

The Stag and the Fox - Drarry

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/23185564) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/23185564>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warnings:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings , No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	F/M , M/M
Fandom:	Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling
Relationships:	Draco Malfoy/Harry Potter , Draco Malfoy & Harry Potter , Hermione Granger/Ron Weasley , Seamus Finnigan/Dean Thomas , Neville Longbottom/Luna Lovegood
Characters:	Harry Potter , Draco Malfoy , Hermione Granger , Ron Weasley , Angelina Johnson , Arthur Weasley , Molly Weasley , Molly Weasley II , Scorpius Malfoy , James Sirius Potter , Albus Severus Potter , Roxanne Weasley , Fred Weasley II , Victoire Weasley , Teddy Lupin , Ginny Weasley , George Weasley , Fleur Delacour , Bill Weasley
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Harry Potter Setting , Alternate Ending , Honey , Honeydukes , Draco and Harry adopt , Thestrals , Draco is a possessive asshole , Top Harry Potter , Bottom Draco Malfoy , Power Bottom Draco Malfoy , Light Smut Kinda , Harry Potter Raises Teddy Lupin , Harry Potter is a Good Parent , Harry Potter is a Good Friend , Draco Malfoy is a Tease , Draco Malfoy is a Little Shit , Draco Malfoy is Doing His Best , Draco Malfoy is Clueless About Muggle Things , Draco Malfoy Alchemist , Good Draco Malfoy , Draco Malfoy Looks Good in Armani , Gay , Pottah
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2020-03-17 Updated: 2020-05-13 Words: 19,173 Chapters: 8/?

The Stag and the Fox - Drarry

by [SilBright](#)

Summary

Y'know that moment in The Prisoner of Azkaban movie where Draco walks up to Harry during their Hippogriff lesson, biting his lip and obviously checking Harry out? Yeah, that's a good moment...

Harry's on a track that he can't seem to get off of, while Draco feels like he's completely derailed and needs to get back on. They meet again at the emotionally loaded 10-year memorial service for the Battle of Hogwarts, finally ready to laugh about the endless taunting of each other during their youth, all while stealing coy glances at each other for the entire evening and- get this, the following morning as well...

When help is requested overseas, they decide to offer their services. It's just a lucky coincidence, that Harry and Draco can help those in need while finding themselves at home with each other when they are so far away from what they are used to.

More feel-good and adorable Drarry-moments than doom and despair in this fic, because they're cute and deserve each other and the world xx

The Sweet Things

The crack of dawn- the promise of a new day, accompanied by the vivid pink and orange of a sunrise, reflected in the trademark round glasses that sat upon Harry Potter's nose. His kitchen window had the most breathtaking early-morning view he'd come across, even if he may say so himself, especially since he was drinking a cup of steaming tea while soaking up the first golden rays of the day.

Harry smiled to himself as a rabbit dashed through the dew that glistened over his unkempt back garden, which had grass at irregular lengths, weeds, common flowers and a few bushes growing throughout the sizeable piece of land. He really must get around to tidying all that wild vegetation up... If only to be able to sit at a small table, in his back garden, fresh dawn air surrounding him, while he sipped his morning tea. Another smile, another thought skipped through Harry's mind, one including two young children giggling as they ran through daffodils that he could picture growing right at the back, in the left corner of the garden.

He nodded, to no one in particular really, checked his watch, quickly finished his tea and left the mug in the sink. After pulling on his jacket and picking up his bag, Harry cast a quick look around to make sure he hadn't forgotten anything, locked up the house, and took a minute of leisurely strolling, before he Apparated to the front door of a charming, flower-covered stone house.

Knocking on the door to mimic a nursery rhyme, Harry took a step back when he heard the scrape of a chair and shuffle-y footsteps behind the door. "Good morning," he smiled, as the wooden door was swung open, something that was becoming slightly more effort by the day, because of the cascading deep green vines, entangled with pops of purple and bright pink flowers, which had grown down to hang in front of the door. He held up the bag he was carrying, "Brought fresh flapjacks."

