all I want for April Fool's Day is...

cracktastic funniness, obviously!

So, my friends, I have been trying unsuccessfully to work on IP, but I ran into a problem. A problem in the form of a vicious little plot bunny that would not go away. "No," I told it sternly. "You are not allowed to gambol about in my brain and distract me."

Of course, it paid no attention to me. They never do.

And therefore I bring you a little something to hopefully brighten your April 1sts, or at least make you remember that really, you didn't need those brain cells anyway.

Title: The Great Veela Conspiracy

Author: [info]i_claudia, por supuesto

Characters/Pairings: Harry, Draco, various assorted sidekicks

Rating: PG

Warnings: erm… crack? Clichés? Blatant and unapologetic OOCness? Also, unbetaed.

Disclaimer: I own nothing but my computer, a few consumptive plants, and a whole lot of textbooks. JKR is the genius mastermind. No copyright infringement intended, etc. etc. ad nauseum.

Summary: A recent revelation regarding his long-time rival has sent Harry’s world spinning wildly out of control…

Author’s Notes: Crack for my friendlings on April Fool’s Day (especially for [info]steren_212, who encouraged the madness)! I have no excuse for it, really. This idea invaded my head a while back, but I beat it back with a shoe because it was too ridiculous to be taken seriously. Then I realized that this excellent day of tricksters and ridiculousness was perfect for it.

It was a perfect summer day, and the grounds of Hogwarts shimmered brilliantly under the warm sun. The lake sparkled, flowers were everywhere in a riot of color, and even the Forbidden Forest looked cool and inviting. All these lovely things, however, paled under the discovery Harry had just made.

He tugged on Hermione's sleeve, ignoring her exasperated sigh.

"Hermione!" he hissed, holding firmly onto the fabric of her robe despite her discreet attempts to shake him off.

"What?" she whispered back out of the corner of her mouth.

"Draco Malfoy is here."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Yes, Harry, he is," she murmured resignedly.

"Why is Malfoy here?"

"Because this is a public memorial ceremony. It's not like he's under house arrest, you know. And will you please stop hissing like that in my ear? Kingsley is starting to send us threatening looks."

Harry subsided once more, muttering to himself. Hermione finally pried his fingers off of her best dress robes and sat up straight, the very model of an honored hero. Harry slouched lower in his seat, sending intermittent glares in the direction of one Draco Malfoy, and feeling vindicated when Malfoy glared back.

* * *

Draco poked Pansy in the ribs, refusing to flinch when she fixed him with her best evil eye.

“What is it now?” she asked him, scowling.

“Potter’s looking at me.”

Pansy gave the long-suffering sigh of someone who knows she is not allowed to inflict pain upon her childhood friend. “Yes, Draco. Of course he is. Obviously your good looks are irresistibly attractive for him.”

Draco’s arm gave an involuntary jerk, jabbing her again. “You really think so?” He felt oddly light-headed under Potter’s glare. The sun must be getting to him, he decided.

Pansy scowled at him again, which made the world feel less like it was slowly tilting sideways. “No. Stop bothering me; breathing the same air as all these Gryffindors is giving me a headache.”

Draco made one of his more splendid faces at her, which she pointedly ignored, and went back to muttering to himself, returning Potter’s glares with fervor.

* * *

Hermione was starting to seriously reconsider her choice in friends.

“It wasn’t my fault! He started it!”

“Look, Harry, I don’t really care who started it. Just… sit here and try not to cause any more international incidents. I’m going to go find something to drink at the buffet table.”

He gave her a mistrustful look. She smiled encouragingly at him, which only made him look more suspiciously at her. Apparently she had taught him too well.

“Ron,” she said, turning to send him a meaningful look. “Will you stay to fend off the journalists?”

Ron grinned at her. “’Course,” he replied, plopping down next to Harry and stretching out his long legs.

She’d always known there was a reason she loved that boy.

Getting to the buffet table proved to be trickier than she’d anticipated, and she glanced back nervously at Harry and Ron as she worked her way through brief exchanges with dignitaries and Ministry officials. They seemed to be behaving themselves, though, and she was fairly confident that Ron could keep Harry mostly out of trouble.

When she finally secured a glass of punch, she took a cautious sniff, trying to figure out what, exactly, was in it. After all, she’d never seen quite that shade of vermillion in punch before, and she had no idea if George Weasley had been near the bowl at all.

“Don’t get your hopes up,” a voice said over her shoulder. “It’s not spiked.”

She whirled, coming face to face with someone she would have been just as happy to never see again.

“Hello, Pansy,” she managed, wondering how quickly she could duck out of the conversation.

“Granger,” Pansy replied. “I feel like I should thank you for Potter’s impressive display of temper; if he hadn’t lost it, Draco would have been the one making a fool out of himself.”

“I can’t really say I’m thrilled about it,” Hermione said, “but I suppose Harry has a little more leeway to do things like that.”

Pansy snorted. “A little?” she asked. “If Draco had tried to do that, he’d have been thrown into Azkaban quicker than you can say ‘I told you so’.”

“Still,” Hermione countered, trying to discreetly look past Pansy and see what Harry was getting himself into now. He was standing up, and appeared to be shouting at someone. “It was unfortunate that he picked today to lose his temper with Rita Skeeter.” She craned her neck, looking for… oh, there was Ron, joining into what seemed to be growing into a splendid row.

Pansy had cottoned on to her distraction and looked around just as Ron moved out of the way, giving Hermione a clear view of their opponent.

“Oh hell,” said Pansy in what Hermione thought was a far too casual tone. “I was worried about that.”

“I suppose we should go pull them apart,” Hermione said with a sigh, moving past Pansy.

Pansy grabbed her by the arm, painted nails digging into her skin.

“Wait!” she said, and Hermione looked at her in question. “Look at them for a minute, and

tell me what it looks like."

"What do you think it looks like?" Hermione demanded, now utterly sure that all Slytherins were mad. "It looks like schoolboy rivals about to tear each other apart."

"I don't mean Weasley," Pansy replied, unperturbed. "Look at Draco and Potter."

