Inconsolable, or How Harry Potter Stopped H8ing and Learned to Love Video Games (Harry/Draco)

Title: Inconsolable, or How Harry Potter Stopped H8ing and Learned to Love Video Games

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Pairing: Harry/Draco, secondary Harry/Ginny, tertiary Harry/Ron/Hermione (sort of)

Rating: R

Warnings: epilogue compliance, somewhat facetious treatment of addiction-related issues, gratuitous bandom references, and utter ridiculousness

Word Count: ~10,600

Summary: Harry Potter really sucks at video games. Draco Malfoy just sucks.

Author's Note: Grateful thanks to [info]mizbean for her idea about why Draco initially played the game, [info]supergrover24 for beta-reading (and letting me write her into it *g*), and all the vile enablers on my LJ who encouraged me to turn a one-note joke into a full-fledged fic. ;) Also, apologies to [info]glockgal for borrowing her video game name from last year's April Fools Day celebration at Fiction Alley and to [info]sarahtales for borrowing her nickname for Scorpius. I steal because I love!

I am writing to raise awareness of: Multiple Sclerosis

Although the words "Nintendo" and "wizard" had been bandied about in the same sentence frequently enough over the years, no one outside of the Wizarding world could have suspected how apt the connection was.

When the great-great-great-granddaughter of the company's founder (and the first witch in at least four generations) came of age, she wasted no time introducing a new division to the company, specifically catering to magical gamers the world over. The division's first console, the Nintendo Wiizard, boasted images rendered in true 3D right in the center of the room, without a need for any sort of Muggle A/V device, and a controller modeled after that of the Muggle Nintendo Wii, but in a slimmer, aerodynamic form more suited to swishing and flicking.

"Inspired!" cried the critics. "Magical!"

In Wizarding Britain, the Wiizard became an immediate hit. The first popular games were sports titles developed with a Wizarding audience in mind—Quidditch World Cup, All-Star Quodpot, Viktor Krum Quidditch Exposition 2018—that let adults and children alike live out their fantasies of international glory. Next came violent, action-oriented titles based on Wizarding history: Goblin Wars Volumes I through XIII, Witch Burning!, Dumbledore vs. Grindelwald (a controversial hit owing to its homoerotic overtones). The game developers and publishers really hit their stride, though, when they began reimagining Muggle games for a Wizarding audience. Thus the studios brought forth instant hits like Magical Mario Brothers, Guitar Wizard, and The Mugs, a Muggle society simulation game.

But in spite of all these games' popularity, in Wizarding Britain, one title trumped them all: Harry Potter: The Video Game.

Now you can BE Harry Potter as he pursues his quest to triumph over the most evil wizard of all time. With the power of your magical Wiizard Wand™, you have the power to save Britain—and the world!

It was all Harry could do rein in his rage-fueled surge of rogue magic and not accidentally blast a hole in the wall of the Video Magic! shop when he first spied the Available 31 July! poster in the store window. Firecalling the game's publisher came to naught—they responded with an owl from their team of solicitors pointing out that there was no law in Wizarding Britain against using the likeness of public figures in such a manner, and besides, he should be honored that the world wanted to experience his heroic deeds.

"I don't see what's so bad," Ginny commented over dinner as Harry continued to seethe after receiving the owl. "It is an honor. Although, mind, it'd be better if we were receiving a share of the revenue. Maybe you should license the rights to another company and have them issue an 'official' Harry Potter game."

Harry stared stonily at her. "Not helping, Gin."

She sighed. "I just don't understand why you're so upset if it isn't about the money."

He flexed his fingers, then curled them into a fist as he tried to keep his tone level. They'd been over this time and again. "I don't like the idea that they're turning the war into some sort of—of—entertainment. Like it was a game instead of life and death. It trivializes everything we did to keep the Wizarding world safe."

"Everything you did, you mean," she said, her voice cool.

He blinked at her. "Ginny, you were just as much a part of the war effort—"

"No, I was not just as much a part of anything, since, as you might recall, you didn't let me come along with you that summer."

He closed his eyes and sighed. "Gin. I thought we'd cleared this up years ago. It was too—"

"Dangerous? Right. Not too dangerous for your best friends, just for the woman who'd eventually bear your children."

He felt an abrupt rush of exasperation mingled with gratitude that Lily was over at Ron and Hermione's for the evening. "Gin—"

She waved a hand. "Never mind. Forget I said anything. It's not worth rehashing anyway." She stood and deposited her dishes in the sink with a flick of her wand to start the cleaning charms. "I'm going for a walk," she said, and left.

By the time she got back, Hermione had arrived to drop Lily off, and Ginny found reasons not to talk to him for the rest of the evening.

Just one more reason to hate that bloody game, Harry thought as he lay in bed next to his stiff and silent wife.

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The game, of course, became a bestseller the instant it was released two months later, fueled both by the insatiable public appetite for anything having to do with Harry Potter, even twenty years after his heroic deeds, and by advance reviews in Game Wiz and other publications that praised the game's innovation, historical accuracy, and massive open world that gave players the opportunity to explore a variety of "what if" scenarios and see if they could defeat Voldemort in fewer steps, even, than the real Harry.

Harry was incensed. Ginny was highly amused. Ron and Hermione just frowned and didn't comment.

Harry's kids, however, called it, in a word, "awesome."

Forbidden to buy the game for use at home, naturally they turned to playing it at their friends' houses. First, James came home from an afternoon at Nigel Wood's bubbling over with enthusiasm about the game, raving about it to Ginny when he thought Harry wasn't present. When he turned around and spied his dad in the doorway, he paled a little. Ginny glared, as if in anticipation of Harry's outburst.

"Dad," stammered James. "I know you don't—I mean—"

Harry shrugged, burying his annoyance. "I can't very well forbid the Woods from buying whatever games they want. Although I am disappointed that you've given into the temptation, knowing my feelings on the subject."

James swallowed, but forged bravely on. "But, Dad, it isn't bad like you think, really—Nigel's mum says it's really historically accurate—"

"As I recall, Katie Wood was not present for most of the events depicted in that game," Harry replied.

Ginny scowled at him. "What does Nigel's dad say?" she asked James.

"He's just disappointed there isn't more Quidditch," James replied.

Harry snorted.

The Woods' reaction was easily enough dismissed, but then came Albus Severus's report that the Malfoys owned a copy of the game.

"Malfoy?" Harry said, dumbfounded.

"Draco Malfoy?" Ginny asked, equally struck.

"Yeah," Al said, seemingly unnoticing of his parents' incredulity. "Scorpius is really good at it," he added.

"…And his father?" Harry couldn't help asking.

Al scrunched up his face. "He's—well, not that good."

There was that, at least.

But the final straw came when he overheard Lily—who wasn't even at Hogwarts yet, and who associated mainly with her many Weasley cousins and a handful of neighboring Wizarding children—comparing notes about the game with Al and James.