Ginny, stood in the doorway, still in her pj's, red-orange hair sticking up in all directions, like the lashing flames in a fire, chuckled sleepily, followed by a yawn, "Mmh, morning to you too," she responded, stepping aside as Harry walked into the home. Ginny looked from Harry, back outside before closing the door, "No Ted?"

"Oh, no, he's with Andromeda until tonight, they've gone to the seaside for a couple of nights."

Ginny nodded understandingly, knowing Andromeda liked to have time at the beach to reconnect with little Teddy. "You'll be extra popular today then," she said, moving the topic of conversation onward, following him into the kitchen where he had produced the biscuit tin, and set it on the counter top.

"Well, that's the plan, can't be falling out of favour with them, now can I?"

The grin on her ex-husbands face had Ginny mock a disappointed shake of the head, before caving and smiling with him. She returned to the seat she was sitting in before Harry's arrival, the chair he'd heard scrape across the floor as she'd stood up. It was half-painted, with a light teal, uneven coat, presumably because Ginny had been distracted while doing the little job. She was reading The Daily Prophet now, the sports section. "Gin," whispered Harry, still smiling, as he was hanging his coat up, earning him not much more than raised eyebrows and

a questioning hum of attention being paid, "You know you can't edit it anymore? It's gone, whoosh, printed. Already on everyone's kitchen table. No point re-reading your own article-" "Yes, yes, I'm aware... Whoosh, gone, no more calling it back. I'll still read it though..." She trailed off, furrowed brows and pursed lips.

Harry busied himself with setting oats and milk out, then found bowls, spoons and a plate. He eyed the fruit basket warily, "Was it apple or banana those two misfits are refusing to eat at the moment?"

Not moments after he'd mentioned them, two pairs of feet came thundering down the stairs. Well, that is to say, one came thundering down while the other squealed for his brother to wait for him, to no avail. James ran through the hallway and practically launched himself, with a battle cry of "Daddy!" into Harry's arms- prompting a winded 'Oof' from the recipient of a two-going-on-three year old rocket. The younger Albus, still whingeing about being abandoned halfway down the stairs, waddled into the kitchen with a severe case of nearly-two-year-old pouting going on, which his father couldn't help but laugh at. Putting James down and scooping Albus up, Harry pointed out the tin of flapjacks to them both, which cured Albus of his sticky-out-y bottom lip, and made him wiggle out of his father's arms to rush over to the counter. Ginny had gotten up from her chair, now had one foot on the first step up the stairs, but had paused to watch the three of them interact. When Harry turned to see her still there, she placed a hand over her heart with a wide smile, then went up the stairs to get ready for her day.

The arrangement that Harry and Ginny had come to suited them both as a perfectly fine solution to a relationship that had gone unattended and ultimately fizzled out, something that had saddened them both greatly but didn't hold against each other. Busy schedules from high-demanding and time-consuming top careers, mixed with a close and large family that was regularly visited, left them with few moments to spend, just the two of them. A rocky start to a last year's Quidditch season on top of an already stressful day job and the resulting lack of sleep for Ginny didn't improve her irritability. The joint decision to terminate her third pregnancy in its early stages was something that Ginny felt grateful for, however sad it was to lose a child. She felt better now, knowing that it had been the right choice. She couldn't imagine any of the steps that she and Harry had taken to end their marriage would have been very pleasant with a newborn involved, and she had never wished to bring another child into such a tense and unhealthy environment.

Now, Harry came by Ginny's home every morning, saw to it that their two sons ate breakfast and got dressed, which gave all three of them a good start to their day, then Harry would leave for the Ministry while Ginny wrote her articles at home. In the evenings, Harry would swing by again if he had time after work, put the boys to bed, and occasionally have late-night conversations with Ginny about this, that and the other whenever Ted was with Andromeda. They kept each other company, both made sure the other was okay, because they did still care for one another.

