silence Harry. “I am not

saying alert the presses. In no way do I want Rita Skeeter to find out and have our picture on the front cover with dirty headlines. But your friends…my friends. I want them to know. I don't want to have to hide our relationship whenever we're around anyone else."

"I think Hermione suspects," Harry pondered it.

"She's a smart witch," Draco pointed out.

"But I don't know if…I'm ready. Neville and Luna like you. Hermione and you seem like the dorkiest book nerds I have ever been stuck with in a library. But even besides Ron, George can tolerate you now, but you know he's thinking of Fred. And Ginny only began really speaking to me a month ago…" Harry trailed off.

"So your ex-girlfriend matters more than your boyfriend?" Draco asked coldly.

"No, but it's just…she's going to think I was cheating on her. Or that I dumped her for you, and that's not true!" Harry insisted.

"She's not going to be any more agreeable to it in the future than she is now," Draco argued.

"I just…" Harry waffled. It was such a big step. It was huge. And no thought had been put into the idea at all, for his part.

"Fine," Draco snapped, "no sex. No punishments."

"You can't say that," Harry pointed out.

"Well, I don't give my consent. If you choose to rape or assault me, I have to submit. But that's what it'll

be if you do anything without having told anyone," Draco replied before biting into his apple.

"Cuddling?" Harry asked, desperate.

"No," Draco firmly held.

Somehow being the one with power did not feel so powerful. Harry couldn't just…force Draco to do something. Well he could technically, but he couldn't do it– not even out of a selfish interest because that'd be the end of their relationship. Damn it. How did Draco always get what he wanted?

Harry lasted eighteen days. At that point he was so unfocused and making so many mistakes during training, that he was told he was clearly pushing himself to exhaustion and needed time off to rest. But Draco couldn't go if Harry did not, and Harry knew that exhaustion was not causing his problems. It was the lack of…not just sex, but all of it. Punishment was actually rather beautiful, and he had come to love it as much as Draco did. But not even that. He could have done without that if there were something – cuddling, leaning against each other, any small sign of their affection he had grown used to.

He was glowering at dinner, while Draco chuckled merrily and thanked Kreacher for the excellent food. The meal was silent except for the laughter. Harry could not believe it. He had gone for months without anything except the punishment, which he found despicable and archaic at the time. And he couldn't last three weeks without Draco. Pathetic.

"Fine," he pushed out as they went into the parlor, where they had been studying every night for exams, which were in a week.

"The vanquisher of Dark Lords undone by pure sex withdrawal!" Draco laughed, but he had no time to because Harry had pushed him against the wall. The blond was warm and finally within his grasp. But the clothes, there were too many clothes. And Harry needed it, needed sex, needed Draco. Buttons were too difficult. And he tore off Draco's shirt, while the latter's hands undid his pants.

Harry's mouth found Draco's neck, that beautiful patch of skin. And he marked it. He marked every bit of Draco's body he could find. And he worshipped the body, kissing it and nibbling afterwards all around,

while his hands kept moving constantly, unable to choose a favorite spot after being so long denied.

But his pants felt like they would break under the pressure, and his hands were failing at messing with the damn buttons. But Draco was there to help him, and oh, slide his hands along it, and that felt so damn good. It had been far too long, far too long since those slender hands worked their wonders on him. Oh bloody hell, it was bliss.

Except it was not quite. No, bliss was in Draco, bliss was being with him and seeing Draco arch his back and not care about the rug burn developed along the way. And there had been no lube in the room, and they preferred traditional lube to spells, but there was no time. Harry needed it, needed to get in. Thankfully Draco was still in enough of a state to be able to correctly perform the spell, and Harry pushed in, in. And oh, that was it. And he pulled out and pushed in again and again and again and faster and harder and he was shouting, actually shouting, and Draco's voice mingled with his, and a hand slipped between them to grab Draco, and that felt remarkable too. And that drove Draco's back harder and harder into the ground, but they loved it.