"Where have you been playing that?" he asked her.

"Aunt Hermione and Uncle Ron's house," she said.

Which promptly landed his two supposed best friends one very irate Harry Potter on their doorstep.

"Oh, honestly, Harry," Hermione sighed. "It's not nearly as bad as you think."

"Are you going to hand me some line about 'impressive historical accuracy' too?" he sneered.

"Have you even tried it yourself?" she asked. "Or have you simply made up your mind based on assumptions?"

Harry opened his mouth to respond, stopped, and scowled at her smug expression. Ron simply looked on, amused and not saying a word.

"Come on," Hermione said. "See for yourself."

Still frowning in annoyance, Harry followed Hermione into the living room, where Hugo was on his feet, busily working the controls of the Wiizard Wand as a scene of horror sprawled before him: the arching walls of a menacing cave and a horde of Inferi rising from the depths of a black lake. Harry stopped dead in his tracks, feeling as though he'd unwittingly stepped into one of his nightmares. Dimly, he saw his sixteen-year-old self clutching a feeble Professor Dumbledore and thought for a moment that he might be sick right on Ron and Hermione's living room rug.

Hermione walked past it as if it weren't even there.

"Hugo, give Uncle Harry a turn."

"But, Mum," he whined, eyes still locked on the figures of Harry and Professor Dumbledore. "I'm right in the middle of a really awesome game!" With a flick of his wrist and a shouted "Incendio!" a stream of simulated fire burst forth from the in-game Harry's wand and surrounded the 3D Harry and Dumbledore.

Hermione remained unmoved. "Save the game and go back to it. You've already been playing for hours."

"But Mum, I'm in the zone!" His fingers continued to work furiously, arm swinging with purpose.

"Do not think for a moment that I won't lock this away for the next month, young man."

Sighing loudly, Hugo pressed a series of buttons and muttered the incantation to save the game. The image froze for a moment, then blinked away, as though it had never been there. With a "hmph," he threw himself into a chair in the corner and crossed his arms, looking sulky.

Hermione rolled her eyes and took a seat on the sofa, patting the cushion next to her to beckon to Harry. "Here," she said, "I'll play through a bit just to show you how it works, then you can have a try, all right?"

Harry shrugged, feeling about as impotent as Hugo in the face of Hermione's determination.

She restarted the game from the beginning, and a waifish, bedraggled looking ten-year-old Harry appeared before them. Over the next half-hour, Hermione skillfully guided the in-game Harry through catching his Hogwarts letter, boarding the Hogwarts Express for the first time, and making friends.

Unlike the way events had actually transpired, Hermione encouraged eleven-year-old Harry and eleven-year-old Hermione to become friends on the train, rather than just acquaintances.

"You see," she pointed out, "there's a lot of room for experimentation. Now, this may or may not be a good idea. It may be that our becoming friends sooner would have completely changed the course of

events in your first year. We'll never know for certain, but the game posits some very plausible outcomes."

"Like you and Harry attending the Yule Ball together?" Ron piped up from where he stood next to the sofa, voice unnaturally even.

Hermione colored a bit. "I didn't say they were all plausible," she replied, not moving her gaze from the figures in the game as she continued to guide them through their small dramas and adventures.

When she reached the point of the first years' introductory flying lesson, she paused the game and handed the Wand over to Harry. "Here, you try now," she said with a smile. "You always were better at flying than I was anyway."

Harry grasped the Wiizard Wand and flicked it at the still figures to bring the scene back to life. He guided his first-year self onto the broom and pursued the tiny, sneering Malfoy into the air, then took off after the falling Rememberall, recalling so well the scream of the wind in his ears, the rush of adrenaline that surged through him as he reached out a hand, the grass rushing up to meet him as he—

Crashed flat to the ground.

GAME OVER flashed before his eyes, and the 3D figures disappeared.

Harry's jaw dropped. So did Ron's and Hermione's, although both made a more or less creditable job of trying to recover and hide their shock.

Hugo nearly fell off his chair laughing.

Ron silenced the boy with a barked, "Hugo!" and sent his son skittering to his room, his face reddened with suppressed hilarity.

"Well," Hermione said. "That was—it was your first time, Harry. It takes a while to get the hang of these things."

"Yeah," Ron chimed in. "Hermione's only just managed to get past the Department of Mysteries."

"It's the brains," she whispered. "I just can't—"

Ron perched on the arm of the sofa next to her and brushed a hand along her hair. She sighed.

Harry looked away.

"It's a rough game," Ron said. "You just have to get the hang of it."

"How far have you got?" Harry couldn't help asking.

"Well, I, er—"

"Ron," Hermione spoke up, "keeps getting derailed by making you try out different hexes on Draco Malfoy in sixth year."

Ron flushed.

"Because nearly eviscerating him wasn't enough?" Harry asked. He pushed away the Wand. "I'm not sure I want to play this game."

"Oh, come on, Harry," Ron said. "You just need a bit of practice. You've no idea how much fun it is."

Harry stared at him. "You really find it fun to relive all the horrible things that happened to us during those years?"

"They weren't all horrible," Ron said. "'Sides, you should see the older version of Hermione in this game." He wolf-whistled, and Hermione shoved him off the arm of the couch.

"Er, not that you aren't gorgeous and all now," Ron added belatedly. "Just—well—er, is that Hugo I hear calling me? Must run."

Harry and Hermione both watched him flee. Harry turned to look at her, and she was shaking her head in exasperated amusement. "He's right, though," she said to Harry. "They—er—got a little creative with me. I wasn't happy about it at first, but"—she blushed—"there's something strangely appealing about being seen as a sex symbol."

"As opposed to being a toy for people to manipulate," Harry retorted.

Hermione sighed. "I'm sorry you don't approve, Harry, but I do think you might appreciate it if you gave it a chance. It really is surprisingly accurate—like a live history lesson for kids who play, and even for adults. But the most fascinating thing, I think, is the way you can change history."

"What's the point?" Harry asked. "What's done is done. You can't really change history."

"No," she agreed. "But we can learn from what we've done or haven't done in the past so that we're better prepared to face situations that come up in the future."

"So the world is ready for the next Dark Lord."

"Well," Hermione said, "yes."

They fell silent.

After a minute or so had passed, Harry sighed and shook his head. "Maybe I've rushed to judgment. Wouldn't be the first time."

"It isn't nearly as bad as you're imagining it to be, truly. I wouldn't mislead you about that."

"I know," he said. "No matter how much you like your sexy video game Hermione character."

"Git," she said fondly. "Want to give it another try?"

He hesitated, then agreed, only a little reluctantly, "All right. Maybe once more."

"It's fun, Harry, you'll see," Hermione said. "And the level of detail is really amazing. I think you'll enjoy it once you get farther into the game."