Harry rescued the tin from James, who had climbed onto the counter (with the assistance of a strategically placed chair), and was preparing to bash the elusive metal case, withholding what he knew for sure to be something sweet, against the wall. Before James could burst out a tantrum, Harry popped the tin open and handed him and Albus a flapjack, before cheekily eating one himself. He picked James up, who made a gurgling sound, as if he were an

explosion, before stuffing another bite in his mouth when he was back on the floor. Albus mimicked the sound before giggling loudly, which started a who-can-laugh-the-loudest contest between both toddlers.

Wand in hand, Harry charmed a knife to chop an apple, hoping it was bananas which his sons had decided to reject for a while. Really though, it was James who was very picky, and once he had decided that something was not worth eating, Albus would unquestioningly go along with him.

The chopping board tipped apple slices into two bowls which Harry then put on the table. He helped Albus into his highchair, while James clambered onto a chair with a pillow on it to raise him to table height, a solution Ginny had come up with when he'd started fussing about being in the aforementioned highchair. With two little boys, all red cheeks and munchy silence, Harry washed up the previous night's dishes the muggle way, just so he could keep his hands busy.

Ginny came back down the stairs just as Harry was wiping porridge remnants off Albus' face, after having dressed them both in dungarees over red t-shirts. "Well, would you look at you two! Aren't you just dashing?" she exclaimed, clapping her hands together. James, holding a stuffed hippogriff toy, beamed at her, while Albus looked from his mother to his father, then made grabby hands at the latter, who picked him up with a smile. After glancing at the clock on the wall, Harry moved through the kitchen to the hallway, transferring Albus to Ginny on the way. In discontentment, Albus whined and reached for him again.

"Traitor!" gasped Ginny, bringing a smug look to Harry's face.

"I knew those flapjacks would shift the odds in your favour, but I didn't think they'd swing so far your way..." she mumbled, winking at Harry, who pumped a fist in the air, "I should bake more often!" He kissed Albus' head, then picked James up and tossed him into the air, the boy giggling with glee, until Harry planted a kiss squarely on his nose. Protesting being back on the floor, James squealed "Again!" and jumped, throwing his toy. Harry picked it up, and crouched down to him, "Dad's going now, I'll throw you again this evening, okay?"

James put a finger to his mouth, thinking about this suggestion for a few moments, then nodded and hugged him.

"See you later buddy..." Harry stood up to shrug his jacket on, then ruffled Albus' hair and kissed both of Ginny's cheeks, "'Till tonight."

He stepped outside, closed the front door and Apparated to the Ministry, swiftly walking along with the throng of people on their way to work. He stepped into an elevator, and stepped back out on Level Two, where he encountered Luna. She smiled sheepishly, "Hello, Harry. How are you today?" she asked in her usual soft tone, "Did you have a good morning?"

"Hi Luna, I'm good, thanks." He gestured for them to keep walking, and after shifting the files (as well as an old Quibbler) she was holding a bit, so they were no longer slipping from her grip, they walked down to Harry's office. "The boys were pretty good this morning, Ginny was a little bit quiet though. S'pose she's a bit nervous about the article in today's Prophet, re-reading it at the kitchen table and all..." His recount of the earlier hours wasn't a long one, for Harry had accidentally caught the eye of one of his colleagues, who seemed to have recently shaved, a particular thing that had always stirred a feeling in Harry, a kind of

feeling that made him bite the inside of his lip to distract him from... Well, the distraction that this man had caused him. Shaking his heated cheeks, he quickly moved his staring from the smirking man down to the floor.

"Yes," Luna lifted her eyes after a few moments of studying Harry's flushed face, "I should think one might be a bit on edge after receiving some negative critique on one's work." She pulled one file from the stack she was carrying as Harry led her into his office, "Here, all the information we have on kappas. It wasn't easy, you know, finding all of the relevant old archives. Some of them are nearly one hundred years old, and no one's done any research on them since then..."

Harry nodded, skimming over the pages and flicking through them. "If we can fit the knowledge needed to keep a kappa alive to our suspects, I'm sure we can narrow down the potential smugglers."

The clock chimed six, and a few moments later there was a soft knock at Harry's office door. "Enter," he mumbled absently, crossing a line through another name. He looked up to see a head poking around the corner. Not recognising who the brown head of hair belonged to, he furrowed his brow and jutted his chin out, evoking a giggle from who he now knew was Ted, and the brown hair turned blue, "Fooled you!"

