Lost and Found

Pain.

It was the only thought that could force its way through the jumble inside Draco's head as he tried to open his eyes. He found the world to be too daunting when he did, though – too bright, too loud, too

everything. His eyelids, battered as they were, slid down to cover his eyes once more and quieted at least one of his over-stimulated senses.

He tried desperately to pay attention, to listen for the heavy footsteps and taunting laughter that had filled his ears just before the shattering of his bones became loud enough to drown it out. He didn't hear his tormenters and assumed they'd left him there to die – there, in the literal middle of nowhere, all alone and unable to defend himself physically or magically since his wand had been snapped as easily as his left femur.

A tear tracked its way down his dirt-caked cheek as he waited for death to claim him.

~xo~xo~xo~

It was significantly warmer when he woke again, and since the first thing he saw upon opening his eyes was a roaring fire he had to assume he'd arrived in hell. It was too bad Potter would never know for sure that he'd ended up there, since he'd suggested that Draco make the trip so very often during their school days.

I would think of Potter first upon realizing I'm to spend eternity down here. Perhaps that's part of my

sentence.

Draco stretched and flexed his fingers experimentally. Several had been broken, he knew, but they appeared to have mended. They met soft warmth and Draco realized he was wrapped in something very fluffy.

Wincing at the pain, he emerged from his fleecy cocoon far enough to take in his surroundings properly. The fire was actually contained in what appeared to be some sort of Floo… but not precisely a Floo. The room was cozy, not terribly spacious but rather inviting nonetheless. Picture frames hung on the wall and sat on shelves but they were too far away for Draco to make out any faces. They were all moving photos, though, so he knew he was among magical folk… wherever he was.

"Awake, are you?"

Draco jumped and hissed at the pain that sizzled down the length of his leg. "Fuck!"

"Easy." A hand touched his forehead. "You're cooler now."

"Funny, I thought I was warmer," Draco croaked. He looked up but only saw the back of the man, muscles flexing beneath his cotton shirt as he stoked the fire. "Where am I?"

"You had a fever before. You're in my home." The man turned and Draco's eyes nearly bugged out of their sockets when his face came into view. "Finally recognize me, do you?"

"Potter." Draco tried to sit up but quickly abandoned the idea. "What happened? How did I get here?" Perhaps his thoughts of the man had brought him into being.

"I brought you here. Drink this."

Draco took the cup Potter offered and eyed it suspiciously. "What's this?"

Potter rolled his eyes. "Water. Honestly, had I wanted you dead I'd have just left you where I found you

since you were more that halfway there."

"Oh." Draco frowned and took a sip. It was blessedly cool as it moistened his throat. "Thank you."

"You're welcome." Potter took the cup back and set it aside. "Tell me what happened."

"I was trampled by a wild erumpent."

"Right. And I was Snape's best pupil. Try again."

"It was nothing."

"'Nothing' doesn't leave a man for death in the wilderness. Why were you out here in the first place?"

"I was tricked." Draco scowled at the memory. "There are some people who hate my family, still, and clearly won't stop until they have their revenge."

"That's stupid."

"Eloquently put."

"Well, it is." Potter knelt beside Draco. "I need to take a look at this leg. Tell me how they tricked you."

"They – ouch, Potter! A man followed me out of Diagon Alley. I didn't recognize him. He told me I'd dropped a package and I took it, and it was a Portkey that brought me… wherever it was you found me. The others were waiting for me there and they had me on the ground before I could react."

"Did you know the other men?" Potter pulled the blankets apart and Draco flushed when he realized his

trousers were missing.

"Er… one of them. He was Theo Nott's father."

"Nott?" Potter looked up in surprise. "He's supposed to be in Azkaban."

"Supposed to be, yes. He's hell bent on seeing me suffer because I went free and Theo didn't. Theo killed himself in Azkaban last year."

"Oh… I'm sorry."

"Don't be. He was a right nasty piece of work, just like his father." Draco hissed as Potter spread salve over a particularly deep laceration on his thigh. "That stings, Potter!"

"I'm sure it does. It will go away."

"Oh, that's encouraging… oh. It feels cool now." Draco relaxed as the pain ebbed.

"I do know what I'm doing, Malfoy." Potter stood and wiped his hands on a towel.

"Yes, you do." Draco frowned and propped himself up on an elbow. "So I'd say it's your turn to talk. Where the fuck have you been these last few years?"

"Here," Potter replied simply.

"Why did you leave? Every now and then there's a false 'Potter sighting' in the Prophet but no one has truly seen you. No one knows where you are."

"And it will stay that way. When you leave here you won't be able to find the place again."

"That doesn't answer the question."

"No, it doesn't." Potter handed him the glass of water again. "Drink up. You're dehydrated."

"But –" Draco huffed as Potter walked away and scowled at the wall. He took a sip of water and settled himself more comfortably on the sofa, wrapping the cozy blankets around himself more tightly.

Maybe I won't be able to find my way back when I leave, but I'm not leaving yet.

~xo~xo~xo~

Draco didn't realize he was dozing off until Potter woke him.

"Draco? Can you open your eyes for me?"

Doing so slowly, Draco turned his head to see Potter kneeling beside him once more. "Time is it?" he mumbled.

"Time to eat. I've got a tray for you since your leg is broken."

"You couldn't fix a simple broken bone, Healer Potter?" Draco sneered.

Potter rolled his eyes. "I can, and did, or you'd have several others. You broke the largest bone in your leg in more than one spot, and nearly shattered the others. The spells and potions I'm using take time to repair that sort of damage properly."

"Oh." Draco sighed. "Sorry."

"No worries. Let me help you sit up a bit."

Draco closed his eyes and allowed Potter to maneuver him into a more comfortable position. The man was certainly fit – whatever else he'd been doing over the past five years, he certainly hadn't neglected himself.

"Better?"

Draco blinked up at him. "Yes, thanks."

"Sure. Here you are."

He looked over the food on the tray Potter gave him. A bowl of thick, fragrant stew, fresh bread… Draco hadn't known how hungry he was until that moment. "Looks edible. Well done."

"Why, thank you," Potter said dryly. "Let me get my own tray and I'll join you."

"Fabulous." Draco dug into the stew and stifled a moan as the flavors exploded over his tongue. Potter had yet another talent, it seemed. "This is very good," he said grudgingly.