Hermione looked, hoping that if she played along with Pansy's game she'd be free to break up the fight sooner. Harry's eyes blazing as he yelled at Malfoy. Malfoy himself was just as passionately involved in the argument, his cheeks flushed and his hair mussed from his wild gesticulations. Hermione didn't have to hear the words to be sure of what Harry was saying; the litany about Malfoy was a familiar one. She'd been hearing it since first year, and it had grown especially tiresome during sixth year, when she'd started to seriously consider the fact that Harry's obsession with Malfoy had seemed to have surpassed his feelings for Ginny…

Hermione started, then looked more closely at the fight as her brain ran furiously through events, sorting through words and actions, piecing together things that had never made sense before, rearranging the world and presenting her with a new picture entirely. She looked at Pansy in dawning horror.

"You really think…"

Pansy smirked.

"No," said Hermione, shaking her head, her brow furrowed. "Maybe… who knows, maybe there's a spark of something there, but even so, there's no way they'd last a week without tearing each other limb from limb."

"Maybe," Pansy replied. "But I have a plan."

Hermione raised a skeptical eyebrow. “A plan? Are you sure you’re not… getting ahead of things?”

“No,” Pansy said, supremely confident, and let Hermione’s arm go. “Meet me at the Ministry library tomorrow morning. Don’t bring the redhead. Now, let’s go break up that fight before someone gets hurt.”

“Harry can take care of himself,” Hermione said defensively as they started pushing through the crowd.

“So can Draco,” Pansy drawled. “It’s everyone else not fighting I’m worried about.”

* * *

Harry was eating toast when Hermione dashed into the kitchen. He watched with mild interest as she downed a glass of pumpkin juice and hunted around in one of the cupboards.

“Where are you off to?” he asked, trying to subtly hide the paper from her. The front page had a long article about the memorial ceremony, mostly dealing with what they called ‘assault’ and he thought of as ‘just desserts’, and he didn’t especially want to start the day with an ‘I told you so’ from Hermione.

She triumphantly pulled a stack of books out of the cupboard, tucking them under one arm as she turned around.

“The Ministry library,” she said as she passed him, stealing a bit of his toast on the way. “Research calls. And I’ve already read the paper, so you might as well stop trying to hide it with your elbow.”

“Oh,” he said, feeling only slightly foolish.

“Ginny’s coming around for lunch,” she told him. “Hopefully I’ll be back by then, but I might be late. Can you pull something together?”

“Oh,” he said again. He and Ginny were still off-again, on-again, and the thought of having her around for lunch left him slightly uncomfortable. He knew most of the Weasley disapproved of his inability to commit to their daughter; Mrs. Weasley had started picking out fabrics for a dress practically the day the war ended. Sighing, he nodded. “Sure, I can probably find something to feed her.”

Was it his imagination, or did Hermione look faintly disappointed? He hadn’t had her pegged as the match-maker type.

“Right, then,” she said, and with a wave left him alone again in the kitchen.

The day was fairly uneventful after that. He enlisted Ron’s help for the lunch-making when his friend finally stumbled downstairs, which mostly consisted of Harry heating up leftover curry while Ron hastily cleared most of the accumulated debris from the table five minutes before Hermione walked in the door. She shook her head at them, but seemed to be too preoccupied to do much more than that.

Lunch went far better than Harry had been expecting. Ginny was friendly, but cordially so, and Ron was too focused on the food to say much, for which Harry was profoundly grateful. He caught Hermione watching him pensively a few times, though, which he found concerning. He started wondering what she’d been researching. Five Ways to Unnerve Your Friends, perhaps?

He didn’t have to wait long to find out. After Ginny had left and the dishes dutifully piled in the sink, Hermione sat him down on the couch with a serious expression on her face and a stack of books and parchments lying solemnly next to her.

“Harry, I want you to know that we’re your friends and you can count on us to be there for you, no matter what,” she said, and poked Ron, who was looking as perplexed as Harry felt.

“Ouch!” he said. “Well, yeah, Hermione. But what, in particular, are we defending him against now? I mean, there can’t be much worse out there than a crazed madman trying to kill him and take over the world.”

Harry nodded weakly; he’d been thinking along the same lines, though he had a sneaking suspicion that this was somehow going to link back to the debacle at the ceremony the day before.

Hermione pursed her lips. “Harry,” she said, in a tone that brooked no argument. “You’re a Veela.”

Harry wasn’t quite sure what happened next; he choked and had to concentrate intently on trying to stop coughing and breathe. He was pretty sure, though, that at some point Ron was rolling around on the floor, laughing hysterically, and that Hermione mostly just looked aggrieved.

“You can’t be serious,” he croaked when was able to breathe again. “I’m not really…”

“It’s true,” Hermione said, affronted. “I’ve been researching it. It comes through your father; I’ve traced it back quite far, actually.” She produced what Harry was sure was a meticulously accurate genealogy, but he quite couldn’t bring himself to look closely at it.

“Hermione,” Ron said, still trying to stifle his laughter. “Harry’s father wasn’t a Veela. Harry isn’t a Veela. It’s impossible.”

“Why?” Hermione demanded, wheeling around and shaking the genealogy chart at him.

“Be…because,” Ron said, trying to look serious and failing miserably. “For one thing, he’s got terrible luck with birds.”

“Thanks, mate,” Harry said dryly. Ron shrugged apologetically.

Hermione raised her eyebrows and glanced at Harry in what he thought was a disturbingly ominous manner.

“That’s because Veelas,” she replied, stressing the word with a glance at Ron, “have a preordained mate, who they have no control in choosing but who they feel irresistibly drawn to.”

Harry was pretty sure that the curry had been off, and that he was extremely ill or even dead; this had to be either a hallucination or hell.

Hermione, his cold hearted former friend, had more charts. He felt vaguely faint as she unrolled the next one, and closed his eyes against the nausea.

Ron guffawed again. “Veelas don’t have mates!” he exclaimed. “Look at Bill and Fleur! Are you going to say he was her mate? Because, let me tell you, Bill would have you locked in St. Mungo’s if you tried pulling that stunt with them.”

“Ronald,” she said severely, a clear warning in her voice. “Fleur was not a real Veela. She was just French.”

Harry could practically feel Ron deflate under her icy tone.

“But Hermione,” Harry said, not daring to open his eyes. “Believing you for one minute, if I

do have a mate, what does it matter? Can't I just ignore it all and get back to a normal life?"

"No," said Hermione gravely. "Harry, if you ignore this…" she trailed off, and Harry's heart sank. "Let's just say that you don't want to ignore it. You don't have to be… intimate… with your mate, but once your bond is activated you have to be in relatively close proximity, and being with anyone else will have disastrous consequences."