Harry bit Draco's neck and shoulders, and Draco scratched his back almost to the point of blood, and his legs pulled Harry in, pulled him in and squeezed, and Harry hit that spot, and Draco was shouting and digging all of him into Harry's body, and it was too much to resist, and Harry came, came harder than he had before because he wanted it so badly. And he collapsed atop Draco, letting the creamy liquid thicken. He did not care. He could not move.

His breathing took minutes to calm down, and neither one said anything as they slowly floated back to the regular world. Draco's hair lightly brushed Harry's face, and his glasses were bent askew on the floor a few inches away. But it was so beautiful and amazing. And hot. So hot.

"Almost makes it seem worth it not to have sex daily, huh?" Draco asked, his chest heaving.

Harry shook his head, "No, it doesn't quite do it. But I'm sure we'll have missions where we can't have sex. Not on the job. So there's no need to choose to go without sex. It'll happen on its own."

"You are so addicted," Draco laughed gleefully.

“No,” Harry defended himself, “just no reason to go without.”

“You couldn’t operate without it,” Draco happily pointed out.

Harry grumbled into the carpet.

“What was that, dear? You need me more than anything else in the big wide world? Ah, thank you,” Draco laughed.

“Can I wait until after exams?” Harry asked, “to tell them. I don’t want Ron to be in such a huff that he blows them.”

“Fine, for Weasley’s sake,” Draco rolled his eyes.

“If he knows about us, you have to call him Ron.”

“Why?”

“Because he’ll have to call you Draco.”

“Fine,” Draco consented, “but only once he starts.”

“He is not going to be happy about this…”

“Tough.”

“He’s the straightest man I know,” Harry commented, “Is gay an acceptable thing in the wizarding world? Dumbledore had talk, but then he fell for Grindelwald. So it could have been for the evil dark lord thing.”

“As long as you’re pureblooded it’s fine,” Draco shrugged, “though mother will be very disappointed not to have grandchildren to spoil.”

Harry laughed, “As long as she doesn’t try to split us up over it.”

“Seriously, Harry?” Draco asked, “Like she would ever do that. First of all, she’d never deny me anything. And secondly, you’re the hero of the Wizarding World. Who better could I ever be with socially speaking?”

“Mm, true,” Harry laughed, “glad to know her opinion is actually based on who I am.”

“Well, for you to fit my standards, you clearly have to be good,” Draco pointed out.

Harry laughed, “Thanks.”

“Okay, but we do need to clean up and actually get some studying done tonight, Harry,” Draco insisted.

“What? But, oh come on, one night isn’t going to kill us!”

“We have a week, a week! And I need to beat Michael. He’s better at acting out his disguises, even if I can transfigure myself into better ones,” Draco complained.

“Merlin, how anyone in school thought you were cool, I have no idea,” Harry shook his head as he got

up.

“Tons of money, great wit, good looks, Quidditch star…” Draco began listing.

“Biggest bookworm Slytherin has ever known,” Harry added.

“And also dating the most eligible former bachelor around,” Draco commented with a smile.

“Dating the most…what!” Ginny shouted as she yet again made a scene in the Grimmauld kitchen. “You chose that spoiled bastard over me?!”

“No, Gin,” Harry tried to point out, “you dumped me. It was months until he and I began dating.”

“I dumped you because you chose him over me! Clearly you wanted to get in his pants the entire time! I cannot believe this, Harry. I can’t believe I began speaking to you again! You are such a bastard, a rotten, selfish little bastard!” she shouted and Floo-ed out, thankfully without hexing anyone.

Harry’s attention went to the oddly silent Ron sitting next to a smirking Hermione. “You’re not following your sister?” Harry asked.

“Well, I doubt she’ll listen to me,” Ron said.

“You’re okay with it!” Harry was in shock.

“Well, not at first. But Hermione figured it out a month and a half ago. I refused to believe her at first. I said you’d never fall for that slimy bastard. But, um, at dinner a few weeks ago, you guys brushed hands passing the salad, and it looked like a regular thing, not an oops thing. It didn’t bug you guys. And so I, yeah…” Ron trailed off.

“I am so glad that was not about the broomstick,” Draco muttered.

“Then what?” Harry asked.