"Thanks. Cooking is one of my hobbies these days." Potter settled into a plush-looking chair across from him. "So tell me what's new in your life, Malfoy. We haven't spoken in years."

"And whose fault is that?"

"Must be mine, seeing as how we spent so very much time together before I left." Potter shook his head. "Just trying to keep up a pleasant – or at least not terribly painful – conversation."

"Oh, fine. I'm in business for myself now. I design and implement security wards."

"Impressive." Potter raised an eyebrow. "You always were good with your wand."

"I certainly am, but how would you know and what does that have to do with magic?" Draco grinned.

Potter chuckled. "Right. Anyway, what else? What about Mrs. Malfoy and all the little Malfoys you must have running around by now?"

"Ha." Draco began to butter a slice of bread. "The only Mrs. Malfoy is my mother, and she'll remain in sole possession of that title as I have no plans to marry. And if I do, he probably won't agree to being called 'Mrs.' anything."

"I see. Isn't that against the pureblood code or something?"

"It's a funny thing, war. Makes one reevaluate what's important. I survived, I got another chance thanks to you… I don't intend to waste it by being unhappy. I don't need a woman to have children, and when I find an appropriate partner we'll discuss that."

"So you don't have an appropriate partner now, then?"

"No."

"How about inappropriate ones?" Potter grinned.

Draco snorted. "Oh, I've had my share of those. Amusing for a moment but not worth the trouble. Why the questions? Are you interested in applying for the position?"

"Depends on which position you prefer."

Draco blinked at the double entendre. He hadn't remembered Potter to be such a blatant flirt, but then it had been years and the man was surely in need of a good fuck, no matter what sort of hole was presented to him. "I like a little variety in my life."

"Mmm. We're of a like mind. How is your mother?"

Draco blinked again, this time at the abrupt change of subject. "Er… she's well."

"Good."

The remainder of the meal was spent in silence and Draco was more than a little surprised at how easy it was to sit alone in a small room with Harry Potter. They'd made relative peace with each other after the trials had taken place – it was difficult to hold a grudge against a man who had pulled him from a fire and flown him to freedom. Even more so when that same man had stood before the Wizengamot, fire hotter than the Fiendfyre in his eyes, and told them in no uncertain terms that Draco and Narcissa Malfoy would not be punished. The resulting erection Draco sported after Potter's speech did not go away until he locked himself in a Ministry loo and tugged at his cock frantically, imagining those eyes looking up at

him while that pretty mouth was put to another use.

Still, they'd never been friends. They'd exchanged polite conversation whenever their paths had crossed, but they were destined for different things. Potter went off to Healer training and Draco took his sweet time in deciding what he wanted to do. That was the luxury of wealth, wasn't it? He knew he didn't want to spend his life faffing about – idle hands and all that – but he wanted to be sure of himself first. By the time he'd set up shop, Potter had disappeared and had never returned.

"You must be tired. I can help you to bed."

"Hmm?" Draco looked up and realized he'd been frowning at his empty bowl, lost in thought. "Oh. Sorry, my mind wandered."

"Not a bad thing so long as it comes back."

Draco chuckled. "I suppose. So, you're taking me to bed?"

"I'm taking you to the guest bed, yes."

"You have a guest bed? Whatever for?" Draco's brow furrowed.

"For guests, Malfoy. Perhaps they hit you in the head harder than I'd thought."

"Oh, be quiet. You're a hermit, Potter. Hermits don't have guests."

"I didn't realize I'd grown a mangy beard and acquired a goat."

"So in your mind, hermits have goats?"

Potter laughed in exasperation. "I don't know! Further proof that I'm not a hermit. I do have guests. Ron and Hermione come occasionally to check on me, and Neville…"

"Wait, so the Weasel sleeps in the very bed where you're making me sleep?" Draco recoiled in horror. "Potter, that is so not on!"

"I do wash the sheets, not that there's anything wrong with that. But by all means, stay here on the sofa."

Draco frowned. He truly did desire a comfortable bed to stretch out upon… "Fine, but if I find so much as one ginger hair on my pillow, I'm going to scream."

"I wash the pillowcases, too. But if I were you, I'd be more on the lookout for the curly ones – Ron sleeps naked," Potter whispered, and then burst into gales of laughter at the look of utter repulsion on Draco's face.

"You are a sick man, Potter. Sick. It's probably best that you stay out here where you can't infect the rest

of humanity with your insane notions." Draco sniffed. "Fine, show me to your pube-infested bedroom."

Still chuckling, Potter stood and took Draco's tray. "Do you need the loo first?"

"Oh… er, yes." Draco flushed.

"Don't worry, in another day or so your leg will be set enough that you'll be able to use a cane to get around and you won't need my assistance so much." He strengthened the stabilizing spell over Draco's affected leg and a lightening spell over the rest of him. "Up you go."

Draco's breath hitched when Potter cradled him close. The man really was too beautiful for his own good. "Careful, Potter, I'm not a sack of potatoes," Draco said gruffly.

"Like you've ever carried one in your lifetime."

"Doesn't mean that I don't know I'm not one."

"I'd offer you another pain potion, but it seems the one I gave you earlier addled your brain."

"You're hilarious. When did you give me a pain potion?"

"Right after I brought you back here."

"Oh. You'll have to tell me more about that – I don't remember much. I just remember waking up in front of your odd Floo."

"It's not a Floo, it's a wood-burning stove."

"Whatever that means." Draco yawned.

"Well, we can discuss it more tomorrow. You're going to fall asleep before I get you to bed." Potter deposited him into the loo. "Can you manage, or shall I…"

"I think I'll be fine," Draco mumbled.

"Right, then, I'll check on you in a few."

After managing to take a piss and wash his hands, Draco allowed Potter to cart him to the bedroom he'd described. "Your trousers were beyond magical repair, I'm afraid. Your shirt needs a good washing so I put one of mine on you, and your pants were fine. Do you want something else to sleep in?"

"No, this is fine." Draco moved his leg gingerly and winced. "The bed is nice, thank you."

"You're welcome."

"No, I mean thank you for everything you've done. You've been kind."

"It's my oath." The corners of Potter's mouth turned up. "Besides, I've spent a lot of time over the years making sure you didn't die. Why ruin a perfect record?"

"Prat," Draco replied sleepily.

Potter pulled the covers up around Draco. "I'm just in the next room if you need anything. Don't hesitate to call for me."