"How do we know it's activated?" Harry asked her with increasing desperation. "How do you know it'll activate? Maybe I'm a defective Veela; maybe it'll never activate!"

"Denial isn't going to help you, Harry," she said kindly. "You have to face this, or terrible things might happen. And," she continued, sounding far too triumphant about the end of Harry's world. "It's possible to find a Veela's mate with Arithmancy, so to help you out I've already done all the calculations for you."

Harry cracked one eye to see a mass of numbers and symbols neatly arranged to spell his doom, and shut it again quickly.

"So," said Ron eagerly, and obviously now Harry was going to have to find two new best friends, "who did you find?"

"Draco Malfoy," she replied.

"What!" squawked Harry, jumping to his feet in horror. "No! I'm… he's… I'm not even gay!"

She brandished the numbers at him again and he backed away. "It's all right here, Harry. I could show you, if you like."

He shook his head, looking to Ron in a mute appeal.

Ron, the traitor, had a pensive look on his face. “You know,” he said slowly, “in a twisted sort of way, it makes sense.”

Harry had no idea what happened next, because suddenly the world was spinning and the ground was racing up to meet him and then it all went dark.

* * *

“Hermione, this is not a good idea,” Harry said as the three of them made their way slowly down Diagon Alley.

“Of course it is,” she replied absently, scanning the crowd. “Don’t be ridiculous.”

Harry opened his mouth to argue, but Ron caught his eye and gave a small shake of his head. Harry sighed, but closed his mouth again. He knew on some fundamental level that arguing with Hermione was generally useless, but the last thing he wanted to be doing was walking down a public street looking for Draco Malfoy. His so-called mate. He shuddered; he’d rather be anywhere else in the world. In his room with the door securely dead-bolted, for instance, or perhaps in Fiji.

“There!” Hermione whispered in his ear, and he looked instinctively where she was pointing. There was Draco Malfoy with Pansy Parkinson, looking for all the world as if he owned the street and expected rose petals to be showered upon his person wherever he walked.

The familiar warmth of dislike flared in his stomach, and he thought with some relief that perhaps it was all just a huge mistake.

“He is rather pretty,” Hermione said critically.

“Hermione!” Ron exclaimed, scandalized.

“What?” Hermione answered, not sounding contrite at all. As they lapsed into a furious quiet argument behind him, Harry tried to examine Malfoy with as open a mind as he could manage.

Leaving aside the fact that Harry knew he was a complete git, Malfoy was pretty, in a way. Classically handsome, Harry supposed, with his blond hair and sharp features. That didn’t mean he liked the prat, though, he hurried to assure himself.

Just then, Malfoy glanced over and met Harry’s gaze, scowling when he saw who it was. Harry returned the glare happily, feeling the familiar tingle from the adrenaline rush. This was familiar, comfortable ground; this meant nothing had changed and he could go back to hating Malfoy in peace. Malfoy sneered back and turned to say something to Pansy, his hair dropping in front of his face. Pansy laughed and patted him comfortingly on the shoulder.

Something else twisted in Harry’s gut, something new and unexpected, and the little bubble of joy Harry had felt in scowling melted away. If he’d been thinking about any other person, Harry thought he might have called the feeling jealousy, but that couldn’t possibly be what it was. It wasn’t, he thought, starting to panic. There was no way it could be anything like that.

Hermione turned back to him with a smile, obviously the winner of whatever argument she’d been having with Ron. “So?” she asked brightly. “What do you think?”

“I think I’m in trouble,” he said heavily, and she positively beamed. He was definitely in trouble, he decided. Big, big trouble.

* * *

The room Hermione had left him in was large and airy, with windows that let the afternoon sunlight stream in. The décor was simple: a couple of chairs and a low wooden table with some magazines and a copy of yesterday's Prophet, a few paintings on the wall of thoroughly uninteresting scenery. He wasn't quite sure who he was waiting for, or even where he was – Hermione had Apparated them there without telling him where they were going. He supposed things would become clear eventually, and in the meantime, he could peruse the Quidditch scores.

He was so absorbed in an editorial about the English team's chance at the World Cup he didn't hear the door open and close. He did, however, hear the voice that said, "Oh, for fuck's sake!"

Turning around, he saw Draco Malfoy fruitlessly pulling at the door handle. "Pansy!" Malfoy yelled. "Open the damn door!"

Suddenly, Hermione's motives became a lot clearer. She'd meant to lock Harry in here with Malfoy, he realized, until they'd come to terms with their new "relationship". With a sinking feeling, he grabbed his wand and tried to Apparate out of the room. Nothing happened. He looked over at Malfoy, who had apparently watched his effort.

"Apparition doesn't work?" Malfoy inquired, and when Harry shook his head, he swore in frustration, waving his wand threateningly at the door. "Basic spells don't work either," he told Harry, and threw himself against the door again.

Harry went to the window and put a hand against it to test it, but snatched it back again when a sharp shock stung him. He shook his head with disgust. Being trapped in a room with Draco Malfoy might not be at the very bottom of the list of things he wanted to spend time doing, but it was fairly close.

Malfoy kicked the door with a final curse and turned away to explore the room for a different escape route, stopping when he came to the window where Harry was standing. He reached out, and before Harry realized what he was doing, touched the window, yanking his hand back

when he felt the sting.

“The window’s charmed,” Harry pointed out helpfully.

Malfoy glared at him. “Thanks, Potter.”

Harry looked out the window, unsure what to say, while Malfoy muttered something about interfering females and gouging eyes out with spoons.

“I guess you know about… about what’s going on?” Harry finally asked.

“Yes,” Malfoy bit out resentfully. “And I am going to kill Pansy as soon as I get out of here. Turning his back on Harry, he stalked away from the window. “Do you have any idea how ridiculous the whole idea is?” he ranted. “As if I could… the Malfoy line goes back centuries, and there isn’t a drop of blood in these veins,” he grabbed his forearm and shook it at Harry for emphasis, “not a drop that isn’t from pure Wizard stock!”

“I’m exactly jumping for joy, either,” Harry snapped. “It’s not like I wanted this.”

All that remark got him was a baleful look as Malfoy picked up a chair and hefted it, feeling its weight as he eyed the window behind Harry. Guessing his intent, Harry dove out of the way just as Malfoy threw the chair directly at him. It hit the window and bounced off harmlessly.