“Well, I was pissed off. I couldn’t see why you’d like him at all. But you weren’t looking very happy the next few days, so I thought you knew I knew and had a fight or whatever. Or something, I’m not a witch. And then I was sort of hoping you’d break up, but you made up, and Hermione’s been working on me since she figured it out. We fought. But she was right. And um, yeah,” Ron’s ears went red, “and I do not want to hear about your sex life, Harry. Just, two blokes, I’d rather not know.”

“You’ve never wanted to know,” Harry laughed.

“She was my sister!” Ron exclaimed.

“Fair enough,” Harry nodded.

Luna was simply smiling, “You really suit each other. I’m happy for you.”

Neville shrugged, “You’ve already convinced me he’s a decent fellow. I think you could do better, but if he’s the one you fell for, there’s not much I can say.”

“I’m a good boyfriend!” Draco interjected, jesting slightly.

“You always like them hotheaded,” Neville shook his head, “I’ll give you that. I think you’re more suited to someone calmer, just to balance you out. But you’ve never gone for it.”

“Harry,” Ron interrupted, “you realize that other than Cedric Diggory, you’ve dated all the seekers? Ginny

was a seeker for a while. And Cho was a seeker. And Draco…"

The whole table burst up laughing. "So I guess I have a type," Harry laughed.

Draco raised an eyebrow, "Yes. Me."

"A round of drinks?" Hermione asked. "In celebration?"

"Yes!"

"Firewhiskey!" "Of course!"

"So how long have you two been hiding this from us?" Ron asked after the third round of Firewhiskey.

"Almost six months?" Harry ventured to guess.

"And you better not forget our anniversary," Draco nudged him, and they almost fell over together. Everyone smiled, and Ron called for another round. Almost everyone had accepted them. And they were officially together, and their friends knew. And by the looks of it, everyone would spend the night.

Chapter Seven

"You can't seriously be considering drinking now," Hermione rolled her eyes at the table of young males in front of her, "It's not even six o'clock!"

“But ‘Mione,” Ron replied, slipping his hand around her waist, “We’ve graduated. We’re Aurors now.”

“Bunch of good you’ll be able to do if all of you are plastered,” she scowled.

“Hermione, give Ron a break. He’s not only survived Auror training, but he’s actually befriended me,” Draco took a stab, while he pulled out a bottle of wine, which made the boys groan. “For the lady,” he explained, “Harry, you grab the shot glasses for the rest of us.”

There were eight of them – the two small groups: Potter, Malfoy, Boot, and Corner; and Weasley, MacMillan, Goldstein, and Moon. The houses were almost equally divided, with an extra Ravenclaw and short one Slytherin. But Harry supposed that was to be expected as he grabbed shot glasses at random. Eight, four in each hand. Setting them down, he noticed everyone grouped naturally with their partner. If he had been willing to part ways with Draco, he would have made a comment about it.

“Gryffindor, Harry?” Draco asked quizzically, “You just had to serve me the Gryffindor glass with a roaring lion?”

Everyone laughed, “You’ve tolerated one well enough. So you might as well drink like one,” Harry lightly shoved Draco’s shoulder.

“Delusional Gryffindors,” Draco muttered, “I don’t drunkenly sing atop a table, unlike Ron. And I’ve had to keep you from joining him once or twice. I’d have been embarrassed to be your partner.”

“Ernie doesn’t mind,” Ron laughed, “Do you?”

“As long as you don’t throw up on me, I’m fine,” Ernie smiled.

“I’ve done that, haven’t I?” Ron scratched his head as Draco poured the shots.

“Just once,” Ernie clarified.

“Sorry,” Ron grinned easily, while Hermione shook her head.

“I’ve told you, Ernie, don’t let him go past six shots. He thinks he can hold it, but he can’t,” she explained again.

“Don’t ruin my fun, woman,” Ron joked, “just join in. Grab a shot glass if you want.”

“I’m fine with wine, thank you,” Hermione raised her glass.

“Everyone ready to drink?” Terry asked, raising his glass.

“Oi, Draco,” Michael called out, “I’m going to have to drink you under the table tonight, for edging me out of first for honors at graduation.”