"'Kay." Draco sighed and burrowed into the pillows. "'Night, Potter."

"Good night, Draco."

~xo~xo~xo~

Draco woke the next morning to the most heavenly scents he'd had the pleasure of experiencing in some time. They reminded him of Christmas morning at the Manor.

"Are you awake?" Harry appeared in the doorway.

Yawning, Draco gingerly rolled to his side. "Starved. You really can cook, Potter."

"You haven't tasted it yet."

"I'm practically tasting it already, it smells so good."

"Well, let's get you to it, shall we?"

After helping him in and out of the loo, Harry settled Draco onto the sofa and presented him with an enormous breakfast.

"How many people are you trying to feed?" Draco exclaimed, surveying his choices. His mouth actually watered as he took it all in.

"You'll need your strength."

"It's a wonder you don't weigh twice what you do if this is how you eat." Draco closed his eyes and hummed in pleasure around his first bite of a warm cinnamon bun.

"I don't eat this way all the time. And I do a lot of running."

"Not much else to do out here, certainly," Draco agreed.

"There's plenty. I have loads of books, a telly and practically every film known to man… I do some writing and drawing, too, though I'm fairly terrible at that." Harry sipped from a steaming mug.

"And you aren't lonely?" Draco shook his head. "I don't know how you do it. A little solitude is one thing, but to be all alone, day after day…"

"I'm used to it. It was a welcome change after years of too much company."

"Are you going to tell me what made you sequester yourself out here yet?" Draco raised an eyebrow.

"No. How's your leg this morning?"

Draco sighed and downed his orange juice before responding. "A little better. I can tell it's healing – it's starting to ache considerably."

"The down side to magical healing. There's a pain potion on your tray there."

Draco located the phial behind a plate of sausages. "So there is. Thanks. All right, then tell me how you found me yesterday."

"I went out to collect more firewood and when I stepped beyond the wards I could hear something – I thought it was a wounded animal, so I looked around for it."

"Oh, that's lovely – so I sounded like an injured bear to you?" Draco said dryly.

"More like a moose in heat."

"Fuck off, Potter."

Harry grinned. "Anyway, imagine my surprise when I came across the source of the noise and it was you instead. By that time you were barely conscious and bleeding quite a lot. I cast a few stasis spells and got you back here so that I could work on you properly, and here you are now."

"Lucky for me they dumped me off in your corner of the wilderness."

"Lucky indeed," Harry agreed and stood. "I'm for more tea. Can I get you anything?"

"I've the whole of your kitchen on my lap already, from the looks of it, so no."

"Eat up. You'll need a bit of therapy to strengthen that leg once it's set. I think you should be stable enough to Apparate by day after tomorrow, and I can give you the names of a few Healers I'd recommend to oversee your therapy. I'd appreciate it if you didn't mention my part in your healing, though."

"I have a better idea, then."

Harry returned, mug full, and reclaimed his seat. "What's that?"

"I'll stay here for the duration," Draco replied boldly. "And you'll oversee me yourself."

Harry's eyebrows shot up. "What? Why would you want to stay here? Therapy will take weeks, Draco."

"At least I know I'll be receiving the best possible care. And there won't be any need to lie about the mysterious man who healed me so well."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Because you've always been so opposed to lying."

"I'm a changed man, Potter. All honesty, all the time – it's the new Draco Malfoy motto."

"Right. Didn't you just tell me last night you have a business to run?"

"My associates can handle the current projects we have. I'll just send off an owl and let them know I'm having a bit of a medical leave. I can receive correspondence here, can't I?"

"Yes, but the owls won't be able to be tracked."

"That's fine, then. So it looks like your solitary confinement is about to come to a temporary end, Potter." Draco shot him a charming smile.

Harry sighed. "And I suppose I have no say in the matter, then."

"Don't you want to make sure your handiwork doesn't go to waste?" Draco asked. "Feed me and nurse me back to health?"

"Your company has been surprisingly tolerable thus far." Harry grinned. "Fine, you can stay. You'll probably last a week before you're too bored to continue and beg me to let you leave."

"If you can handle this lifestyle for years on end, I reckon I can last a few weeks."

"Always a competition with you."

"Of course. And if you have a couple of brooms lying around, we could take advantage of all the space out here and do some competitive flying."

"Once that leg is completely healed, perhaps. Done with breakfast?"

"I think so." Draco looked regretfully at the tray. The remaining food still looked delicious, but his stomach told him he'd be sorry if he kept going.

"Good. Then I'm going to begin the second round of healing spells." Harry took the tray and set it aside, retrieving his wand in the process.

"Is this going to hurt?" Draco asked in alarm.

"Some, yes. The pain potion you took should help to dull the worst of it. You were unconscious the first time, and that would have been far more painful than this will be." Harry lifted the stabilizing spell from

Draco's leg, causing Draco to hiss in discomfort. He ran a hand across Draco's thigh. "Sorry. It'll be over soon."

Draco swallowed, uncomfortable for an entirely different reason as soon as Harry touched him. "Fine. Just hurry."

"This can't be rushed." Harry began to murmur the appropriate incantations and Draco clenched his jaw. There was something indescribable about the sensation of one's bones knitting together.

Finally Potter finished and cast a diagnostic spell. "Looks good. Another round tomorrow morning should have you ready to get up and around."

"Good. I can't wait to stand under a long, hot shower."

"A short, hot shower, perhaps. No overdoing things. I realize the cleaning spells I used aren't the same as the real thing, though."

"Definitely not, though I appreciate them. How about a sponge bath instead, Healer Potter?" Draco grinned.

"I'd love one. Shall I fetch you a flannel? Start with my back, if you would." Harry winked and got to his feet.

"Prat." Draco thought to himself that he wouldn't mind washing Potter's back in the least, or the rest of him.

"Git. I'm going to go out for a run, if you don't mind."

"Sure, rub it in my face." Draco looked at his elevated leg mournfully.

"Oh, you'll be running with me in no time."

"Malfoys don't run, Potter."

"Then what are you moaning about?"

"I'd just like to have had the opportunity, that's all."

"You're such a pain in the arse. Can I get you a book, or would you like to watch the telly?"

Draco pondered the choice for a moment. "Telly. I don't own one, but I've heard of them."