“Look where you’re throwing things,” Harry said in irritation as he picked himself up off the ground and dust his knees off. “You might hurt me.”

“That’s partially the point, Potter,” Malfoy replied, distracted. “Come help me with this table.”

“You can’t just throw things at me,” Harry argued doggedly, lifting one side of the table. “What if there are other… effects of this connection?”

“There’ve never been any effects of me beating you up before,” observed Malfoy, grabbing the other side of the table and lining them up with the door.

“Maybe it’s a delayed effect,” Harry said. “And anyway, I always give you a worse thrashing than you give me.”

Malfoy looked at him with a raised eyebrow. “Four words for you: sixth year, Hogwarts Express.”

“I meant in a fair fight.”

“That was a fair fight. Now!”

They ran the table at the door, throwing all their weight behind it as they collided with the solid wood. The table cracked, and they landed with it in a heap on the floor.

Harry sat up with a groan, prodding his ribs with a wince. That would be a lovely bruise in the morning. “It was not,” he said, unwilling to let the point go. “Anyway, who really knows what might happen if you hurt me; Hermione was pretty vague on the effects of that.”

Malfoy had been looking at the door with disgust, but he turned to Harry impatiently. “If you think it matters that much, shouldn’t it actually matter more the other way? I’d think the Veela getting beat up by his mate would cause more problems than the other way around.”

Harry shook his head, confused. “You’ve got it mixed up, Malfoy. That is you hurting me.”

Malfoy's eyebrows snapped together threateningly. "No," he said, his voice slow and dangerous. "Me hitting you is the Veela hitting his mate, which I'm sure is perfectly allowable under the circumstances."

Harry jumped to his feet, and Malfoy followed. They faced each other over the cracked table, both wary. "Hermione clearly said that I was a Veela, and that you were my mate," Harry said carefully. "Don't make this any harder than it has to be to soothe your own pride."

"Soothe my pride?" Malfoy replied angrily. "You're the one in denial! Pansy told me that I was the Veela here!" His eyes widened in sudden realization.

Harry felt as if someone had simultaneously punched him in the gut and lifted the hippogriff that had been riding around on his back. "They set us up, didn't they?" he breathed, shocked. Malfoy nodded, obviously already deep in thought as he concocted payback schemes.

Finally, he motioned Harry over to the middle of the room. "In case they're listening," he said in a low voice. Harry nodded, waiting. "Alright," Malfoy said after another pause. "Here's what we do. Obviously they have become deranged and think for some reason that we are meant to be or some such rubbish. I know Pansy; she won't let us out until it looks like she's gotten her way, so we need to convince them that hell has frozen over and we've somehow resolved years and years of wanting to rip each other's throat out and will live together forever in peace and fucking harmony and probably get a puppy and raise it together."

"Right," said Harry, feeling slightly bewildered. "What do we do then?"

"When we get out," Malfoy said with a vicious smile, "we are going to carry on the charade for a little while longer, and then we will make them wish they had never been born."

Harry considered this for a moment, watching Malfoy's face closely. He didn't trust him, but he also had absolutely no intention of being locked in here forever, and it would be satisfying to prove Hermione wrong for once. He nodded, and Malfoy's smile grew wider.

“So how do we actually convince them to let us out?” he asked the blond.

“Simple,” Malfoy replied. “Put your arms around my waist.”

Harry obeyed, feeling odd and awkward, along with a whole host of emotions he wasn’t about to analyze. Malfoy draped his arms around Harry’s shoulders, pulling him closer, and he was warm and thin and vaguely sharp around the edges, and Harry felt a bit dizzy.

He waited like that, breathing in Malfoy’s peculiar spicy smell, but nothing happened. “Nothing’s happening,” he whispered.

“I know,” Malfoy murmured back, his breath ghosting gently across Harry’s ear, making Harry shiver.

Harry opened his mouth to point out that an awkward embrace was hardly grounds for Hermione and Pansy to let them out, and Malfoy kissed him.

In his right mind, Harry would have had quite a lot to say about Malfoy kissing him. ‘What the fuck’ ranked top of the list, with ‘Get the hell away from me’, ‘How much have you had to drink?’, and a restraining order following close behind. At the moment, of course, he couldn’t say any of those things if they were ever going to get out of their prison. So he stood mute as Malfoy’s lips (Malfoy’s lips! his mind screamed at him,) moved chastely against his own, until Malfoy’s tongue slipped between his lips. Harry gasped, which only served to open his mouth wider, and suddenly Malfoy was everywhere: in his mouth, pressed against his chest, his scent in Harry’s nostrils, his hands twisted in Harry’s dark hair. His own hands drifted up of their own volition and gripped Draco’s hair, securing him as the world melted.

Oh, Harry thought, and then his brain splintered.

They were interrupted by someone flinging the door open, and they jumped apart almost guiltily. Pansy sashayed into the room, smiling broadly, followed by a more demure but

equally pleased Hermione.

“You,” Malfoy said to Pansy, slipping an arm around Harry’s waist, “are an evil, evil woman.” Harry nearly pulled away out of habit, but remembered that they were stretching the game out before exacting their full revenge. Tentatively, he put his own arm around Malfoy.

“But see what my scheming has finally gotten you, Draco!” Pansy said smugly, and Malfoy’s arm twitched. Harry looked at Hermione, who at least had the decency to look mildly embarrassed.

“You made up the Veela thing, didn’t you?” he asked.

“Would you have even looked at Malfoy otherwise?” she shot back, and he shook his head.

“It’s Draco now,” Malfoy announced. “And Harry to you,” he added, looking at Pansy. “For we are marvelously happy together and will probably make up all sorts of disgusting nicknames for each other.”

“Er, right,” said Harry, playing along with the charade. “And we… we’re moving in together. Because we have found… er… found our soul mate. Oh, and we’re getting a puppy,” he remembered.

Malfoy sort of trembled, which Harry hoped didn’t mean he was about to laugh and give the game away.

“Don’t you think that’s a little sudden?” Hermione asked, concerned, but Pansy waved her off.

“Oh hush, it’s wonderful,” she said, and would probably have said more, but Draco cut her

off.

“Yes, wonderful. Will you let us out of here now that we’re not about to kill each other?”

Pansy and Hermione looked at them and then each other, clearly weighing the sincerity of their redirected passion. Hermione shrugged.

“Of course,” Pansy said. “Follow me.”