But in his next attempt at the game, Harry couldn't even manage to snag one of the Hogwarts letters out of the air. When Hermione played a bit for him, then let him take over again, he couldn't get through the wall to Platform 9-3/4. The third time, he accidentally got himself Sorted into Slytherin. At that, he tossed away the Wiizard Wand in frustration.

"I don't get it," Hermione said, as dazed as he. "I would have thought—you have such excellent hand-eye coordination. Haven't you played video games before, Harry?"

"Well...we got a Wiizard for the kids, but I haven't played it much myself. Not nearly as much as Ginny."

"But even so—with your Quidditch skills and Auror reflexes—"

"No need to rub it in," he said with a scowl, standing.

She rose to her feet as well. "Oh, Harry, don't be angry. I'm sure it's just a fluke."

"Right," he said. "And how long did it take you and Ron and the kids to get past the opening stages?"

Hermione opened her mouth, then closed it with a frown and just looked at him entreatingly.

"Yeah, that's what I thought," he said, and left.

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Three days later, his niggling frustration having gotten the better of him, he found himself Owl-ordering the game under a false name.

Ginny laughed at his sheepish expression when she walked in on him playing the game one afternoon. But she curled up on the sofa next to him and didn't laugh—much—when Harry failed again and again to get past supposedly easy obstacles. She leaned her head against his shoulder when he sighed in frustration. "Remember, it wasn't easy when you did all those things in real life, either," she murmured.

He bent his head to kiss her, and handed her the Wiizard Wand. "Here," he said. "You give it a shot."

She beat his best score handily in her first attempt.

So did Lily when she got home from her grandparents' house. However, Harry comforted himself, she did have experience playing at Ron and Hermione's.

Then again, she also was only ten.

Harry's progress through the game came with painstaking slowness. He'd watched Lily, Al, and James skillfully play their way through the game—Ginny had quit playing in a rage when she realized how small a role the game's developers had given her…and how much less voluptuous they'd made her character in comparison to Hermione—and he found himself unaccountably eager to make his own way to levels like the Chamber of Secrets or the Shrieking Shack or even, Cedric forgive him, the graveyard in Little Hangleton. He wanted to prove he could do it all over again, maybe even better than before. Whether this desire grew out of a need to satisfy himself or somehow cement his place as a hero in others' eyes, he wasn't certain. He only knew that as the weeks wore on and his progress seemed to stall somewhere around McGonagall's towering chess set, it became less of a whim and more of an obsession.

Ginny's frustration with the game grew when, once Al and James were back at school, Harry made a practice of turning to the Wiizard every evening after work, as well as every weekend, often staying up late into the night. When he began coming home during his lunch hours to play as well, she entreated him to stop, but he merely brushed aside her protests. When he began skiving off work to play, she deactivated the Wiizard's magic supply and hid the console. He bought another and set it up in the attic, where he wouldn't disturb her—and where no one would witness his repeated failures. When she threatened to leave him, he thought she was overreacting.

But when she greeted him at the door one afternoon with a packed suitcase, he realized she hadn't been kidding.

"Ginny," he said, shocked. "You can't leave—"

"I'm not," she said. "You are." She shoved the suitcase at him, and he just barely managed to catch it.

He stared at her, dumbfounded.

She closed her eyes in frustration, then opened them, and her tone was gentler as she said, "You have a problem, Harry. You need help."

"It's just a video game," he said. "It doesn't mean anything."

"Exactly," she said, and closed the door in his face.

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When Hermione opened the door, Ron at her side, to find a shell-shocked Harry toting a battered suitcase, she sighed and shook her head, but opened the door to let him in.

"Ginny kicked me out," he said.

"She firecalled," Hermione replied.

"Oh." Harry colored. "So you know why—"

"Harry," Ron interrupted, "everyone knows there's a problem. You've missed a lot of work lately, mate."

"It's not as bad as Ginny thinks," Harry insisted.

"We've hidden the Wiizard," Ron said.

"Well, that's—that's hardly fair to Hugo," Harry said.

"'Bout shook the house with his shouts of protest," Ron agreed. "But it's more important to get you to break the habit."

"No habit to break," Harry said confidently.

"Hmm," both of them replied.

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Harry was absolutely certain he didn't have a problem.

He didn't miss the Wiizard at all, he told himself. He didn't spend a single minute during the next few days thinking about the Harry Potter video game and how to get past the various obstacles.

No, indeed, not a single minute.

More like hours.

Hours upon hours.

When he held his weekly meeting with the Auror team leaders, he found himself thinking of directing the movements of pieces on a giant chessboard.

When he reviewed one of his teams' paperwork for a recently completed mission, he found himself thinking of catching Hogwarts letters out of the air.

When he went out on assignment to help chase down a suspected neo-Death Eater who made the

mistake of attempting to flee on broomstick, he found himself thinking of the simulated Quidditch games and that desperate reach for the Golden Snitch.

In the evenings, his fingers itched for the controller. He zoned out at the dinner table, his mind drifting to new game strategies. He dreamt about them at night.

At the end of a week, exhausted, unhappy, and thinking a little too desperately of trying to sneak a new Wiizard console into Ron and Hermione's house, he sat down with Hermione. "I think I have a problem," he admitted.

She handed him a card.

AWRY, it said in twinkling golden letters. Addicted Wizard RecoverY: For the witch or wizard who knows when it's time to quit!

"It's a recovery and support group for wizards with addictions," Hermione said gently. "I looked into it for you, and they're very, very discreet. It seems like the sort of thing that would help you."

"I just want my life back," Harry said miserably.

"We want that for you too, Harry," Hermione said, closing her hand over his.

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The following Friday evening, Harry made his way to a nondescript building just off Diagon Alley, his heart in his throat and Hermione's dossier of information on the group tucked under his arm. Part of Hermione's confidence in the group arose from its practice of using a spell to forbid members from discussing specific issues that arose during the meeting with anyone but other group members. In that way, the secrecy of members' private struggles was assured, while allowing members to turn to each other for support during rough patches outside of the meetings. Participants could not reveal even the

identities of other group members, let alone what addictions they were attempting to overcome.

"So, theoretically," Hermione said, "even the confidences of the famous Harry Potter should be safe."

"Theoretically," Harry pointed out.

Hermione shrugged. "There are variables, certainly, but I think you can be reasonably confident that this is a safe space."

"Reasonably confident," he echoed. "Smashing."

The meeting room was already buzzing with voices when Harry pushed open the door. The room held only a couple of long tables and a circle of chairs, around which an assortment of wizards and witches were milling. He felt a tickle of magic brush across his skin as he crossed the threshold, and he sought out the group's leader, Iphigenia, who wore a bright name tag and welcomed Harry warmly.

"Yes, yes," she said in reply to Harry's question, "we seal off the entire room with a privacy spell, and that's what you felt. You can continue to discuss your own situation with your friends and family members who aren't part of the group, but you will only be able to discuss other members' situations with the group or with them individually. We find it makes for a much safer, more welcoming environment."