"Here you are, then." Harry handed him some sort of odd wand with buttons. "This red button turns it on, and the up and down arrows flip through the stations. I've got a magically enhanced satellite so you're bound to find something of interest."

"I'll try it. Thanks."

Draco was so engrossed in a program about Merlin that he scarcely heard Harry come back in. "This isn't about the real Merlin," he informed Harry, eyes glued to the screen. "Not possible. But those two blokes obviously fancy each other so I wish they'd just go at it."

"You and thousands of girls watching right now," Harry chuckled. "I wouldn't mind seeing that myself, though."

Draco tore his eyes away from the program to watch Harry shrug out of his hooded sweatshirt. His hair was damp from perspiration and curled attractively at the nape of his neck, and he could see a strip of flat abdomen when Potter raised his arms to stretch.

He fervently hoped he'd have a chance to lick that strip at some point before he ended his seclusion with Potter.

"I'm going to shower. Enjoy the sexual tension." Harry grinned and sauntered toward the loo.

"I thought you were going to let me give you a sponge bath," Draco replied.

"No sense in starting something you can't finish, at least until you've got two good legs." The door closed and water began to run.

Draco stared after him, mouth ajar.

Perhaps he'd have that chance after all.

~xo~xo~xo~

"You're truly awful at this game." Draco collected his chess pieces.

"I know," Harry replied cheerfully. "Ron still makes me play him all the time, and I still lose all the time. I'm hopeless."

"Well, so long as you're aware."

The rest of the day had been uneventful. Between meals they'd watched films together and Harry had fallen asleep in his chair, snoring lightly while Draco looked on fondly. He wasn't sure he could tolerate such a solitary existence indefinitely but fuck all if he wasn't enjoying himself with Potter.

Harry bloody Potter.

Draco shook his head. Just yesterday morning he'd been certain he was dead, and within a day he was certain he'd never been more attracted to a man as he was to Potter. The attraction had been there for

years in some form or another, he supposed, but this quiet, strong, sure version of the man was his undoing. He'd miss Potter when he returned to real life whether they became intimate or remained platonic, that much was certain.

"Ready for bed?"

"Sure." Draco waited for Harry to finish putting away the chess set and sighed in contentment when he was cradled against the solid chest he was beginning to fantasize about frequently. "Don't drop me."

"I haven't yet." Harry smirked down at him. "Though some might argue you could do with being dropped on your head."

"Some might argue you already have been," Draco countered.

"I probably was, considering my upbringing. Here, take your time." Harry deposited Draco in the loo and closed the door.

Once he was safely in bed, Draco watched as Potter set out a few potions on his bedside table and renewed his stabilizing spell. "I'll be glad when I don't have to have this damn spell on anymore," Draco grumbled. "It makes my leg feel odd."

"Be glad you're not a Muggle."

"I am, every day of my life."

"Prat. Muggles can't heal bones this quickly – you'd have to wear a cast for weeks. A giant plaster enclosure on your leg that holds it in place," he explained at Draco's blank expression. "They're heavy and itchy and your muscles waste a bit underneath since they don't get used for so long. And that's for a simple break – something like yours would have required opening your leg surgically and fusing the bones with metal pins and rods. This is nothing in comparison."

"Oh." Draco wrinkled his nose. "That sounds terrible. Yet another reason I'm glad to be me."

"Like you needed more," Harry said dryly. "All right, I've left you pain potions for the night and morning, as well as a strengthening potion for the morning. Can I get you anything else?"

"No. Thanks."

"You're welcome. Good night, Draco."

"Sweet dreams, Potter." Draco smiled winningly.

"I'll probably dream of a crazy uninvited houseguest. Oh, wait, that's reality."

"If you don't want me here, I'll just go." Draco plastered on his best injured expression.

"Quit the dramatics, I was teasing. It's been… nice. So far. I suppose it does get lonely, though I don't notice until I have someone here with me."

"Do you often have someone here with you?"

"I told you last night, Ron and Hermione, sometimes Neville."

"Yes, but… that's all? No one else?"

"I haven't had a lover in some time if that's what you're driving at." Harry crossed his arms.

"And you're all right with that?"

"Hard to find someone when you live alone with no one nearby. And no, I'm still not telling you anything."

Draco huffed. "Fine. But how do you get your food and supplies?"

"Dobby brings me everything I need once a week. He still lives at Hogwarts – I'd go spare if I was trapped out here with him."

"Dobby as in our old house elf?"

"The very same. He's still very loyal to me and he's bound to secrecy about my location and that he's working for me. No one else is able to get in or out but him, and he's literally unable to tell anyone he's even seen me, let alone that he knows where I live."

"Hmm." Draco shook his head. "I can't imagine being celibate this long. Does your elf bring you toys and porn?"

"No, I brought all that myself." Harry winked. "Enough about my sex life."

"Lack of one, more like it."

"Enough all the same. Should we even it up and discuss yours?"

"No need to depress you," Draco said airily. "I've no complaints."

"You said you don't have a partner and that casual flings don't satisfy you."

"No, I said they aren't worth the trouble. They are momentarily satisfying, though." He paused. "All right, so it's been a little while, but at least I live among other people. If I want a man I can go and find one."

"I'll bet you can," Harry murmured.

Draco flushed under Harry's gaze. "Yes, well… I suppose we should sleep, then," he replied. He wasn't sure why Harry's obvious appraisal unnerved him, but he suddenly felt a bit like a teenager again. Unsure, apprehensive, and randy as all fuck.

"We should. Good night, Draco."

"Good night, Potter."

~xo~xo~xo~

"One more, come on!"

"It fucking hurts!" Draco hissed.

"Of course it does. It won't stop until you strengthen the bones again properly, so take another bloody step. Without the cane." Harry held his hands out to Draco.

Draco glared at him and concentrated on lifting his sore leg again. "Fine, you bastard." He took another painful step and grasped Harry's hands gratefully. "Happy?"

"Overjoyed. Have a seat and I'll help you stretch."

Draco collapsed onto the sofa with relief. "Remind me why I agreed to stay here."

"Agreed?" Harry snorted and pulled off Draco's shoe. "I do believe you informed me you were staying here. Probably best for you as no Healer in St. Mungo's would let you call them all the colorful things

you've been calling me."

"Well… shut up."

"Very clever, that one. Do write it down for me."

"Potter!"

"Malfoy!" Harry mocked, grinning when Draco's next retort was cut short by a moan. "Like that, do you?"