“You think you can?” Draco smirked, “You’re on.”

“Let's do it!” Harry roared. And they all took the first of many rounds.

Harry couldn’t remember much past the fourth the next morning. There was an insipid tapping at the window, and the sunlight was killing him. Merlin, what a hangover. He was about to ask Draco to get the post, but the blond was still out cold. The Gryffindor wondered who won the drinking contest. Either way, Draco drank more than he had. But he really didn’t want to get the post.

“Kreacher!” he groaned.

“Yes, master?” the elf bowed.

“The post,” Harry flailed an arm toward the window.

“Yes, master,” Kreacher repeated, taking the letter from the owl, which stayed in the room, apparently ordered to take a reply. Harry dozed around another half hour or so before he got up. The letter sat on the dresser, but Harry stank like something rotten, so he decided to shower first.

The water felt good and actually woke him up. He scrubbed his body until it was sore, since alcohol reeked out of his pores. Nasty. He would never drink that much again. Well, not for a while at least. Harry ran the mousse or whatever potion it was through his hair as Draco liked it. Bits stuck up occasionally, but as the blond thought it looked better, Harry was fine doing it. Only then, after putting his glasses on and getting dressed into pajama pants, did he look at the letter.

Mr. Potter and Mr. Malfoy,

Last year you enquired as to what had happened to you whilst you were hiking in the Outback. At that time, you were given no answers, for it was not the right time. However, if you would like to understand what has happened and what you can do, please meet us at that spot in two weeks time. A reply confirming your arrival would be appreciated.

- Kala Napaltjarri

They… they could find out what happened? They could get answers? Harry grew excited and went and shook Draco, “Draco, Draco, Draco!!! Wake up. You won’t be able to believe the good news!”

“You have a hangover potion?” Draco asked.

“No, better…” Harry exclaimed.

“Tell me when I wake up then,” Draco grumbled and rolled over.

“It’s about the bond!”

“What?” Draco sat up, rubbing his face and pushing his hair back. “What happened?”

“Letter from an aborigine. I think it’s a witch. Anyway, we meet them in two weeks, and they’ll tell us about it,” Harry said happily.

“If it’s anything like the millennia old European ones I read about, it’ll be to complete the bond,” Draco stumbled out of bed and went to the bathroom.

“Do you think it’s like them?” Harry trailed after Draco.

“I don’t know,” Draco splashed his face with water, “I’m hung over. We should go, at least, to find out more information. You should have been able to figure that out on your own, Harry. Now, I’m going to shower, so I don’t stink. After that, I’m sleeping until the afternoon. Because I can.”

“What about me?” Harry asked, putting the letter down.

“What about you?” Draco asked, stripping off his clothes. With a slightly throbbing head, the sight shouldn’t have affected Harry so much, but it wasn’t his fault. It was Draco, and Draco’s body was always so perfect, even when hung over. Draco turned to look for an answer from Harry before stepping into the shower, but Harry had come and pressed him against the glass doors and attached himself first to the beautiful pale neck.

“Harry, mmm,” Draco tried to protest, “I stink. Shower…”

“Fine,” Harry grumbled, pulling back to open the door and push Draco in to hit the tiles with his back, which gave him time to pull down the thin pants he was wearing, “sex in the shower.”

Draco seemed to consider it a moment, but he had no time to protest after that. Harry only fumbled with the water controls before grabbing the soap and cleaning the body, rinsing each limb off immediately and marking it as his own as soon as it was clean. He dropped to his knees without a second thought, and Draco was clutching at the walls, the shower knob, anything to help support himself. And the steam and the water offered just enough lubricant. Even if it didn't last long, there was always more of it.

Only once the water ran cold did they step out. They patted each other dry with towels before stumbling back toward the bed. It was exhausting. They had been in there for over an hour. "Are you always this horny in the morning?" Draco asked as they lay in the bed.

"Yeah," Harry looked away, trying not to blush.

"You never mentioned…"

"We barely got out of bed on time as it was," Harry defended himself.