Harry stood up and smiled, "Cheeky."

Trying to contain the smile pulling up his cheeks, Ted wandered over to the shelves as Harry started organising his papers, deciding to take a few home with him. Ted was reaching for a slim, red, leather-bound book, with gold lettering on its spine, until a stern voice stopped him,

"Edward..." was all his grandmother had to say to stop his hand mid-air. Harry laughed when Teddy's eyes cautiously met Andromeda's, estimating his chances of getting away with grabbing the book anyway.

Carrying his jacket and bag, Harry patted Ted on the back, "C'mon you rascal, best not get in trouble over a book about the intricacies of knitting a pattern of the Gryffindor lion into scarves." They all stepped out of the office, both adults chatting while Ted stared around with wide eyes, as if this wasn't his umpteenth time in the Ministry.

He suddenly turned to Harry, a flush of red to his cheeks from the all of the buzz around him, "Can we Apparate to Ginny's house today?"

Harry looked at Andromeda, "Well... Only if Granny Anny says it's okay..."

Ted cast a pleading, hopeful look at her, and after a few moments, she nodded. Ted whooped and dragged Harry out of the elevator, who barely had a second to tell Andromeda he'd see her tomorrow. They both waved at her, until she turned to head for the corridor to travel home by the Floo network.

"Alright," Harry held out an arm for Ted to take, "Ready?" He nodded determinedly.

"If you have to vomit, try not to get it on yourself, okay? Or on me, for that matter. What did you have for dinner?"

"Erm... Beef and potatoes. And beans."

Harry cringed, "Good solids," he clapped Ted on his back, "Aim at some grass, if push comes to shove. Or food comes to fly, in this case, I suppose."

Teddy nodded again, this time less sure of himself, and clutched Harry's sleeve. Harry told him to take a deep breath, then apparated to Ginny's house.

Ted stumbled, falling, were it not for Harry catching him, "How're you doin'?" He breathed deeply a few times, and gulped, "I feel like I've been through a bloody blender." Harry chuckled and swatted the back of his head, "You've been spending too much time with the Weasleys. Just 'cause you apparated for the first time, doesn't mean you can swear, young man."

Ginny must have seen them through the window, because Albus and James came running down the drive and into Harry, who picked them both up and spun them around, both tight to his chest and their laughs and delighted squeals echoing through the street.

In the house, Harry tucked James and Albus into their beds and cast a simple spell over the room as he silently exited it. When he wandered back downstairs, Ted was happily eating an evening snack in the living room, but the mood was doused in the kitchen, where Ginny was sat at the table, a cup of tea between her hands, an envelope in front of her, Hogwarts' seal pressed into the wax.

What I Like

"Might I assist you?"

Draco was abruptly shaken from his thoughts, as if ice water had been poured over him. As if in response, a drop of rain ran under his collar and down his back. He was stood outside the front window of a robes shop, water streaming over him and accumulating around his feet, stuck staring at a small mannequin wearing grey dress robes. His first thought at seeing them had been of Scorpius, an image of him wearing them in Hogwarts' Great Hall had skidded into his mind, triggering memories of his school years, mostly bad ones. When he tried to divert his thoughts back to a happy setting, to little Scorpius, he was tipped into a pit of painful moments, of a crying Astoria, doors slammed, nights spent on the sofas of friends, missing her, but more so his- their son.

Re-focusing his glazed eyes when he heard the vague sound of a voice, as if he were underwater, he stared at the shopkeeper, who seemed to be getting increasingly nervous and confused, exaggerating the grey puffiness under her eyes. He tore his stare from the robes and turned heel down the street. His heavy coat billowed behind him as he kept a stiff march, passing through one street after another. His erratic corner-taking and sudden decisions to change direction betrayed the fact that a certain destination was not on his mind, but a lot of other things were. Rain now reduced to drizzle clung to every inch of him, he slipped more than once, but the water running down his face disguised his tears and the brisk walk was clearing his head, giving him a chance to think his life over in a rapid albeit less distressed way.