After a brief moment of struggle where Harry tried to untangle his arm and Malfoy simultaneously tried to pull him closer and walk forward, they moved toward the door with their arms still entwined. Once past the threshold, Harry felt the wards drop away.

“I assume you can find your own way back?” Pansy asked, and at Malfoy’s nod, Apparated away. Hermione followed her, but not without a worried look at Harry.

“Allow me,” Malfoy said, and squeezed Harry to his chest again as he Apparated.

Landing, Harry staggered slightly, but Malfoy caught him and steadied him automatically before dropping his arm and stepping away. Harry shrugged off the odd sense of loss that accompanied that, thinking that he was probably just cold. He looked around with interest and soon realized that Malfoy must have Apparated them to his own flat.

“And now,” Malfoy said, rubbing his hands together in obvious evil delight, “it’s payback time.”

Go on to Part 2..."Spizzerinctum is personal drive or motivation", according to “Word Nerd”, and something which I am sorely lacking, apparently. BUT now that I've got some things cleared away in regards to Non-Internet Life, the little bit of spizzerinctum (what a

FANTASTIC word that is) I possess can be applied to fic! huzzah.

(And please, someone tell me that NaNo is a horrendous idea. Remind me that it drives me insane every year. No self, no! Choose life outside the asylum!)

ANYWAY. Here it is... the obscenely overdue sequel to "The Great Veela Conspiracy"; it's been languishing on my hard drive forever, and now I release it into the great wide beyond with strict instructions to never, ever come back. whee.

(There's also a link under the cut to the first part, to refresh your memory.)

Title: The Great Veela Conspiracy – Part 2! (The Morning After)

Author: [info]i_claudia

Characters/Pairings: Harry, Draco, various assorted sidekicks

Rating: PG-13ish

Warnings: erm… crack? Abuse of fandom clichés? Blatant and unapologetic OOCness? Also, unbetaed.

Disclaimer: I own nothing but my computer, a few consumptive plants, and a whole bunch of textbooks. JKR is the genius mastermind. No copyright infringement intended, etc. etc. ad nauseum.

Summary: Revenge doesn't always work out as expected, especially when there are leather couches involved.

Author's Notes: Back by popular demand, here is the sequel to my April Fool's fic, brought to you by inordinate amounts of chocolate and caffeine, as well as our very favorite river in Egypt. It's really, really, atrociously late, but I hope you all enjoy it anyway!

(x-posted to [info]harrydraco, [info]hp_creatures)

(Part 1)

Part 2: The Morning After

The morning light found Harry lying on a couch, completely comfortable except for trying his damnedest not to breathe, afraid that if he moved at all something terrible would happen. It was the kind of couch that screamed money with its butter-smooth leather and unblemished mahogany woodwork. He was almost positive it was worth more than number four Privet Drive, and equally sure that even if it wasn't, Malfoy probably considered it to be.

There was a thought. Malfoy.

Harry raised his head, peeping over the top of the couch surreptitiously, looking for Malfoy. The last time he'd looked, his new partner in vengeance had been sitting at the kitchen table, calmly sipping a cup of tea and perusing the morning paper. He was pretty certain Malfoy hadn't been setting fire to said paper with a look that would have sent Voldemort himself scuttling for cover.

He sank back down behind the back of the couch and considered the brown leather thoughtfully. A week ago, even a day ago, he would have been on Malfoy in a second, demanding to know why he was burning a copy of the Prophet, which obviously had something to do with Malfoy being a Death Eater, or almost a Death Eater, or at very least being incredibly pointy and obnoxious. Now, for whatever reason, Harry couldn't bring himself to care much about it.

Malfoy's gone 'round the twist at last, he thought contentedly, feeling deliciously warm beneath the soft blanket he'd pulled over himself during the night. He had a lurking suspicion that it was something Aunt Petunia had always referred to as cashmere in hushed, worshipful tones. He wasn't entirely sure Malfoy wouldn't screech at him for using it, but he figured the blond would be too worried about harming the blanket to really give Harry what-for. Soft, cuddly things, he'd discovered, were just as helpful in self-defense as swords pulled from hats

– which was to say, not entirely useful unless you were in the right situation.

Harry had a deep and abiding sense that he was in a ‘right’ situation. From the moment he had stepped into Malfoy’s flat the night before, it had felt like home. Which was odd, to put it mildly; Harry was sure that when people said “stranger things happen at sea”, this was what they meant, the sea be damned. Nevertheless, Malfoy’s flat felt more like home than anywhere else Harry had been in the last five years. He knew that normally, thoughts like that should fill him with a Gryffindor’s righteous indignation, but he couldn’t manage to get properly worked up about it. He was just too comfortable.

“Malfoy,” he said into the back of the couch. “Why are you burning the paper?”

“Don’t talk into my couch,” Malfoy replied. “You might dribble on the leather. And I’ve no idea what you’re talking about.”

Harry sat up, frowning at the blond. “Normal people don’t just burn papers because they feel like it.”

Malfoy looked hurt. “I am not normal people, Potter,” he said haughtily. “I am a Malfoy.”

“Right,” Harry muttered under his breath. “I’d almost forgotten you were an insane pure-blood.”

Malfoy narrowed his eyes at Harry. “All it means,” he said loftily, “is that my brilliant plan is going flawlessly.”

Harry sighed. Did they really have to have a plan, he thought, feeling slightly woebegone. It would be so nice to just lie here on Malfoy’s couch forever, cuddled in his soft blanket which smelled of warm nights by the fire and mulled wine.

“Up, Potter!” commanded Malfoy. “You have a lunch date with the Weaselette.”

“I do?” Harry asked, frowning. He and Ginny didn’t really have ‘lunch dates’ – they had ‘we’re both in the same place at the same time so let’s eat’ dates.

“You do now,” Malfoy said. “You’re going to tell her that the two of you will never get married, because you’re completely and absolutely in love with me.”

“I am?” Harry asked. Really, he thought, someone could have consulted him over this change in his life plans.

“Of course,” Malfoy said, grinning at him. The grin forcibly reminded Harry that Malfoy got half of his pureblood insanity from the Blacks, and he shouldn’t really be surprised that Malfoy was so utterly mad.

“Malfoy, why...” he said slowly, trying to remember how one addressed an insane person, but Malfoy interrupted him.

Malfoy waved him off impatiently. ”It’s all part of the brilliant plan.”

Harry started again. “Are you sure...”