"Clearly, we are waking up half an hour earlier each day, in a few weeks, whenever we go back to work," Draco commented.

"Really?" Harry looked up happily.

"Oh, you silly little Gryffindor," Draco chuckled, "you look like Christmas came early."

"It does," Harry grinned, "whenever I get this." His hand reached under the covers.

Draco groaned, "Harry, yes, but, mm, we do have to go to Australia sometime…"

“Right,” Harry replied, “we’ll get there in a week and a half.”

They arrived a day before they were supposed to, actually. Thankfully no longer needing a cloak to be invisible, the two Apparated near the point, though not on it, considering what had happened the year before. It saved time.

Three dark skinned people, darker than Blaise Zabini, waited for them. Harry and Draco approached cautiously, Auror skills on the alert. Just in case. The woman bowed first, “I am Kala.”

The next bowed, “I am Ganan.”

And the last one, whom they had spoken to in the artist’s shop, bowed, “I am Pindan.”

Draco immediately followed in their example, bowing and speaking, “I am Draco.”

So Harry followed suit, “I am Harry.”

Pindan nodded to Kala. She stepped away from where she was and closer to Harry and Draco. “We are on a songline,” she explained. “This is where we form our bonds. This is where our women get impregnated. This is where our souls belong. This is where we form our bonds – where our souls join together.” Her voice flowed sweetly, like a small brook.

“We think ourselves wise in most things, we human beings,” she continued, “but the songlines are unbiased. They know deep into our souls, into our magic, what we do not. And at times, even when we have not chosen it, bonds form because they are the best bonds, the perfect matches. These bonds are about magic. Your bond goes beyond Harry Potter the person and Draco Malfoy the person and matched the magic. And that magic was bound.”

Harry supposed that made sense, though it really explained little more than what Draco and he had already found out. “Well sort of,” Harry replied as she paused, “the magic is the person. Magic isn’t separate.”

“Harry,” Draco whispered, touching his arm, “it’s…different. It goes beyond personality. It’s not that different sounding from the European examples I found.”

Pindan smiled at them, still looking like he knew more than he was letting on. “Continue, Kala,” he spoke.

“The bond is ready to be confirmed and solidified, never to be undone,” Kala explained, “your magic has overcome the barriers that could cause harm to it. You have felt the bond in the formative stage, which was why you had to always be together, every minute. The bond was forming. It is now ready for you to choose it.”

“We get a choice?” Harry asked.

“Of course,” Kala replied, “The bond can only force you in the formative stage. Now, you must either confirm and strengthen the bond into full maturity or dissolve it.”

“Confirming will help both the relationship and our magical skills, yes?” Draco asked.

“Indeed, that is true,” Kala answered, nodding.

“Aren’t we young to be bonded?” Harry asked.

“You are bonded,” Kala replied. “That is that.”

“How much time do we have to decide?” Harry asked, nervous.

“A week,” Kala answered.

“Okay,” Harry replied, “could we tell you in a few days?”

She nodded, “If you come here to this spot, Ganan will know. We shall come if you come. Come when you have your answer.”

Harry nodded, and he let Draco apparate them back to the hotel. Bonded, for life? They were so young. He’d basically never really dated anyone else. And Merlin he needed to talk to Hermione. And Ron. He needed them to be with him. He, Merlin... he, well, Draco was amazing, but bonded for life? That seemed a bit much. And…

He made his way to the fireplace, immediately making the call. He only told them the basics, or well, told Ron about the bond for the first time. Ron thought that it explained many things, but he promised to arrive the next day anyway. Harry then sat back, as Draco watched him with a curious look.

“You seem a bit nervous, but I’d like to do it,” Draco said calmly.

“Yeah, it’s just, it’s…you know, a lot,” Harry replied, “to hear all at once.”

“I was expecting something of the sort,” Draco came over and hugged Harry. “Calm down. It’ll be fine.”

“Yeah,” Harry laid his head on Draco’s shoulder. “Ron and Hermione are coming.”

“I am not surprised,” Draco laughed, “I’d invite mother and father, but well, you know. They can’t really come.”

“What about Blaise or Pansy?” Harry asked.