After what would have been a few miles of walking, he had circled back to the robes shop, and the prospect of seeing shopkeeper from earlier again making him squirm with anxiousness, Draco hurriedly turned into a sidestreet to catch the breath he didn't know had escaped him, body heaving from the uncommon amount of exercise. The raw, aching pain of scar tissue over his chest and back refusing to stretch as his lungs expanded was easily dulled with a whispered spell and a fluid movement of his hand, but the uneasy feeling of being watched, stayed. Fighting the need to sink to his knees in exhaustion, both mental and physical, made Draco feel guilty and regretful that he never managed to eat enough to keep himself strong nor exercise enough to feel fit. He had to lean against the old, greying brick wall for support, wind rushing between the buildings, dragging wet, dead leaves with it, until the silhouette in the corner of his eye came too close for comfort, and Draco finally managed to apparate home, not waiting to find out if whoever he saw had actually been there, nor what they might have wanted.

He'd barely put the kettle on, after drying off and changing clothes, when his apartment door was knocked on. Wary, he peered through the peep-hole before opening up for his next-door-neighbour, an elderly woman by the name of Jean Cambell, a wealthy muggle who had known Narcissa well, though how such a situation had come to be was a mystery to Draco. Accompanying Jean was, as always, her soapy lavender scent, but today that was overwhelmed by the warm, comforting smell of hot lemon cake, evidently with raspberries beautifully decorating the top.

"I heard you get back home, and since it's raining terribly out there, I was sure you'd need

something tasty to lift your spirits.”

Jean was vaguely aware of Draco’s unfortunate circumstances, and puzzled together that which she didn’t fully understand, which was most things. For example, what she had assumed to be a faded, awfully constructed tattoo, she learned was actually the way a manic, murderous crime lord branded his followers. When she remarked that she couldn’t see the appeal of going along with this practice to Draco, he had smiled bitterly and told her that fear was a strong persuader when applied with enough force. Since then, she’d noticed that he did a lot of things in fear. He left his apartment sometimes, but only when he became more afraid of the thoughts in his mind than the people in the outside world. He had stopped working for a while when he became afraid of failing at his projects or disappointing the people he was working with. He never visited his mother, he was afraid of what she might say, or worse, what she might not say. He always asked to see his son, but he was afraid he might upset Astoria, while at the same time he was also fearful that Scorpius might forget him, were he not to be around enough.

On his mother’s request, Draco accepted help from Jean to move into the same building that she was a resident of, assured by both women telling him that rich and pretentiously self-centred muggles would have little interest in his odd comings and goings after a few weeks. Mrs. Cambell, who had succeeded in persuading him with this argument, obviously had missed the irony in the fact that she herself showed escalating interest in Draco’s activities. Her interest was one reason, among others, that he no longer brought “activities” home from pubs.

“That painkiller you brewed for me works wonderfully, so well that I’ve managed to sleep a full night for the first time in years,” she chattered, taking out a knife and slicing the cake. ‘That’s one of us.’ “I’m very glad I could help. If you ever need any more, just let me know and I’ll whip you up another vial.”

“That’s very generous of you, Draco. For now though, what I’d like is for you to whip us up some tea.”

After what had turned into an afternoon tea, and Mrs. Cambell had wandered back down the hall, Draco sat down at his elaborately carved and perfectly laquered desk, quill hovering over a piece of parchment as he attempted to still his mind, searching for the right thing to write. He took a deep breath, smiled to himself and started a thoughtfully worded letter to Astoria, asking her to, please, let him see Scorpius. Every letter perfectly swooped into the next as he tiptoed around words and phrases that might offend her. Under the short paragraph, he looped his signature, and let a drop of ink splatter beside it, like a secret code to assure Astoria that it was really him writing to her. He re-read the letter a few times, then folded it up, sealed it, and gave it to his owl.