“Completely sure,” Malfoy replied, looking surprised that his words were not encouraging Harry. “Now go. No, wait!” he cried as Harry heaved himself up off the couch with a sigh. “You can’t go dressed like that; you’ll give the maître d’ nightmares. I’ll have to give you something to wear.” He fixed Harry with a steely glare and added ominously, “And I swear, Potter, if you so much as sneeze on any of my clothes, I will kill you and chop you up into little tiny pieces and hide you in a wall somewhere.”

Harry gulped, but followed gamely on when Malfoy beckoned. He could always make a run for

the blanket if things got sticky.

* * *

“Erm,” Harry said, fiddling with the stem of his wine glass. It probably had some fancy name; wine glass was definitely not classy enough for this place, with its marble columns and imposing gilded everything, but the words gave him a sort of vindictive plebian comfort. He looked across at Ginny, noting with just a tinge of jealousy that she seemed perfectly at ease in her dress robes. He felt like his – well, Malfoy’s – robes were slowly choking him.

Malfoy had made him rehearse what he was supposed to say over and over until Harry thought he’d do something drastic to the couch if they went through the ‘script’ one more time, but apparently the lines had been waiting to flee his memory the exact moment he sat down across the table from Ginny.

“Look,” he tried again. “The thing is...” No, the words had left him again, and Ginny’s face was stern and closed off, so unlike her normal expression that it was making him even more nervous.

The Plan, he reminded himself. He had to stick to the Plan.

Ginny sighed. “Harry,” she said, sounding tired, “I know what you’re trying to say.”

“You do?” Appalled that his voice could still hit that particular octave, he tried to pull himself together. “How did you...”

Ginny pulled a newspaper clipping out of her purse and pushed it across the table to him. “This was sort of a huge clue,” she told him.

With a deep sense of foreboding, Harry picked up the clipping and looked at it.

BOY WHO LOVED? the headline screamed. SAVIOR FINDS ROMANCE IN UNLIKELY ARMS.

The picture was of him and Malfoy locked in a passionate embrace, snogging as if the world was ending. Which, Harry reflected in a fleeting moment of calm, lucid thought, it might just be about to do. There were probably a hundred Howlers bursting into screaming, synchronized flames at his flat already. He had wondered about all the paparazzi around the restaurant; it had seemed a little overkill even for the Boy Who Lived.

He was going to kill Hermione.

Ginny sat back in her chair and folded her arms; Harry shifted uncomfortably under her gaze. He knew her expression well. It was the kind of look that said 'tell me everything, Harry James Potter; if you leave anything out, I will know, and you will never be able to have children and will also be permanently cursed with bat-shaped bogeys'. Sometimes he thought if she'd looked that way at Voldemort, just once, they would've gotten to do a lot more about having a childhood and a lot less running around after Horcruxes and trying not to die.

"Gin, I..." Christ, this was awkward. He had to tell his sometimes-girlfriend that they couldn't be together because he was with Malfoy – but he wasn't really with Malfoy, except that in a way he was, because he'd slept on Malfoy's couch and there was a picture on the front page of the Prophet of Malfoy snogging his brains out. Also, there was The Plan, which Malfoy still hadn't explained to him, but which apparently meant pretending they were together.

He looked at the girl – woman, really – sitting across the table from him, and tried hard to imagine them together, really together, more than just a few weeks of sun-kissed giddiness before the clouds came back in. He tried to think of them in a little house like the Burrow, with maybe a dog and an herb garden and everything he thought he'd ever wanted, but all he could think of was Malfoy's crooked grin, and the way one of Malfoy's front teeth was ever so slightly chipped.

He knew he'd taken too long to think when Ginny sighed, leaned forward, and put one of her hands over his.

"Harry," she said, sounding solemn and a little sad. "I'm not going to pretend I'm not absolutely furious with you."

"Oh," Harry mumbled, wondering how long it would take the Wizarding world to get used to a reclusive Savior with an incurable case of bat bogeys.

"But," continued Ginny, and he perked up, hoping that perhaps he wouldn't have to be shut away, after all, "I'm not a fool. I know real passion when I see it, and that," she gestured to the photo with her free hand, "is more passion than we've ever had."

He opened his mouth to protest, with no idea what he'd actually say, but Ginny gave him a freezing look.

"Don't you dare go all chivalrous on me," she said, her voice going slightly ragged around the edges. "Don't make this any harder than it has to be." She tried to smile, but despite her best effort it went lopsided, wobbling. "Convincing myself that you're a selfish prick who never deserved me is going to be hard enough without you being apologetic about it." She paused and tilted her head. "Although," she added, looking thoughtful, "the fact that you're absolutely flaming is sure going to help. Really, you'd think I'd have picked up on that before. It is sort of obvious once you realize it."

Harry choked. "What?" he squawked.

Ginny frowned at him, but before she could speak, Malfoy Apparated onto their table, toppling it and sending him sprawling onto the floor.

"You!" Malfoy gasped, scrambling upright, heedless of the mess he'd made and of the fact

that his hair looked like someone had attacked it with a lawnmower. “Get your hands off of him!”

“My hands are off of him,” Ginny replied coolly, and Harry had no doubt that even though she hadn’t actually said ‘you boyfriend-stealing ferrety bastard’ to Malfoy, she was thinking it really loudly.

“What are you doing here, Mal – Draco?” Harry demanded, remembering at the last second that they were supposed to be Deeply In Love, and therefore he probably shouldn’t refer to Malfoy as Malfoy.

Malfoy blinked, and looked confused.

Ginny got to her feet, ignoring the expensive meal now splattered all over her dress robes. “Don’t worry, ferret-face,” she said sweetly, and Harry looked at her, alarmed and very, very suspicious. “I’ll be on my way, and you two lovebirds can be on yours. I just want to give Harry a little present first.”

And as Malfoy sputtered, Ginny walked over to Harry, smiled very prettily up at his bewildered face, and punched him squarely in the nose.

* * *

“Tilt your head back more,” Malfoy advised him.

“I amb tilding by head back, you...”

“No need to get so touchy, Potter.”

“Touchy? Touchy?! You’re nod de one wid a bloody broken node!”

“Ah yes, those nodes, always breaking, aren’t they?”

...On reflection, Harry thought, it might not have been the best idea to hex the person who was supposed to be healing him.

* * *

“There,” Hermione told him in satisfaction. “All fixed.”