"Just… just don't stop." Draco closed his eyes and reveled in the feel of Harry's strong hands working his muscles.

"I won't. Relax. You're doing well. It's only been just over two weeks – breaks like yours require a great deal of therapy to properly strengthen the bones. They knit together quickly with the benefit of magical treatment, but they also remain fragile for some time. Your muscles have to work harder to support them and the result is a lot of pain."

"Mmm." Draco wasn't particularly listening to Harry's words; rather, he was enjoying the quiet timbre of his voice and the gentle pressure against his tired muscles. Harry's hands felt so bloody right touching him.

He wasn't aware he'd nodded off until a hand smoothed over his forehead. "Harry?" he murmured, eyelids fluttering open.

"I'm here. You looked flushed – just checking to make sure you weren't feverish."

"I'm fine." Draco stretched. "I didn't mean to fall asleep."

"It's understandable. You've been working hard."

"Right." Draco cast a sidelong glance at Harry when the man sat down on the other end of the sofa.

The past two weeks had been surprisingly relaxing. The therapy was difficult, no question, but the rest of it… he'd clearly needed a break because he found even the silence refreshing. He'd miss it when he returned to real life.

"What do you want to do this afternoon?" Harry asked.

"Hmm… you could tell me a story," Draco suggested.

"A story?"

"Yes. I'd particularly like to hear the tale of Harry Potter's disappearance from the wizarding world."

"Give it up, Draco."

"Malfoys don't give up."

"You spend a lot of time telling me what Malfoys don't do. Is there anything they do?"

"We do plenty," Draco said haughtily. "For instance – we're tenacious. Especially when we want information."

"I don't care to discuss it."

"I thought we were becoming friends." Draco pouted. "You don't trust me?"

"We are friends. I do trust you. But that doesn't mean I want to discuss every painful aspect of my life with you."

"Painful?" Draco latched on to the hint. "Was it a bad break-up? The Weasley girl? Someone else?"

"No, nothing like that."

"Was it a problem with your friends? No, couldn't be if they visit you out here…" Draco tapped his chin. "Was it –"

"Just stop!" Harry stood and strode toward his bedroom.

"Potter!"

"Leave me alone." The door closed with force and Draco stared after him.

He waited, but Harry didn't return. Guilt gnawed at his insides and made him fidget until he couldn't stand it. He grabbed his cane and made his way down the hall. "Harry?" he said hesitantly, tapping on the door. When there was no answer he pushed it open.

Harry was lying on the bed, facing the wall. "Go away, Draco."

"I'm sorry, Harry. I really am. It's not my business and I won't ask again."

Sitting up slowly, Harry looked at Draco and sighed. "Sit down. Take the pressure off your leg."

Draco sat gratefully beside him on the bed. "Whatever it is…"

"It was a child."

"You… have a child?" Draco swallowed.

"No." Harry chuckled. "When I became a Healer, people would bring their family members to me. Really hopeless cases of cancers and things that had no magical cure, but they were all convinced that I could help, being me and all. Of course, I couldn't, and I hated it. I tried to tell them all… I'm just a regular person, a regular Healer. Not even the best Healer because I still lacked experience."

"That was a lot of pressure to put on you."

"Yes. One night… there was a child. She'd been hurt badly. Severed limbs, internal bleeding… her parents were arguing and her father tried to take her and leave, but he was drunk and he splinched her. It was the worst case I'd ever seen. Her mother brought her to my house, nearly dead before she arrived, and begged me to save her. I tried to take her to St. Mungo's but she wouldn't allow it, said only I could help. I did what I could but there was too much bleeding, and I didn't have everything I needed… by the time I convinced her to let me take the girl to the hospital it was too late." Harry pinched the bridge of his nose.

"That wasn't your fault." Draco laid a hand on Harry's arm. "You couldn't have done more than you did."

"If she'd been in a facility with proper potions and equipment, with loads of Healers instead of one half-asleep Healer at his house in the middle of the night… don't you see? They just kept coming. People died, and I couldn't help them, but they just kept coming. I couldn't take it."

"So you moved away to a place where no one could find you and beg you for miracles."

"Essentially, yes. They'll seek proper care now, and if there's no hope to begin with… maybe they'll accept it."

"You're a good Healer. You shouldn't feel obligated to spend your life out here."

"I appreciate that, but… they came to my house at all hours. I tried to use charms but they found me on

the street, in shops or restaurants. They came to St. Mungo's and caused scenes if I wasn't available. It wasn't worth it, Draco. I'm no better than anyone else but they wanted my name. That's all. They wanted a miracle from the Boy-Who-Lived, and I just don't fucking have any more of them," Harry said bitterly.

"I'm… sorry." Draco was at a loss for words. "I don't know what to say except I'm sorry. I wish things were different."

"So do I."

"I'm sorry, too, for making you talk about it. I should have respected your privacy."

"You've never respected me before, why start now?"

Draco blinked at the sharpness of Harry's tone. "That isn't true."

"No?"

"No. I didn't like you, but I respected you. For your Quidditch skills, for your ability to pull out of every mess you got into, for your bravery and loyalty… you're an admirable person. Most of the time I hated you for making me feel unworthy to breathe the same air, but I also respected you."

"That's… wow." Harry shook his head. "Thank you, I think. And look, it's forgotten. I probably overreacted, but I… I really hate to think about it. Now you know, and we can move on."

"Yes." Draco hesitantly touched Harry's hand. "For the record… you're brilliant at what you do."

Harry turned his hand so that the palm faced up and laced his fingers with Draco's. "Thank you. Fate had a good laugh at my expense, I'd say, since I moved away from it all and still ended up with someone dumped at my doorstep."

"You love me being here and you know it." Draco tried to lighten the mood. "I make things interesting."

"Yes, you do," Harry said quietly. His eyes shone with intensity as he tugged Draco's arm, bringing their heads closer together. "I've always found you interesting."

Draco's breath hitched. "Have you?"

"Mmm. Especially lately, when I'm in bed, thinking about you in the next room, wondering what it would be like to crawl in beside you and keep you warm." Harry pressed his cheek to Draco's and lowered his voice to a whisper, his words coming in a puff of air against Draco's ear. "I'm glad I found you, and I'm glad you stayed."

"I…" Draco gripped Harry's shoulders. "Harry."