Draco watched the bird from his balcony, leaned on the cold wrought iron railing, for as far as he could, which was until it disappeared behind some tall building or other. He’d send her owls often, maybe twice a week, and usually he would receive a negative response, one letting him know that Astoria just wasn’t up to see him. She didn’t seem to understand that she was not the point of his visits to the house.

As far as Draco was concerned, they- Draco and Astoria, could have moved from their marital home into the Manor, as it was large enough to house both of them without having to see each other on a daily basis, and at the same time Scorpius’ time wouldn’t be divided,

instead shared by his parents. Not to mention, Narcissa was in the same place and would have welcomed the company, even if it did mean she had to deduct three rooms from her host portfolio, for she had renovated one wing of the Manor into accommodation suitable for a few dozen students, who came from all over the magical world. Draco had learned about host families in the year following the defeat of Voldemort, as he'd not returned to Hogwarts for the eighth year he'd been asked to attend. He'd instead been accepted into Uagadou, Uganda's wizarding school, so he could pursue and specialise in his passion of Alchemy. That's what he wrote in his letter to the school's head, anyway.

He didn't realize he was shivering until the unfocused shape of an owl was moving towards him. With numb, uncharacteristically fumbly hands, Draco opened the letter after coaxing the owl to let him have it. In the middle of the parchment was a single, small, gorgeously swirled word;

'Okay'.

He nearly pulled the door off its hinges in his rush to get back inside. Standing in front of the hallway mirror, he pulls his fingers through his hair that now reaches past his upper back, and gathers it with a black ribbon at his nape. He stuffs his equally dark button-down into his trousers, decides against a jacket, and steps into a pair expensive-looking dress shoes. He takes a breath, then follows the powder he just tossed into the fireplace, swallowed by green flames.

On the other side sat little Scorpius, patiently waiting while he watched a miniature quidditch player fly around in front of him, his mother observing from the next room, whispering charms that made the tiny player flip and loop the loop as it whizzed around Scorpius' head, right past his ear to make him giggle. When the fire rose and orange bled green, Scorpius sprang up, quidditch player forgotten, instantly enveloped in a hug. Draco tightened his arms around the boy as he stood up and sat in an armchair, Scorpius now warmly snuggled into his father's lap. Draco complemented his clothes- "Don't you look smart in those trousers", and asked Scorpius every question he'd been storing for this visit. Had he been eating his vegetables, had he been brushing his teeth, had he fed the ducks, had he combed his hair by himself, had he kissed Mummy everyday, had he been to friend's house again, and so on. Amongst Scorpius' retellings of climbing a tree to save a snail, eating pancakes and falling over in the mud, Draco didn't interject, relishing every moment he could listen to his bubbly little boy ramble on about a tree branch as if it was the most magnificent thing in the world. He only laughed softly, nodded or shook his head to agree with his son whenever he wanted assurance and smiled, because he couldn't help the grin his little boy always brought to his face. Astoria simply sat and listened, at first fighting the jealousy that wrenched at her heart, but it slowly subsided every time Scorpius laughed, because she knew Draco made him happy, there was always a sparkle to him whenever Draco sent a letter.

The joy that became him when the owl had landed in the garden, holding a piece of parchment she dreaded every day, wasn't something she could bear to diminish. Scorpius had watched her, standing on his tippy toes to see her write her reply, then followed as she gave it to the owl and it flew off. He turned to her, eyes wide and drenched with hope, "Say Daddy can visit?" and she'd nodded, then watched the widest grin she's seen him wear in weeks appear on his face as he raced to sit in front of the fire.

After not even fifteen minutes of chatting, Scorpius got fidgety and climbed down onto the floor, pulling Draco after him, who happily obliged. Out of the back door and into the garden,

Scorpius crouched next to an upside-down bucket that had a hole in the bottom, and with one eye squeezed shut he peered into it, “Spiky niffer, Dad!”

Draco laughed, assuming he’d painted a face on a pinecone, and looked inside the bucket as well. He nearly jerked back at what he saw, but instead held the bucket up, “That, my dear boy, isn’t a niffler.”