"Is it really secure, though?" he had to ask.

"Well," she laughed a little, "we were fairly certain it was until Hermione Weasley contacted me recently. Claimed she'd been working in her spare time on the subject of privacy spells and said she had a much stronger one she was offering for the use of the group. Supposedly, it's designed to withstand even the attempts of a trained Auror like you."

"If Hermione developed it, I've no doubt it is," he said, amused.

"And one really doesn't say no to Hermione Weasley, does one?" she said with a smile. "So, yes, Mr. Potter, your privacy is assured."

Feeling more relaxed, Harry drifted toward the circle of chairs and took a seat as everyone else in the room began doing so. He saw a handful of faces he recognized from the Ministry, a portly man he recalled seeing frequently at the Leaky Cauldron, and a handful of others who seemed vaguely familiar and whom he thought he might have seen here or there in Diagon Alley. He thought perhaps he'd lucked out and there'd be no one who knew him well, until—

"Harry bloody Potter condescending to join the ranks of the addicted?" a snide voice drawled. "What next, Ronald Weasley attends the annual Pureblood Families of Wizarding Britain retreat?"

And sure enough, the figure that had dropped into the chair next to Harry's was unmistakably Draco Malfoy.

"Finally realized your addiction to fame and glory, have you?" Malfoy continued, adopting an expression of false sympathy. "Sad, yes, but we all knew this day had to come."

"Fuck off, Malfoy," Harry muttered, turning to face straight ahead, determined to ignore the other man, for all that they'd been tacitly courteous to each other since their sons had, inexplicably enough, become friends.

But Malfoy leaned in, his breath tickling at Harry's ear. "It's all right, Potter. You can tell me. What's your big, bad secret?"

Harry turned and narrowed his eyes at Malfoy, refusing to be discomfited by the man's face hovering so close to his. "You're the one who's so nosy, why don't you tell me what addiction you're here for?"

"Gladly," Malfoy said. His lips curled lovingly around his next word: "Sex."

Harry blinked, then scowled. "You're taking the piss, Malfoy—" But then he noticed Malfoy's gaze had dropped to Harry's lap, an unmistakable flare of hunger lighting his eyes. Harry shifted his weight to the opposite side of the chair and, as nonchalantly as possible, crossed his legs. The low laugh in his ear told him his movement hadn't gone unnoticed.

Mercifully, the meeting began.

They went around the circle, each of the witches and wizards present introducing him- or herself as well as what addiction they were battling. The subjects of addiction ranged from alcohol to cleaning charms to, apparently, sex, which Malfoy claimed as his addiction with no hint of mockery or embarrassment.

"And how have you fared over the last week?" Iphigenia asked.

"Still meaningless conquest-free," he replied in a sing-song voice, sounding bored. "Though certainly not for lack of opportunity, mind."

"How are you helping yourself to resist the temptation?" she asked.

Malfoy shrugged. "I tell myself they're all diseased and remind myself how uncomfortable an itchy prick can be."

Iphigenia blinked, but replied only, "Well. Very good, then, Draco."

Then it was Harry's turn.

"Um, hi," he said. "I'm Harry. And I'm...well...I'm..." He closed his eyes and took a breath. "I'm addicted to

a video game."

"It's hard to admit the first time, isn't it, Harry?" Iphigenia asked gently.

"Yeah," Harry said. In fact, he was nearly trembling, as though in the aftermath of a great shock.

"Which video game is it that led to your addiction?" she asked.

Harry froze. He would feel silly enough admitting his addiction to Harry Potter: The Video Game in a room of near-total strangers. But he could feel the heat radiating off Malfoy, who was lounging next to him, his arm practically draped across the back of Harry's chair, and to admit it in front of him, in particular, was unthinkable.

"Wrock Band," he replied.

"Oh, I love Wrock Band," piped up a young woman about halfway around the circle, who'd confessed her addiction to some sort of Muggle television program about modeling. "I can totally see why that would be addicting. My favorite thing is playing drums with the My Potions Romance tracks. Merlin, I just want to be Bob Brewer, you know?"

"Er, yeah," said Harry, who did not, in fact, know. "I, uh—I like that group with—the—" He groped for a name he'd heard his children mention. "Fall Out Wizard?"

"Ooh, yes, I love them too," she sighed. "Which instrument do you prefer?"

"Um…bass?"

"Mm, yes," she said. "I can totally see you as a Pete Wandz type."

Malfoy was looking at him again. "Bass, Potter?" he asked, sounding amused.

"I don't seem like the bass type to you?" Harry asked, moderately offended.

"Hmm. Not really. But perhaps you have—ah—hidden depths." He seemed to be checking out Harry's arse. Harry shifted in his chair and tried desperately to look elsewhere.

Iphigenia cast Malfoy a look and turned her gaze back to Harry. "Tell us what brought you here tonight."

And so Harry did, leaving out the details specific to the Harry Potter video game, and the group listened and offered support. When he admitted that Ginny had kicked him out because of his addiction, he could feel Malfoy retreat slightly, as though in surprise, and he wondered if Al had even mentioned the news to Scorpius.

As the meeting drew to a close and attendees began streaming out, he sensed Malfoy eyeing him, and not entirely in a lascivious way. When Harry made to follow in the wake of the exiting throng, Malfoy caught him by the arm. "Hey, you interested in grabbing coffee or something?"

Harry gave him a narrow look. "I don't think so, Malfoy."

Malfoy practically snarled at the rejection. "Look, it's not what you think—"

"I don't care what it is or isn't. The answer is no."

"Fine," Malfoy said, straightening. "Whatever."

"Whatever is right," Harry said, and rather than give the man another chance to speak to him, he

grabbed his coat and hastened toward the exit, all the while feeling the uncomfortable heat of Malfoy's gaze.

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Over the next week, his cravings for the video game didn't lessen in the slightest.

"Well, it's not as though those meetings are a panacea, Harry," Hermione replied when he complained. "You need to work at this. Besides, you've only been to one."

So he went back. Every week, he went back. In spite of Malfoy's continued attentions, the way he'd nudge his chair just a little too close to Harry's, and how he seemed to savor the word sex every time he spoke of his supposed addiction. Harry could deal with Malfoy's peculiar touches and innuendos, which he was convinced were only meant to rile him. The group offered compensations that far outweighed the gnat that was Draco Malfoy.

It was such a relief to have people who really understood. Who nodded knowingly when he spoke of how the video game dominated his thoughts when he should be thinking of legitimate things, like work, or when he spoke of the almost physical craving for the feel of the Wiizard Wand in his hand, granting him control of the universe.

He listened to others' tales of how they'd been without firewhisky or Felix Felicis or Honeydukes chocolate for three months or three years or three decades, and he began to take heart, began to believe that he really could overcome this strange obsession.