"Draco."

Their mouths met then, meshing in a slow and intense kiss that left Draco's head spinning. He allowed Harry to lower him to his back, concerned only about the hands roaming over his body and whether they'd stray to his cock or not. Fingers deftly unbuttoned his shirt and trousers before toying with his nipples and mapping his abdomen, finding every spot that made Draco gasp.

Draco pulled at Harry's shirt until he was able to tug it off completely. Trousers and pants were abandoned next in between a flurry of stolen kisses and desperate touches, and when there were no barriers left Harry settled himself between Draco's legs and thrust against him, swollen cocks sliding together.

They came quickly, one right after the other, and moaned into each other's mouths as they continued to devour one another. Although the evidence of their shared release was cooling between them their hunger did not lose any heat, and they continued to explore each other with hands and lips, tongues and teeth.

Eventually they dozed, still wrapped around each other. Draco awoke to find moonlight spilling through the window. "Harry?" he said softly.

"Mmm." Harry burrowed beneath the blankets and pressed his face into the crook of Draco's neck. "Sleep."

"We slept through dinner from the looks of it."

Harry kissed Draco's throat. "Sorry. Hungry?"

"A little."

"I'll go and make you something, then." Harry sat up wearily and stretched.

"No, we'll go together."

"No." Harry ran a hand down Draco's leg. "You're tired. Let me take care of you."

Draco felt a ball of warmth roll in his belly at Harry's words. "That's lovely. Something simple, then."

"All right. I'll be back soon." Harry wrapped himself in a bathrobe and padded out of the room, leaving Draco sprawled across the bed.

Draco sighed in contentment and looked around. Harry's bedroom was simply decorated but felt very inviting. The bed was certainly a slice of heaven, in Draco's estimation. As was the man himself. Draco shivered at the memory of Harry thrusting against him, eyes filled with such brutal intensity that Draco had felt it necessary to keep his own closed while they kissed. It would be quite lovely to spend the remainder of their time together in bed.

He frowned when he thought about it ending. His therapy couldn't go on forever, after all, and he had to get back to reality soon enough. He had a business to run and he had no desire to lock himself away forever, no matter how tempting it seemed in the face of a promising new affair. Yet an affair was all it could be, since he couldn't stay and he knew Harry wouldn't go.

"Haven't moved an inch, I see." Harry returned with a tray and grinned down at Draco. "Want to sit up so you can eat?"

Draco forced a smile. "Of course. Thanks."

"You're welcome."

They ate sandwiches in bed together, pausing occasionally to share a kiss or a smile. Draco felt sick to his stomach as he ate, though, and couldn't decide precisely why. In that moment, for that length of time, they were together. They belonged; they fit. It was unfortunate they wouldn't be able to continue beyond his too-brief stay with Harry, but it wasn't as though they were in love. There was affection, certainly, but it was only about a mutual attraction and physical release.

Harry took Draco's tray when they finished and set it aside. "Feel better?"

"Much," Draco lied.

"Good. I may be giving you the night off, but it's back to work tomorrow." Harry winked at him and cupped his cheek before kissing him deeply. "How is it that I can't get enough of your taste?" Harry

murmured.

Draco closed his eyes and clenched his trembling hands into fists. "It's to be expected. I taste brilliant, after all."

Harry chuckled and slid down Draco's body. "Can't argue with you, for once. And I'm eager to taste you everywhere."

Draco moaned when Harry took him into his mouth. His mind raced, but he forced himself to take a breath and focus only on what Harry was doing, the way Harry was making him feel.

It's not as though we're in love.

~xo~xo~xo~

The next weeks flew by in a far-too-quick flurry of long therapy sessions and even longer lovemaking sessions. Draco doubted he'd had as much sex in his cumulative life as he was having with Harry on a daily basis, and he loved it. He adored the scent and taste of Harry, the feel of being filled, the joy of doing the filling. It was brilliant until the day Harry announced that Draco's therapy would conclude at the end of the week.

"I'm giving you a clean bill of health." Harry forked a bite of pasta into his mouth.

"What?" Draco paused with his own fork in the air. "We're done?"

"Yes. Friday will be the last day of your therapy – you're doing well. That leg is as good as new."

"But… it still hurts!" Draco told him.

Harry raised an eyebrow. "You haven't taken a pain potion in days."

"I… I think I'm still weak."

"Draco, you aren't using the cane and your gait is steady. You're ready. What's wrong? Why are you afraid to go?"

"I'm not afraid," Draco said testily. "I just don't want to end up in St. Mungo's because I tried to do too much too soon."

"Do you not trust me?" Harry looked hurt and Draco sighed.

"Of course I do. But –"

"Then trust that I know what I'm talking about. You're well."

"So… I'll be leaving Friday, then." Draco tightened his jaw. "That's it?"

"Well, yes. You're probably eager to get back, right?"

"Oh, right. Work and all, and getting back into the dating scene."

Harry's eye twitched. "I imagine you're ready to find a man to accompany you to all your posh events. Time to stop killing time with the sad hermit."

"You've no beard and goat, remember?" Draco teased sadly. "I haven't been killing time, at any rate. It's been lovely here."

"I'm glad." Harry's voice was soft. "In that case, shall we forego dinner and get to bed?"

"Definitely." Draco stood and pulled Harry up beside him, and they headed for the bedroom together.

Their lovemaking was quiet and intense, speaking very little other than to murmur encouragements and each other's names. When it was over, Draco didn't want to let go.

"Come with me," he said suddenly. "Come back to the wizarding world."

"Draco…"

"I know you had problems, but we'll figure it out. Come back."

"I can't. I'm sorry." Harry brushed the hair away from Draco's face. "I'll miss you, Draco. What we had… it was special."

"'Had,'" Draco said bitterly. "So in your mind it's over?"

"What do you want from me? A long-distance relationship? You want to come out here on weekends? You deserve more than that. This was nice, but we both knew it wasn't forever." Harry sat up and drew his knees to his chest.

"So it was just about the sex for you?" Draco swallowed. He'd sworn he wouldn't do anything so pathetic as to cry or beg, but he knew he'd end up doing both if it'd allow him to keep Harry.

"It's not like we love each other," Harry snapped. "What did you think it was?"

It's not as though we're in love.

Draco got to his feet slowly. "If that's it, then… I don't see how three more days are going to make a difference if I'm already walking so well. I'll just be going."