Harry felt his nose gingerly. “Thanks, Hermione.” He hopped down off of the kitchen table and began hunting for something to eat.

“You’re welcome,” Hermione said. “You know you can come to me any time you and Malfoy have a lovers’ spat.”

Harry nearly inhaled a piece of stale biscuit, choked, and spun around to face her. “A lovers’... what?” he asked, wheezing.

Hermione appeared unfazed by his wild stare and near-death by biscuit. “It’s perfectly natural to fight with the ones you love,” she informed him. “Just try not to let Malfoy break your nose, next time.”

“Malfoy?!” he exclaimed. “Hermione, that was Ginny!”

Hermione raised her eyebrows skeptically. “Ginny? When did you see Ginny?”

“We... ah, that is...” Harry floundered, unsure how to tell her without giving away Malfoy’s great plans for revenge. “We had dinner, and Malfoy sort of... showed up... and then she punched me.”

“Oh, Harry,” Hermione said reprovingly.

“What?” he asked, feeling very much as if someone had rearranged the universe without consulting him. Why did Hermione disapprove of him having dinner with Ginny?

“Don’t you see? Malfoy was jealous of you going on a date with Ginny, and Ginny’s still trying to get over the fact that you’re in love with Malfoy.”

He had forgotten how very superior and confident Hermione could sound. “But,” he said weakly, “I’m not... we’re not... Malfoy told me to go to dinner with Ginny!”

Hermione shook her head. “I’m sure that’s what he told you, Harry, but he was probably just testing you. You know how difficult it is for him to trust people these days.”

“No!” Harry protested. “It... it was all just part of the plan!”

“Of course it was,” Hermione replied in a very motherly, indulgent tone. “Now, go on back and apologize to Malfoy for almost breaking his heart. He can be quite delicate.”

Harry eyed her suspiciously. “You’ve been talking to Pansy Parkinson, haven’t you?” he accused her, feeling betrayed.

Hermione looked at him innocently. “What do you mean?” she asked.

Harry shook his head, but let it go. “Malfoy’s not broken-hearted,” he insisted. “He set me up on a dinner date with Ginny so we could break it off, and then she put her hand on mine, and then he Apparated onto our bloody table, looking like hell and...”

A thought suddenly struck him. “Hermione,” he said slowly. “Did you and Pansy really make up all that stuff about us being Veelas?”

Hermione’s eyebrows went up even higher. “Of course we did.” She sounded genuinely surprised. “Frankly, I’m astonished you two actually believed us. But it all worked out for the best in the end, didn’t it?”

“Are you sure?” Harry pressed, the thought growing in his mind and making him uneasy. “There isn’t... there’s no truth in any of it?”

Hermione put her hands on her hips and gave him a look. “No, Harry,” she said, sounding aggrieved. “You don’t have Veela blood in you, and you don’t have a predestined mate. Everyone’s free to pick whoever they want to fall in love with. Don’t try to blame who you like on fate,” she added. Harry thought that was a bit rich, coming from the friend who’d set him up with someone on exactly that premise.

He said nothing about that, though, because the sinking feeling in his gut was picking up speed. “Oh,” he said simply, trying his best to sound normal and not like his head was about to implode. “I... have to go.” And with that, ignoring all of Hermione’s questions, he Apparated straight to Malfoy’s flat.

* * *

He had to knock three times before Malfoy opened the door, scowling, and let him in.

“What do you want?” Malfoy demanded, still sporting a magnificent black eye. “Come back to hex me again? Punch me in the other eye, perhaps?”

“That was self-defense,” Harry protested.

“Utter bollocks. You meant that punch and you know it.”

“Maybe I did and maybe I didn’t,” retorted Harry, shifting uncomfortably. “Anyway, that’s not the point.”

Malfoy eyed him in suspicion. “What is the point then?” he asked, leading the way into the kitchen. Harry looked at it with longing at the couch as they passed it, but sat at the kitchen table instead.

“The point is,” Harry told Malfoy, scooting his chair closer, “that Hermione and Pansy were wrong.”

“We already knew they were wrong,” Malfoy pointed out. “That’s why we have a grand plan of vengeance, which will be awful and terrible and also extremely entertaining.”

Harry raised a finger. “No,” he said, feeling slightly proud for having figured something out before Malfoy. “I’ve been thinking, and –”

“Merlin help us all,” he heard Malfoy mutter. Harry glared at him.

“I’ve been thinking,” he repeated, “and I was wondering what you were doing before you decided to Apparate onto my dinner table tonight.”

Malfoy looked surprised. “I wasn’t doing anything. I was sitting here, plotting revenge, and then all of a sudden...” He stopped and paled. “No,” he whispered.

Harry didn’t respond. He could practically see the wheels turning in Malfoy’s head, whirring away at a thousand miles a minute: anything he said would go unnoticed at the moment. Instead, he absentmindedly studied the blond, his gaze tracing the fine jawbone, the way his fringe fell just so across his forehead, the soft curve of his neck.

It probably should’ve bothered him more, the feeling of rightness that had once again snuck in and taken up residence where loathing used to live. It made it difficult to remember the reasons he hated Malfoy, made it easier to question those reasons – had he ever actually hated Malfoy?

Maybe he’d been influenced by the fact that he’d come to terms with it once already. Or maybe Malfoy’s Veela wiles had completely brainwashed him at this point; either way, he felt none of the horror that had possessed him before.

Besides, he thought, his eyes drawn back again to the sight of Malfoy’s fingers softly drumming on the table, Malfoy was an attractive bloke. He’d even been cleared of all charges after the war on the grounds that no one could be sent to Azkaban for being a whiny bastard who’d tried (and failed miserably,) to be evil in order to save their parents.

Also, that couch was worth any number of Malfoy’s shenanigans.

He’d lost track of time when Malfoy finally nodded decisively and stood up. “Come on, Potter,” Malfoy ordered, striding to the door.

Harry jumped up before he heard the undertone in Malfoy’s voice. “Where are we going?” he

called out, hurrying after Malfoy.

Malfoy opened the door with a flourish. “Not we,” he said. “You, Potter.”

“What?” He could feel the rightness slipping away, sliding through his fingers; he was pretty sure the panic showed through his voice.

“You heard me. Out.” Malfoy had been resolutely not looking at Harry, but when Harry didn’t move, he turned, glaring. “Are you an idiot?”