It was hard not having someone who understood like that in his life every day. Ron and Hermione's sympathy only went so far; they didn't have that bone-deep understanding of what it meant to crave something beyond all else. The support group filled a void, but only to an extent.

And so, after his fourth week of meetings, he found himself turning to Draco Malfoy and saying the unthinkable. "If you're still interested in that coffee, I'd like to take you up on it."

Malfoy blinked at him in surprise, then his jaw tightened. "Who says I ever was interested?"

"Hey, you're the one who asked."

"Weeks ago."

"Right," Harry said. "And I said no then, but I've changed my mind."

"Well, isn't it nice to be Harry Potter and have that prerogative?"

Harry rolled his eyes. "For fuck's sake, Malfoy, do you want the bloody coffee or not?"

Malfoy narrowed his eyes at him. "Why now?"

"Because, frankly, I'd like to have someone I can talk to about this stuff outside of these meetings, and you're the only person here who's more than a passing acquaintance at this point."

A muscle ticked in Malfoy's jaw as he considered Harry's response. "All right," he said at last. "Let's go, then."

"One ground rule, though," Harry said. "No funny business. None of this irritating flirting and fussing and such."

"Fine," Malfoy said, swinging his coat off the back of his chair with a flourish and turning to Harry with a smirk. "I was only doing it to annoy you anyway."

*

To Harry's surprise, Malfoy suggested a small Muggle coffee shop just around the corner from the Leaky Cauldron where the employees greeted him like a regular.

"Sometimes it's nice to get away from the Wizarding world," he said in response to Harry's unasked question, not quite meeting Harry's eyes.

At this hour in the evening, the place was relatively quiet, a handful of young people tapping away at laptops, a few rather more middle-aged folks like themselves reading or engaged in quiet conversation. Harry inquired silently, and at Malfoy's small nod, he unobtrusively cast a spell to prevent others from overhearing their conversation.

"All right, Potter," Malfoy said, folding his arms on the table behind his steaming mug of coffee, "tell me what you're really in for."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you wouldn't know Pete Wandz from a hole in the ground, so your claim about being addicted to Wrock Band is utter horse shite."

Harry glared. "Right, and you're such a music connoisseur?"

Malfoy lifted a single eyebrow. "No, but unlike you, apparently, I've actually played Wrock Band, and the details in your story don't fit. Everyone else is just too starstruck to call you on it."

Harry opened his mouth to retort, but Malfoy just kept watching him with that utterly cocksure, I-can-see-right-through-you expression, and he sighed instead. "You have to swear not to tell."

"The privacy spell is designed to hold when we talk to each other about our addictions outside of the meetings as well, so I don't have to swear anything, more's the pity," Malfoy replied. Harry gave him a narrow look, and Malfoy rolled his eyes. "Fine, fine, I swear, OK?"

Harry drew in a breath, uncertain whether he wanted to confess this. Finally, he decided just to bite the bullet. "It was Harry Potter: The Video Game."

Malfoy's jaw dropped, and an expression of unholy glee stole over his features. "You're having me on, right? You're not serious?"

Harry dropped his forehead into his palms and shook his head.

Malfoy roared with laughter.

"This is not exactly supportive of you," Harry pointed out when the laughter began to die down.

"Merlin, Potter, how did you expect me to react?" Malfoy asked, still wheezing a bit. "Addicted to your own bloody video game. That is priceless. What, killing the Dark Lord once wasn't enough—you had to try it multiple times?"

"Not exactly," Harry muttered. "But that's beside the point. You see now why I couldn't say that in front of the group?"

"Please, like anything would make them think badly of you, you closet narcissist."

"Fine, then," Harry said, "what are you really in for?"

"Sex addiction," Malfoy replied promptly with a little, maddening smile.

"Horse shite," Harry retorted.

Malfoy held up his hands. "Merlin's honest truth. Once I'd married and had the requisite heir, I was free to indulge all the urges I'd repressed for so many years, and I'm afraid I went a bit mad with it. Different men every night, sometimes quantities of them." He shrugged unconcernedly. "Astoria was tolerant enough at first—after all, she was free to have all the men she wanted by then, too—but I think in the end it finally got to her."

"She was upset you were spending so much time with other men?" Harry asked.

"No, just envious that I pulled more men than she did." He tucked a strand of silvery-blond hair behind his ear and winked. "I always was the better-looking of the two of us."

Harry didn't take the bait. "Are you two still...together?"

"She left me years ago. Lives on the continent now. She comes back every fall to see Scorpius off to school, but that's the most we see of each other. Better that way, frankly."

"What made you decide to give it up?" Harry asked, recalling that Malfoy had said during the AWRY meetings that he'd been "meaningless conquest-free" for about eight years. "Catch a social disease, did you?"

"More than one," Malfoy replied without batting an eye. "That's what Healers are for, you ignorant twat. No." He shook his head, the lingering mockery in his eyes fading. "I stopped when Scorpius grew old enough to realize there were always strange, half-naked men about the Manor, and to comment on it. What I hadn't minded flaunting in front of my wife, I was embarrassed to show my child." He shrugged. "I found out about AWRY, and the rest is history."

"Does it ever get easier?" Harry couldn't stop himself asking.

Malfoy met his gaze, expression serious. "A little, maybe. It becomes habit to deny yourself, but the urge never really goes away. I've made changes in my lifestyle to reduce the opportunities for temptation—I don't go to clubs, I don't allow myself to be drawn into obvious flirtations—but that doesn't mean the desire isn't still there, sometimes almost overwhelmingly so."

"Oh," Harry said, staring into his coffee cup for a long moment. When he glanced up again, Malfoy was still gazing at him, and something occurred to Harry. "You haven't stopped flirting, though," he said.

"Not entirely, no," Malfoy said.

"So, why even bother with me?"

Malfoy smiled, and for once it wasn't predatory or mocking. "Well, for one, because there was little to no chance you'd flirt back, which makes it a form of torment, which is always fun where you're concerned, Potter. But also, well—" He shrugged again and his gaze drifted lower, to where his finger was making idle circles around the rim of his coffee cup. "—because you're Harry Potter, and maybe you would have flirted back, and who could pass up an opportunity like that?" When he looked up again, the taunting grin was back, but Harry thought it might be more self-mockery than anything else. "Of course," Malfoy added, "now I know you're addicted to your own bloody video game, I realize you're just as much an idiot as the rest of us lesser mortals."

Harry laughed and tossed a low-calorie sweetener packet at his head.

*

To Harry's astonishment, he actually enjoyed himself that evening with Malfoy, so much so that he agreed to meet with him again the following Friday night after the AWRY meeting. Then the Friday after that, and the next Friday as well, until neither even asked anymore—it was just their regular thing.

What was even more surprising to Harry, though, was that Malfoy's obnoxious flirtation during AWRY

meetings came to an abrupt halt.