"No, you won't. I don't have a Portkey prepared."

"I'll Apparate."

"You'll have to leave my wards to do that, and we don't know where Nott and his men are!"

"It's not as though you love me, Harry," Draco told him mockingly. "What the fuck does it matter if they find me? Only this time do me a favor – let me fucking die. It would be far better than being stuck with you any longer."

"You didn't have to be stuck with me the first time," Harry reminded him. "You chose to stay here."

"And now I'm choosing to leave." Draco dressed hastily and strode out the door.

"Draco!" Harry tugged on his trousers and followed. "Dammit, Draco, don't go. Not like this. We'll never see each other again if –"

Draco whirled around. "If I don't come back here, right? Because you'll never leave your little hole. You're too content to let everyone else roll over you and make you hide. It doesn't fucking matter to you that I'd stand by you and help you to be who you want to be. It doesn't fucking matter that I fell in love with you here in this godforsaken place, because you don't love me."

Harry's eyes went almost comically wide. "You – oh, Draco…"

"Don't follow me. I don't want to see you right now. Good-bye, Harry." Draco pushed the door open and headed into the cold night.

~xo~xo~xo~

Draco hurried across the grass, clutching his jacket – Harry's jacket, really, as he'd been borrowing Harry's clothing for weeks – tightly around himself to block the cold. He stopped to take a deep breath once he finally broke free of Harry's wards. Previously they'd felt safe, even comforting, when he'd walked outside, but now they just felt oppressive.

He couldn't believe he'd been stupid enough to tell Harry how he felt. It was bad enough that he'd gone and fallen for the berk when it should have been simple sex, but to expose himself in a fit of hurt and anger? It was humiliating. Even more so to know that Harry didn't share his feelings.

Swallowing back the angry tears that threatened to spill, Draco fumbled in his pocket for his wand and frowned when he didn't find it. He tried his other pocket and swore, finding it empty.

"Fuck," Draco mumbled. "I can't go back in there, but I can't Apparate without my bloody wand."

"Well, well. Ickle Draco's unarmed and all alone. You are alone, aren't you?"

Draco spun around to find Nott and the man who'd tricked him with the Portkey grinning at him. He

backed away quickly, trying to retreat into Harry's wards, but before he could reach the magical barrier he found himself bound and lying on the ground thanks to a hasty Incarcerous.

"Leave me alone!" Draco shouted. "Har – help!" he amended hastily. He didn't feel right about giving Harry away, especially to men like these, no matter how angry he'd been. And despite what he'd said before, he prayed that Harry would hear him. He'd Obliviate the bastards himself to keep Harry's secret if he'd just come outside.

"How'd you manage to get away the first time, Malfoy?" Nott kicked Draco in the ribs. "I left you here for dead. My mistake, I suppose, but imagine my surprise when I returned to find no body, no trace of you at all. And why were you mumbling about your wand when I snapped it in two myself?"

"I'm not telling you anything," Draco spat, groaning when his words earned him another kick to the ribs. He certainly wasn't going to tell Nott that Harry Potter had presented him with the Hawthorn wand he'd taken from him years ago to replace the one that Nott had destroyed.

"It doesn't much matter, anyway. I won't make the same mistake twice. When I didn't find your body here before I set alarms so that I'd know if you returned to the area – after all, where would you go without a wand? There's nothing out here, no one to help you. I have no idea how you survived but now that I have you again I'll kill you with my bare hands and burn your traitorous body when I'm done. And while you burn, I'll be thinking about my son and how he was worth ten of you," Nott hissed. "You fucking piece of scum!"

"Theo was a coward and an idiot, just like you!" Draco replied.

"You dare to speak his name?" Nott shouted. "You, who failed our Lord again and again? Your parents were pathetic fools and they raised you to be the same. You don't deserve to breathe another breath."

And with that, Draco didn't have a choice in the matter – blow after crushing blow was delivered to his chest, and all he could hear were Nott's grunts and his sidekick's maniacal laughter. He couldn't even manage to scream when his freshly mended leg was broken again, or when his head was battered again and again. He struggled against the blackness that licked at the edges of his consciousness and tried to picture Harry's face in his mind, smiling at him, telling him that death would come and take away his pain. Telling him he'd lied, and that he loved him after all.

His eyes were too swollen to see and his chest was too tight to allow him more than an occasional wheeze, but his ears were still working and he heard the sounds change around him when an angry roar rang up and startled shouts replaced the laughter. The sounds of fists on flesh continued, but the flesh was no longer his own and he didn't know what was happening. Silence finally surrounded him and he gasped when his magical bonds broke.

"Hold on, Draco," he heard near one ear. "Fuck… collapsed lung… too much internal bleeding…"

"Harry," he managed. "Harry."

"Hold on, Draco. Please, I… I can't do this by myself. You need more help than I can give you alone. I'm going to Apparate us."

The familiar sensation of Harry's Stabilizing Charms washed over him before he found himself gathered in Harry's arms. His body ached as though on fire and he tried to scream, but found the effort to be too much. The blackness finally claimed his mind just as Apparition took hold.

~xo~xo~xo~

The first thing Draco noticed when he opened his eyes – apart from the fact that he was able to open his eyes – was that his chest no longer felt crushed. He took a deep breath and released it, relishing the simple ability to do so.

"Are you in any pain?"

Draco blinked and turned his head. A mediwitch stood beside his bed. "Where am I?"

"St. Mungo's. How are you feeling?"

"How did I get here?"

The witch huffed. "Healer Potter brought you. He'll be in soon. Now – pain? Trouble breathing?"

"No, no. I'm fine. My leg…" He frowned down the bed at the offending appendage. "It's broken?"

"Yes. We've started the healing process, but a break of that magnitude on a bone that's been so recently repaired –"

"I'm aware," Draco replied wryly. "Harry is here?"

She raised an eyebrow. "Healer Potter is here, yes. He's meeting with the other Healers who assisted in your case."

"How long have I been here?"

"Four days. You've been in a healing sleep," she explained. "The trauma team was called in to assist Healer Potter in your care. I must say…" She paused. "We didn't think we'd ever see him again, but he was adamant about staying to oversee your treatment."

"He came back for me," Draco murmured in wonder.

"What was that?"

"Nothing. Could… could you ask him to come and see me, please?"