“Pansy still wants me to marry her, in her own jealous way. And Blaise is put off that I was the one who turned ‘the Boy Who Lived’ gay instead of him,” Draco laughed.

“You two…” Harry couldn’t help but feel a twitch of jealousy.

“A couple of years ago, Harry. Calm down. I won’t be jumping him again,” Draco kissed Harry’s neck.

Draco kindly let Harry talk to Ron and Hermione in private by sleeping with a Silencing Charm around the bed when they arrived the next morning. Ron looked a bit annoyed, whilst Hermione was glowing.

“You two look like opposites,” Harry greeted them, “What’s the matter?”

“We’re engaged!” Hermione burst out, grinning.

“Congratulations. But, er, he doesn’t look too happy about it,” Harry commented.

“Oh, I am,” Ron smiled for a moment, “it’s the not being told about the bond thing that miffs me. I’m your best mate, and you couldn’t tell me?”

“Sorry,” Harry apologized, “I didn’t tell anyone about it.”

“Hermione?”

“…was there when it happened,” Harry held up his hands.

Hermione kept glowing, but she did take a seat and try to look serious, “So, tell us more about the situation with Draco. You have a choice whether or not to bond?”

“Yeah,” Harry sat next to her, and Ron sat on the floor, “and it’s more than getting married, no offense, because it’s a bond, and it won’t break. There’s no turning back. And Merlin, I’m not even twenty. Doesn’t that seem a bit young?”

“We’re practically the same age as you, Harry,” Hermione pointed out.

“But you could always get a divorce!” Harry pointed out.

“Divorces don’t happen as much in the Wizarding World, Harry,” Ron pointed out, “and really, we aren’t going to get a divorce.”

“Well, just, I don’t know. The bond is supposed to help our magic as well,” Harry trailed off.

“Isn’t that a good thing?” Hermione asked.

“Well, what if Draco’s mainly agreeing to it for that?” Harry asked, nervous.

“He’d have to be a complete idiot to do that!” Ron exclaimed.

“Why?” Harry asked.

“It helps, but unless you really love the person completely, no pureblooded witch or wizard, no one who was raised in them magical world, would ever agree. Especially a Malfoy. He’s passing off all his rights to ever be with anyone else, to continue the family line with, well, anyone considering you’re both…but

Harry, if he had any doubts, he'd be a fool to do it," Ron argued.

The three of them sat there, Hermione grinning.

"Merlin," Ron laughed, "did I just defend Draco Malfoy?"

"Son of 'known Death Eater Lucius Malfoy'? Yeah," Hermione laughed, "and I'm proud of you for it."

"Wow, Ron," Harry stared down at his best mate.

"Anyway, Harry," Hermione picked up, "it's so obvious he loves you. He knew what was probably going to be expected. He'd probably already thought it through and had his doubts and gotten over them. He cares for you. He picks up after you. And if you don't realize he's utterly in love with you, you're a blind git who doesn't deserve to have him."

"Really?" Harry looked surprised, glancing over at the sleeping blond not too far away.

"It's almost pathetic," Ron agreed.

Harry knocked him on the head. "It's not pathetic to be in love with me."

"When you're Draco Malfoy and able to completely hide your emotions and even I can pick up on it, yes, it is. Just a little bit," Ron rubbed his head.

Harry stared at Draco, who rolled over in the bed, toward where Harry had lain that previous night. He was so beautiful, so amazing. And Harry tried considering the alternative – not having Draco in his life, even a decade or more down the road. And the Gryffindor couldn't. Draco was…his, his friend, partner, lover. Life without him would be like life without Hermione or Ron – never going to happen. And he

smirked, happily, watching Draco sleep in.

Hermione and Ron left – Ron never having been to Australia before - which gave him time alone with Draco. With the Silencing Charm on (Hermione had put it up and forgotten to take it down), it took a hand job to wake Draco up, though perhaps Draco had faked sleep to get it. Harry didn't care. Holding Draco against his chest, he grinned. "I love you, Draco."

Draco nudged him to find the most comfortable part of his chest to lay his head on. "I know."

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