The hedgehog, as it in fact was, took one look at Draco and Scorpius, and scurried off into the safe leaves of a bush. Scorpius made a sad noise, Draco picked him up, “How about, instead of trapping creatures, we silently watch them from a safe distance. Especially ones that are covered in pointy things.”

Scorpius considered this, then nodded, “Owl?”

Draco looked at the owl, sat sleeping on its perch in a large cage next to the house. “Ah, well. Good point, son.”

That evening, after putting Scorpius to bed and awkwardly trying to keep a conversation going with Astoria, Draco arrived home through his fireplace. He washed the dishes he and Mrs Cambell had used earlier, then changed his button-down for a navy jumper. About to leave, he was reaching for his coat, when he saw the envelope on his doormat. He recognized the seal, and various scenes from those seven years flashed through his head. He was debating whether to just grab his coat and step over the envelope, leave it where it was, but his hand, still in midair, started getting numb and he brought it down, all the way to the floor, where he picked up the letter.

He ended up sitting in his velvet high-backed armchair, tumbler with gin on the side table, turning the letter over and over in his hands. Finally, with a heavy sigh, he broke the seal and pulled the letter out of its envelope.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Wednesday the 2nd of April 2008

Dear Mr Draco Malfoy

As you may be aware, the tenth anniversary of the notorious Battle of Hogwarts is anon approaching. To our great sorrow, many of our dearest friends gave their lives to safeguard our school and conserve our liberation during that time.

You yourself were present during the Battle, and thus to you we extend this invitation to attend the Memorial of the Samaritans, to remember our dearly, inequitably departed, and their sacrifice for what they believed in.

We hope to welcome yourself and any person you wish to accompany you in our Great Hall for an evening meal on the Second of May this year, commencing at nine o’clock in the evening.

Yours sincerely,

Minerva McGonagall

Headmistress of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Chantilly Lace

Ginny slowly looked up at Harry. After reading the letter, this one addressed to her, out loud, silence had hung in the air for several minutes, each one with their own thoughts and memories to go over.

Harry held her gaze with a level stare, he knew what she was thinking. “Gin... We should-” “No. We shouldn’t. I have made my peace with Fred’s death. He’s remembered everyday, his candle still burns on the mantelpiece, his pictures are still on the wall. As they will be, for years and years to come.”

“I know, he won’t be forgotten, no one that ever knew him would let themselves forget him. I’m not sure anyone ever could.”

Ginny managed a sad smile at that, the memory of one of many silly pranks he and George played on her swirling in her mind.

“I can’t go back to the place he died, Harry. It won’t be right. It won’t feel right.”

Harry started pacing the room, gestures large, “Gin, Hogwarts wasn’t just the place he died. It was the place he lived, too. It was where he sold students his jinxed sweets, where he tried to join the Triwizard Tournament with an aging spell, where he rebelled against Umbridge, where he trained to fight Voldemort. There’s so much else of him there, so many special moments. Not just death.” He turned back to face Ginny, and his arms dropped to his sides. Ginny had her hand clasped over her mouth, eyes brimming with tears she was trying to blink away. “I can’t, Harry. I won’t.”

Harry opened his mouth to protest, to apologise, he wasn’t sure, but he closed it when Ginny stood up from the table and held up her hand, tears now falling freely, asking him to say no more. She wished him goodnight in a broken voice, and went up the stairs to bed.

Harry sighed, looking at the letter, still on the table. He folded it up and slid it back into the envelope, then left it next to a picture of Fred in the living room. Ted had fallen asleep on the sofa at some point, so, with a little bit of effort, Harry managed to carry Ted into the green flames of the fireplace and onto the sofa in his own living room.

As expected, the letter from Hogwarts was on his doormat, and he opened it to read nothing different than what Ginny, Draco and every other combatant of the Battle, had read. He couldn’t stop thinking about the castle, and every moment encased in its walls. At some point, he had stumbled into a not-so-very-amusing game that compared a regular, happy memory of a place at the school, to the memory of that space during the battle. From a cupboard, he chose a bottle of liquor, and poured a brilliant crystal glass half full. With the glass at his lips and pleasant burning down his throat, he stood at his kitchen window, looking up at the sky. He was there long enough to watch the moon slide across the sky, at a painstakingly slow pace.