"It's no fun anymore, now you're onto my game," Malfoy explained easily in response to Harry's question. Then he lifted his eyebrows lasciviously. "Unless you miss it?"

"No, no," Harry hastened to say. "Just—you know. Wondering."

The other regular in his life was that every Sunday, he spent the day at his own house with Ginny and Lily. Ginny had been highly supportive of his joining AWRY and had listened eagerly to his talk of his own progress in overcoming his addiction. She was still wavering on whether to take the step of allowing Harry to come home for good, though. Harry was reluctant to press too hard, although with the holidays right around the corner, he wanted to ensure he'd be home in time to spend the hols with all of his children. After the first month with Ron and Hermione, when it was clear that Ginny wouldn't welcome him back simply because he'd joined a support group, he'd refused to impose on his friends' hospitality any longer and found a small flat to sublet. It was small and lonely and he hadn't even thought—much—about buying a Wiizard to install and, damn it, he wanted his family back.

"Your wife's being a cunt," Malfoy said calmly over coffee.

"She isn't," Harry said, affronted. "She wants to make sure I'm really serious about kicking this addiction. I get that."

"Maybe," Malfoy said, sounding dubious. "But she clearly doesn't get how important it is to you to go home. If she really supported you in this, she'd have found a way to convince you to get treatment herself, instead of kicking you out and dropping you into your friends' laps. Weasley couldn't take it when her fairy-tale ending turned sour."

"That's not true and you know it," Harry said, angry.

Malfoy just lifted a brow at him and shrugged. "Believe what you want, Potter. You said there was tension between you even before the video game thing, right?"

Harry frowned. "Not like you're suggesting."

"Still." Malfoy sipped his coffee, his gaze direct. "Seems to me she seized on this whole mess as an excuse."

Harry rose from the table. "You're wrong, Malfoy."

Malfoy closed his eyes and sighed, then met Harry's gaze again. "You know what, Potter? For your sake, I hope I am."

*

That Sunday, emboldened by his argument with Malfoy, Harry dared to press Ginny for an answer about when he could come back home.

"Oh, Harry," she sighed. "It's not that I don't want you to come home. I just need to be certain you're really over this thing."

"Gin," he argued, "it's been months. I go to my meetings every week. I even have a—a friend I discuss things with. I want it to be over as much as you do, if not more." He laid a hand over hers where it rested on her thigh.

Slowly, she turned her hand until they were palm to palm. She took a deep breath. "All right," she said. "Come home for the holidays. Just as a trial. And...we'll see how it goes. All right?" Her brown eyes were wide and nervous, and he couldn't help leaning over to catch her face with his other hand and lift it to his for a kiss. Her lips were tentative against his, and he drew away feeling vaguely unsettled.

"Good," he said. He smiled. "Perfect." And squeezed her hand.

*

At the following Friday's AWRY meeting, Harry made a point of announcing that he and his wife were on the verge of reconciliation, and the group offered cheers and support. In the chair next to him, Malfoy wore his usual sardonic expression, but didn't say a word.

He continued to be unusually quiet during the walk to their usual post-meeting haunt, and he frowned into his coffee cup at the table.

"Are you angry about something?" Harry finally asked.

Malfoy looked up at him and blinked, looking startled. "What? No."

"You've hardly said a word all night."

"I have a lot to think about. Hols coming up, and all."

"Right," Harry said. "So you're not at all narked that I'm moving back in with Ginny?"

Malfoy scowled. "Why should I be?"

Harry spread his hands. "I don't know, damn it! But you've been doing a pretty good imitation of it all evening."

Malfoy sighed and pushed away his coffee, then met Harry's gaze. "Look, this is what you want. I know that. And I'm happy for you. All right?"

Harry frowned. "You don't seem very happy. I thought we were, you know, friends now."

Malfoy blinked at that, and swallowed. "We are," he said. "Weirdly enough. I think. Right?"

"Right," Harry echoed, feeling a little lost.

Malfoy stared at him for a moment, then shook his head and muttered, "Fuck." He leaned across the table and seized Harry's hand in his. "I want this to work out for you, all right, Potter?" Malfoy said, his eyes locked on Harry's. "I know how badly you want it, and I know how it is to want something badly." He laughed briefly, a rueful sound. "We all do, though, don't we?"

Harry stared into the intent gray eyes across the table from him, amazed again at the realization that he'd come to think of this man as a friend—this tall, lean man with the receding hairline he was in total denial about, whose face was usually so full of mockery, yet now so serious, a shadow of fear lurking somewhere in those eyes. He could feel the heat and weight of Malfoy's hand on his, the sure strength of his fingers, the smoothness of his skin. He glanced down at their joined hands, a glimmer of realization dawning.

"I suppose we do," he said, and squeezed Malfoy's hand in return, then slid his fingers from Malfoy's grasp and curled them around his coffee cup.

But the warmth wasn't the same.

*

The next day, Harry's world turned upside-down.

He was awakened by a parliament of owls knocking at the glass of his bedroom window, and when he

stumbled out of bed to let them in, they dropped a half-dozen copies of the Prophet at his feet, each with a note attached bearing the handwriting of a friend: Hermione, Neville, Luna, and others. When he unrolled the paper, he saw why.

The news was trumpeted across the front page: Cursebreaker Decodes Salacious Bonus Scene in Potter Video Game!

The article went on to explain how a Gringotts cursebreaker whose hobby was playing video games had discovered a curious pattern in the magic of the game's final scene, following the in-game Harry's defeat of Voldemort. Through careful study and experimentation, she'd realized there was an additional hidden scene, accessible only through a deliberate series of incantations and clearly not meant to be a part of the official game. The scene, she claimed, showed Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, and Ron Weasley engaged in a shocking show of sexual passion. And, naturally, the Prophet, ever determined to leave no scandal unmined in its pursuit of journalistic excellence, described exactly the sequence required to unlock the sexy scene.

Harry Apparated directly to Ron and Hermione's house without even bothering to change out of his pajamas.

"I haven't tried it yet," Hermione said, wringing her hands, when he arrived. "I'm almost afraid to. Oh, thank Merlin I finally beat the game last month, or we'd have to ask Hugo to get us through the final scene."

"I just checked, and he's still asleep," Ron said. "We should do this now, if we're going to."

Together, they moved into the living room, where Hermione activated the Wiizard and took them directly to the game's final confrontation between seventeen-year-old Harry and Lord Voldemort. Harry watched as the room filled with eerie orange light as the two figures faced off and Hermione cast the final Expelliarmus! that caused Voldemort to fall, finally and forevermore. The letters YOU WIN! appeared, and Hermione quickly followed the instructions provided in the Prophet. The letters faded, and the three of them found themselves looking at their younger selves in the headmaster's office.

Gosh, Harry, said the young Hermione, I can hardly believe you've defeated Voldemort and it's all over!

How about we fuck to celebrate? asked the young Harry.

Only if I can come, too! said the young Ron.