“No,” Harry said, irritated. “Why do I need to leave? I don’t understand...”

Malfoy glared harder. “What is there to understand?” he hissed. “You’re not welcome here anymore. I never want to see you again. Your ugly face makes me sick. Is that plain enough for you?”

“What about... what about The Plan?” asked Harry, grasping, trying to make the world level again.

“Consider it over. It was never going to work, anyway,” Malfoy said, and this time Harry could hear the venom, the tightness in Malfoy’s voice.

“But it was working,” Harry insisted. “Hermione... Hermione believed it, Malfoy, and Hermione is never wrong.”

“Granger needs to learn she doesn’t control the universe,” Malfoy shot back. “I’m giving you one more chance, Potter. Get out of my flat.”

Harry scowled at him. “No.”

Malfoy made as if to pull his wand out of his pocket, but Harry leaned forward and grabbed his elbow.

“Get off!”

“No,” said Harry again, holding tight as Malfoy tried to twist away. “Look, what is this about, anyway? So you might be a Veela. So what? Does it really matter?”

Malfoy stopped struggling and looked at Harry, momentarily incredulous. “Are you serious?”

Harry knew there was some point he was trying to make, he knew there was, but Malfoy’s arm was solid and warm beneath his hand, and the way Malfoy’s blond hair was falling across his face kept distracting him.

Taking advantage of the moment, Malfoy pushed Harry away roughly, finally freeing his arm from Harry’s grip. “Listen,” he snarled. “I don’t care what little delusions you’ve cooked up in that pea-sized brain of yours, but unless you leave in the next five seconds, I am going to melt you into a little puddle of Potter-goo on my doorstep, because this is not happening to me.”

His teeth were bared: he looked fierce and desperate and cornered and it was all Harry could do to ignore the monster in his chest clamoring for him to pull Draco the few final inches nearer.

Harry pinched the bridge of his nose in frustration, trying to think. “Look,” he started, trying to think of words that wouldn’t guarantee him a gooey death, “if this is about the Veela thing, we can just... leave that out and–”

“Leave it out?” Malfoy’s voice inched dangerously toward a squeak. “Leave it out, Potter? Clearly someone left you out on an exposed mountainside as a small child and wild beasts raised you.” This time when he went for his wand, Harry was too slow to prevent it.

“All I’m asking,” Harry said carefully, keeping an eye on Malfoy’s wand, “is what’s so bad about this?” Malfoy’s grip tightened on the wand, and he hurried to explain. “I mean, okay, so we might have tried to kill each other in school, and yeah, you were an evil twit, and maybe I don’t really get along with your family, but–”

He had to make a running leap and dive behind the couch to avoid the hex Malfoy threw at him.

“I was a twit?” Malfoy demanded. “You were the twit! You in all your Gryffindor glory, with your obnoxious friends and your obnoxious hair and your stupid, obnoxious scar.”

Harry tried to look over the top of the couch to protest, but another hex sent him ducking back down.

“You made it clear from the moment you met me that you didn’t have any time for me,” Malfoy ranted on. “Hagrid the oaf and Weasley were better company, apparently. You had no idea who I was, but you rejected my friendship without a second thought.”

“Are you a stuck-up prick to everyone you try to befriend, or was that a special act just for me?” Harry yelled, not quite daring to stand up. As Malfoy sputtered, he crawled forward to peer around the corner of the couch.

“I was not a stuck-up prick!” Malfoy said hotly, and Harry snorted. “Okay, I might have been. Occasionally. But you were no better, Potter! You never even pretended to notice anyone who wasn’t Granger or a Weasley–”

Malfoy went on, but Harry stopped listening. There was something he couldn’t quite place...

a flicker of something behind Malfoy's sneer.

"...never even gave me the time of day unless you could insult me with it, you bastard..."

Realization struck him and he sat back, shutting his eyes tightly as all the pieces flew together. He took one more look around the couch, just to make sure. Malfoy paced back and forth as he ranted, fists clenched, dark spots of color high on his cheeks, looking mad as hell and like he wanted to rip something apart. And damn it, Harry thought, he looked good.

Bloody Hermione and her bloody omnipotence.

A quick whispered spell sent Malfoy's wand flying to the other corner of the room, and he used Malfoy's distraction to climb over the couch, silently apologizing to the leather.

"Potter," Malfoy said warningly. "What the hell –"

"It's okay," Harry told him, hoping he'd put it together right and wasn't about to get another broken nose. "I don't care about all the Veela stuff. Maybe it's real, maybe it isn't." Malfoy was backing up, but Harry followed him until they came to a stop in front of the kitchen table. Harry had to repress a grin at the memory of Malfoy burning the Prophet – had that really only happened this morning?

"The point is," he continued, "I don't care."

"You said that already," Malfoy pointed out, trying to lean back.

"Well, it's true. I don't want you to think this has anything to do with... with Veelaness, or anything."

“What?” asked Malfoy, suspicious. “What are you –”

Before Malfoy could say anything else, anything that might jeopardize this particular Plan, Harry lunged forward, gripping Malfoy’s head with his hands to hold him still. He sort of smashed their noses together accidentally before he started getting the hang of it, and Malfoy was still trying to talk, the idiot, but when Harry slid his tongue across Malfoy’s lips tentatively, Malfoy froze.

Harry froze too, cursing himself for being a complete idiot and hoping he wasn’t about to die at the hands of an enraged Draco Malfoy.

And then, before he could apologize or Apparate or even hide behind the couch again, Malfoy was melting against him and this, this was what he remembered, shattered thoughts and the sound and feel and taste of nothing but Malfoy.

The bruising grip Malfoy had on his arms hurt, but the ache as Malfoy pulled away was worse.

“How,” Malfoy started, then started again. “What are you up to with this? What do you want?”

“I told you,” Harry murmured, leaning forward and trying to unobtrusively smell Malfoy’s hair. “Hermione is always right. Plus,” he added as an afterthought, “we really should investigate this possible Veela connection. For, you know, posterity. The greater good.”

Malfoy was looking at him, his face unreadable, and Harry tried not to shift nervously, half-convinced that he was about to become a puddle of goo after all.

“I am not a nice, fuzzy, laid-back Gryffindor,” Malfoy said finally, looking at Harry sideways through his lashes. “I expect to be kept in the style to which I am accustomed.” He leaned closer. “Are we clear, Potter?”

Harry grinned. “Crystal.”

Fin