"No need to ask." Harry appeared in the doorway. "You're awake. How are you feeling?"

Draco didn't reply until the mediwitch took her leave, closing the door behind her. "You came back. You said you never would."

"You'd have died otherwise. I wasn't about to let that happen, not again. Not to you." Harry twisted his hands nervously. "Are you in any pain?"

"I'm fine. Harry…"

"Draco, look." Harry began to pace in front of the window. "I thought… I didn't think what we were doing was anything to you but a way to pass the time. I didn't think –

"You rarely do."

"Draco." Harry looked at him, his eyes pleading. "I do love you. I don't want to lose you."

"But you'd have allowed me to walk out? To never come back?"

He hung his head. "I was afraid, Draco. I still am. I'd have likely come after you, though, once I realized that you'd filled a hole in my life that I hadn't known was there. I don't know where we go from here, but… don't leave me without letting me try to be what you want."

Draco's heart ached. "Oh, Harry… I don't want more than you're willing to give, don't you see that? I just wanted a compromise. I can't sequester myself away forever, and I don't think it's healthy for you to

do so, either. My business, though… I can do it anywhere. If you want to start over somewhere else, where you might have more of a chance at freedom… say the word. I'll go with you."

"And if I want to stay right here?" Harry's eyes were bright.

"Then I'll stand by your side, just as I said I would. You came back for me," he said, still unable to process the information. "To save me. And you stayed. You could have dropped me off and gone back to your cabin, but you stayed."

"I wasn't about to go back into hiding when your life was in the balance. Of course, it was front page news." Harry smiled ruefully. "Ron and Hermione couldn't believe it."

"That you'd come back, or why?"

"Both. I hope you don't mind that I told them we were together."

Draco reached for Harry's hand. "Are together. Not past tense."

A grin split his face. "Are together, then. Everyone else thinks I simply found you and brought you in for treatment, but I couldn't hide my feelings from them. Hermione guessed before I told them, anyway."

"I'm glad you wanted your friends to know."

"It feels good to be back here, Draco. The parts that I loved… it's all coming back to me. I know it's just a matter of time before the madness begins again if I choose to take my job back. If they even offer it to me," he added.

Draco rolled his eyes. "Of course they will. And when they do, one of your conditions for acceptance will be better management of the clientele here, including a public statement that you are unable to treat anyone while off duty."

"You make it sound so easy."

"I'm certain it won't be, but if you make that a condition of your employment, the facility will have no choice but to back you up as they never did before. And you'll have my support as well, for what it's worth. I'll be willing to bet that your friends – and perhaps more of the public at large – will be more accommodating now that they've seen it all drive you away before."

"You're right." Harry bit his lip. "I do want to try, Draco. I want to return to my career. Being here… I miss it, I really do. And I don't want to lose you."

"You haven't." Draco beckoned to him until he leaned in for a kiss. When they parted, Draco smiled. "And I haven't properly thanked you for saving me. Again."

"You can properly thank me when we're home. Wherever home will be."

"Home will be my flat, for the time being, unless you have somewhere you'd rather be."

"Absolutely not."

"I think you should keep your cabin, though, so that we can retreat for a quiet weekend from time to time."

"That would be nice." Harry perched on the edge of the bed and ran his fingers through Draco's hair.

"Unless… is Nott –" Draco's eyes widened with panic as he finally recalled the events that had precipitated everything.

"In Azkaban, as is the man he was with and the two others who ambushed you originally. He was only too happy to give up his so-called friends, but it didn't help his case. He'll be there for life." Harry continued to stroke Draco's hair in a soothing manner.

"Thank Merlin." Draco yawned. "I shouldn't be this tired after sleeping for four days."

"Get your rest. I'll be overseeing your therapy, after all." Harry gave him a wicked grin and Draco groaned.

"Remind me not to break anything else in the future." Draco sighed. "Mind if I sleep?"

"Not at all. I'm planning to take you home in the next couple of days, so I need to finish my reports. I'll check on you later. Call for a mediwitch if you need anything." Harry kissed his forehead and took his leave.

Draco smiled and closed his eyes, imagining he was curled up in Harry's bed as he drifted off to sleep.

~xo~xo~xo~

"Dinner is served." Harry presented Draco with a tray and climbed into bed beside him.

"This is the life," Draco sighed. "Remind me why I said we couldn't live here all the time?"

"Because you'd have gone spare eventually. And I thank you for it."

"Mmm. It's lovely, though."

"It is," Harry agreed. "I'm glad you talked me into getting away this weekend."

"You were spending entirely too much time at work," Draco pouted. "Coming home late most nights…"

"Where I'd find you still up working yourself," Harry finished. "We've both been burning the candle at both ends lately."

In the year since he'd returned to society, Harry had found his niche at St. Mungo's. It had been challenging initially, as expected, but Draco had been correct when he'd predicted that the wizarding world would be more wary of disturbing Harry for fear he'd flee again. St. Mungo's was all too eager to see Harry happily employed, and with the exception of a handful of overzealous patrons Harry was largely left in peace. He still carried a robust workload, but he loved what he did and it made Draco smile to see Harry so happy at last.

Still, they both enjoyed their peaceful weekends at Harry's cabin whenever they managed to procure one, and to Draco it was a bit like coming home. Harry still cooked for him and fed him in bed in between sessions of lovemaking and Draco lapped up the pampering like a cat with expensive cream.

"How about a massage?" Draco said suddenly.

Harry gave him a tired smile. "Sure. Go on and finish eating and then I'll take care of it."

"No, I thought I'd give you one." Draco handed Harry a slice of buttered bread. "Eat."

Harry took it, surprised. "You want to massage me? That would be heavenly, Draco."

"You deserve it." Draco watched Harry eat, feeling a surge of protectiveness over the man who gave of himself unconditionally so often. He couldn't wait to feel the tension slip from Harry's muscles beneath his touch.

After the promised massage and the resulting sex, Draco curled up beside Harry and closed his eyes. Harry's respirations were deep and steady and Draco found comfort in that.

"Love you," Harry murmured.

"Love you, too. Sleep."

"Mmm."

With one final kiss to his lover's chest, Draco followed Harry into sleep.

CLICK HERE TO RETURN TO LIVEJOURNAL TO COMMENT

displayNameOrEmail - _time_ - Remove

text

Sign in Recent Site Activity Terms Report Abuse Print page | Powered by Google Sites