All three laughed, and then they began stripping.

Then they began fucking.

On the headmaster's desk.

To the accompaniment of enthusiastic applause from the various headmasters' and headmistresses' portraits on the walls.

"Oh, my god," Hermione whispered.

"Holy fuck," Ron said.

Harry was speechless.

Young Hermione, with her larger-than-life curves, wailed and writhed like a porn star as she bounced on top of a groaning, startlingly well-endowed young Harry, while a reasonably, although not impressively, furnished young Ron thrust eagerly into Hermione's arse. Then they changed position, with Ron now in the middle, riding Hermione in the missionary position, with Harry buggering him. They changed position again, this time with both Ron and Hermione orally servicing Harry's significantly larger-than-life cock until he moaned and came all over both of them.

Now, that's what I call a happy ending, young Harry said with a smirk, and the scene disappeared.

All three of their real-life counterparts sat, shocked and silent.

"We should never speak of this again," Harry managed at last.

Ron and Hermione nodded enthusiastically.

*

His hope that the whole mess would die a quick death was quickly dashed, not least when he Apparated to his own house later that morning and Ginny refused even to let him enter. Tears streamed down her face.

"I saw that filthy thing!" she shouted. "Did you think I wouldn't? I knew there had to be something going on with the three of you—all that time you spent alone together that year, and you try to tell me nothing happened? No wonder you didn't want me along to ruin your fun!"

"Christ, Ginny, it wasn't like that! Can't you tell it's just—"

But Ginny would not be interrupted. "I remember how the three of you disappeared that morning. One last fling, was that it? One final fuck before you resigned yourself to going back to your clueless girlfriend!"

"Ginny, you're not thinking straight—"

"You're not thinking straight! Buggering my brother like that!"

"Ginny, it's a fucking game—"

Her glare was like ice. "And this is my fucking life, and you've made a laughingstock out of me, Harry Potter. I am through with this, and I am through with you. I want a divorce, and I want you out of my sight."

She slammed the door, leaving Harry reeling on the doorstep.

*

The rest of the weekend passed in a haze for Harry. Letters piled up under the open window, dropped by a steady stream of owls, and he refused even to open them, let alone respond. He did, however, take a glance at Sunday's Prophet, which followed up on the previous day's story with an article about how stores all over Wizarding Britain had seen a rush of customers the day before, and now Harry Potter: The Video Game was effectively sold out everywhere.

Harry lit the paper on fire.

After being shut out of his own home, he'd returned to Ron and Hermione's house, noting suspiciously that they both seemed rather flushed and in good spirits, though refusing to dwell too hard what might have prompted that sunny mood. To his shock, both seemed saddened but not particularly surprised by Ginny's actions, and Harry began to wonder if he was the only person who hadn't realized his marriage had been slowly falling apart around him.

It was all the more reason to want to stay in bed with the covers pulled over his head.

He contemplated avoiding work on Monday, but in the end refused to cave to what he knew would be a steady stream of gossip, and simply used his practiced Auror stare to cow subordinates who dared even

look as though they were thinking about the now notorious "Victory Celebration Scene." But, unfortunately, he couldn't use intimidation on everyone, and everywhere he went, whispers followed. Hermione kept him informed of her efforts to comb through Wizarding law, including a mind-numbing array of arcane statutes, during her free time over the next several days, but she finally was forced to conclude that they had no real legal grounds for a lawsuit against the game's publisher. She would, however, quickly set about working to establish such a law. But, of course, whatever she did would come too late for the three of them.

By Friday, Harry thought he had steeled himself against the looks, the whispers, the laughter. But when he walked into the AWRY meeting and every face in the room spun as one toward him with near-identical expressions of speculation, he realized it was just one embarrassment too many, and abruptly wheeled about and strode back out.

Out in the street, he was preparing to Apparate when he heard his name being called. "Potter! Damn it. Harry!"

He turned to find Draco Malfoy, panting after having raced out of the room to catch him.

Harry rolled his eyes. "Couldn't miss your opportunity to rattle my cage about this one, huh?"

"Shut up, you imbecile," Malfoy retorted. "If this is what I get for trying to be a supportive friend, then I'll just turn right around and head back to the meeting, shall I?"

Harry closed his eyes and exhaled slowly. "Right," he said. "Sorry. It's just—it's been a long week."

"So I gathered. Want to hit the coffee shop early this week?"

Harry hesitated, then shook his head. "I think I'm just not in the mood to be in public right now, even among Muggles."

"Come to the Manor, then," Malfoy said. "I'll pour you a few drinks and get you well and truly pissed, and you can forget this whole thing ever happened."

He hesitated again. "All right," he said at last. "Maybe a drink or two wouldn't hurt."

Malfoy Apparated them both to his study in Malfoy Manor and set about pouring two glasses of scotch, handing one to Harry, who drained it almost instantly. Malfoy poured him another, and Harry sank into one of the guest chairs. "This whole week has been a nightmare," he muttered, closing his eyes and sliding back into the luxurious leather.

"The video game thing will pass eventually," Malfoy said.

"Ginny wants a divorce," Harry replied without opening his eyes.

"Oh." Harry could hear the quiet sound of a heavy glass being set on the desk blotter. "I'm sorry."

Harry opened his eyes at last and sighed. "Said she couldn't believe I hadn't actually done all that with Ron and Hermione. I'm starting to wonder if she ever really knew me at all."

"Well," Malfoy said, "since I haven't actually watched the notorious scene in question, I can't say with any real certainty whether or not I agree with her. But if I recall, the Prophet described the scene as an 'orgiastic victory celebration,' and frankly I don't see how the idea of Ron Weasley's freckled arse could fail to turn anyone's stomach, so I'm going to assume until further notice that it's all a terrible, terrible lie."

But Harry's brain had seized only on the first part of Malfoy's rambling statement. "You haven't seen it?"

"I'm beginning to suspect I'm the only one in Wizarding Britain who hasn't."

"Why haven't you?" Harry asked, bewildered.

Malfoy jerked a shoulder in a shrug. "Fear of being blinded by the sight of Weasley's arse? I don't know." He tossed back the remainder of his scotch and scowled. "It seemed disrespectful somehow. Since we're, you know, friends and all."

Harry could feel the alcohol warming his blood and clouding his brain. It felt good. "Aren't you curious?"

Malfoy's eyes met his, and there was an odd light in them. "Insatiably so."

"I'll watch it with you," Harry said.

"You're just saying that because you want to play the game," Malfoy said with a wry look.

"I'm not, I swear," Harry said. "I want to see your reaction."

Malfoy hesitated for a few brief seconds. "All right," he said.

He led Harry upstairs to a designated recreation room with comfortable furniture and a wide, open area at the center. As Malfoy activated the Wiizard, a thought occurred to Harry. "You have beaten the game, right? Because you can only get to it from the last scene."

Malfoy gave him an arch look. "Of course I have. Quite easily, too, I'll have you know."

"Oh," Harry said. "It's just—well, when Al mentioned once that you owned the game, I seem to recall him saying you weren't very good at it."

To Harry's amusement, a faint red colored Malfoy's cheeks. "Well, that's—it was an entirely different situation then."

Harry settled into one of the sofas and grinned. "I won't hold it against you if you were really bad at it. If you must know, I'm not very good at it myself."

"What is the world coming to if even Harry Potter can't be Harry Potter?" Malfoy murmured, seating himself next to Harry. He sighed and rolled his eyes. "If you must know, the only reason I bought the game in the first place was to see how many ways I could inflict harm on you."

Harry's jaw dropped. "You what?"

Malfoy snickered. "I made you die over and over, Potter. Run over by the Hogwarts Express, fell off your broom, poisoned by Professor Snape. All the ways I used to imagine you'd go when we were still in school."

"Malfoy, that's—" Harry floundered for a word. "—really fucking morbid."

"I know," Malfoy said, looking entirely too pleased with himself. "But, well—" He shrugged. "After you joined AWRY, I started playing seriously to see how far I could get. It was—a surprisingly humbling experience, actually," he concluded with a frown.

"That the game was so hard to play?"

"Oh, no, it's not that hard at all. I meant, that you actually did all of those things, and not in a game."

"Oh," Harry said.

"Yeah," Malfoy said, looking uncomfortable. He lifted the Wiizard Wand and turned his face toward

where the game's start-up image filled the center of the room. "Here, I'll get us through the final scene, then you point me toward the porn."

Malfoy rolled up his sleeves and skillfully worked the controls of the Wiizard Wand. It was surreal, Harry thought, to watch Draco Malfoy orchestrating the downfall of Voldemort. The world had changed so much over the last twenty years. But they were good changes, on the whole. Some, he thought, watching the play of muscle in Malfoy's forearm as he swished and flicked, might in fact be very good changes.

When the YOU WIN! image flashed, Malfoy prompted Harry for the incantations, and with a final swish of his arm, he unlocked the scene. Soon the room was filled with the sounds of moans and groans and gasps as young Harry, Ron, and Hermione worked each other over.

Harry turned to Malfoy, expecting to see the same shock and revulsion Harry'd felt when he first watched this unfold, but instead he saw that Malfoy was utterly transfixed. His mouth hung open, his eyes tracing the movements of the figures. When the trio shifted positions, with Harry now thrusting into the arse that Malfoy had claimed to find so abhorrent, Malfoy gasped quietly, and Harry was stunned to notice that Malfoy's hand had begun moving in his lap, rubbing over what appeared to be a prominent erection. He lifted his eyes again to Malfoy's face, and realized that Malfoy now was watching him, his eyes glazed with want.

Harry's own mouth fell open as a wave of heat swept over him. Yes, was all he had time to think as Malfoy's hands caught his face and drew it to his own for a rough, passionate, altogether amazing kiss. Harry gasped into Malfoy's mouth, curling his own hands around the other man's shoulders and drawing him down. The heat of him, the weight of him as he pressed Harry deeper into the sofa, was dizzying, maddening. Harry could feel the ridge of Malfoy's erection against his own, and when Malfoy thrust his hips against Harry's, Harry cried out with the intensity of the sensation. His ears were filled with Malfoy's desperate panting mixed with the strange, surreal sound of his seventeen-year-old doppelganger's high-pitched orgasmic cries, and that plus the insistent thrust of Malfoy's hard cock, the hot mist of his breath, the leashed strength in Malfoy's long, lithe body, straining against Harry's own, sent Harry over the edge, and he practically screamed with the pleasure of it.

Malfoy seized his mouth again in a kiss, and Harry's shout blended with Malfoy's own groan as he bucked hard one last time and fell, trembling, onto Harry.

Now, that's what I call a happy ending! announced the game's Harry, and the room fell silent.

Harry was squashed into the sofa, Malfoy's body heavy on his own. He could feel the pounding of Malfoy's heart, the deep draws of his breath in the aftermath.

"Um. Wow," said Harry.

Malfoy lifted his head, looking startled. His hair was mussed and his face flushed in a way that made Harry want to kiss him again. "I—er. I'm sorry. I'm—not supposed to do this sort of thing."

"Oh," Harry said, affronted, and shoved Malfoy off so he could sit up. "Right. No more 'meaningless conquests.'"

"Yes. I mean, no! I mean." Malfoy impatiently brushed his hair out of his face. "You're not a meaningless conquest."

"Right."

"You're not, OK? Damn it." Malfoy sat upright and scowled in the direction of the Wiizard's 3D display, which had defaulted to a high-scores list. There was tension in his face and body that, oddly, gave Harry a feeling of hope.

"Well," he said, his voice carefully even, "technically I shouldn't be anywhere near this video game."

"It's not like you played," Malfoy retorted.

"And it's not like you went to a club and picked up some bloke whose name you don't even know," Harry

said.

A muscle at the corner of Malfoy's mouth twitched, but he didn't reply.

At a loss for what to say, Harry turned to look in the same direction as Malfoy and noticed something peculiar about the list of names. "Why does that just say 'Score'?" he asked, distracted.

Malfoy was silent for a moment, then cleared his throat. "My son. He thinks the nickname's clever. I keep hoping he'll grow out of it."

"Ah," Harry said. "Are those…pretty high scores?"

"Very high," Malfoy acknowledged, seizing the change of topic. "Scorpius shows remarkable talent. If only it were something he could apply toward his schoolwork. Your Albus Severus, at least, seems to take it less seriously."

"How so?"

"Your son is less interested in saving the world than in seeing what happens when he tries things you didn't."

Harry blinked. "Like what?"

Malfoy shrugged and didn't look at him. "Like befriending different people."

Malfoy's hand had curled into a fist, tension still evident in the careful way he held himself, and Harry realized what he meant. "Like you," he said.

Malfoy inclined his head slightly and still didn't look in Harry's direction.

"Well," Harry said, "we already know what happens. Clearly the world comes to an end."

Malfoy's mouth curved upward slightly at the corner, and he slanted a look at Harry, who grinned. Harry inched closer to Malfoy on the sofa and touched his hand to Malfoy's, curling his fingers around the closed fist and stroking slowly. He heard Malfoy release a shuddering breath.

"I wonder..." Malfoy hesitated. "I wonder what would happen if we became...more than friends?"

Harry's breath caught. "Why don't we keep playing and find out?" he dared.

Malfoy uncurled his hand beneath Harry's and looked Harry in the eye as he lifted the hand to place it on Harry's knee. When Harry guided the hand farther up his thigh, a slow smile dawned on Malfoy's face. "I'd expect nothing less from an addict like you," he murmured. As he pressed his mouth to Harry's once again, Harry had the fleeting thought that this was one game, at least, that he was pretty certain he could take to the next level.