At some point, he ended up safely in his bed, flashes of memories both good and bad on his mind, still thinking about that moon.

Harry didn’t push further for Ginny to attend the memorial, and didn’t mention it at all- apart from the next day, just to apologize. He didn’t even say a word about it on the morning of the second of May. What he did do, was arrive at her house extra early so he could give her some time to herself, and he’d baked her favourite biscuits. When she came downstairs, she played cheery and happy to the boys, but Harry knew she was thinking about Fred. Even though she

wouldn't be coming to the memorial that night, Harry could tell that Fred would be in her thoughts all day, and no one thought higher of him than Ginny, because while many people might think back and smile to Fred's memory despite his tricks, Ginny loved him for them. He gave her a tight hug before he left, even though she could only muster half a hug back, then headed for the Ministry after dropping Ted off at his grandmother's home.

However many times Harry looked at the clock, it seemed to never get close enough to nine o'clock. He had decided to get through a large amount of paperwork during the morning and afternoon, then spend the evening studying a case involving four anonymous young adults with an affinity for making metal in public muggle places melt in the night, but it had only just gone a minute past seven and he had barely made a dent in that pile of paperwork. He looked over at the suit that was hanging on the door, chosen for him by Luna for the evening's occasion. It was tastefully black, but was fleetingly highlighted in a deep red sheen as the fabric moved under lights. There was a black button-up and waistcoat to match, but no tie as Harry disliked the things. His cufflinks were miniature versions of Hogwarts's seal in gold, the quartet of tiny gilded house animals idly flicked their tails and turned their heads, flapped their wings or slithered into a coil, enrapturing Harry as he held one of the cufflinks between his fingers. He put it back in the box next to the other and looked at the clock again; three past seven. With a sigh, he forced himself to focus on the document in front of him. Despite his best efforts, Harry's attention still wandered, and by the time the clock read a quarter past eight, he had convinced himself that arriving early at the memorial wasn't that much of a big deal, so he got up, collected his necessities and apparated home. In the living room, he flicked his wand to change into his handsome evening outfit, and fastened his cufflinks while examining his hair in the hall mirror; to comb, or not to comb? It was no longer the bird's nest mess that it had been in his schooldays, and to put his best foot forward in front of his former peers, he decided to brush his pitch black hair through, and even break out a spell to fix it in a classic pompadour. Proud of his appearance- tidy stubble, healthy colour to his face, smart suit, wide smile, he took a final glance at himself before apparating to Hogsmeade.

It was calm in the streets of the little town, a few students went in and out of the Three Broomsticks as he passed it, unable to ignore the years-old pull that he felt towards the place with a smile. Everything about Hogsmeade oozed nostalgia; faded memories he loved, like the books Hermione would lovingly read by the fire in Gryffindor common room, with their yellowed and worn pages. He knew Hermione and Ron would be attending together this evening, and Ted was staying the night at the Burrow with their kids. He assumed that Ginny would go there with Albus and James, if she felt like being with company.

A gusty breeze taunted him on his wander up to the castle, so Harry charmed his hair back into place once he had arrived at the gigantic front doors. They were swung wide open, welcoming the evening's guests, though Harry seemed to be the first guest there, as far as he could tell. His wrist clock informed him that it was twenty-five to nine. Harry looked up again when the sound of footsteps caught his ear. Inside of the great hall, house elves were pottering about, charming flowers and candles in a flurry of light and colour. Yellow, purple, pink and white plants all braided into garlands that hung along the stone walls, while wreaths covered in blue, pink and red spiralled together around clusters of candles as centerpieces on the as centerpieces on the immense tables, as well as on tall, smaller tables dotted about the entrance space, crowded around and dispersed throughout the hallways down to the front

doors. Harry watched in awe as the flowers bloomed in mid air to the house elves' careful motions in orchestrated perfection.

At the far end of the Great Hall, another figure was keeping her eye on the proceedings, until her calculated gaze fell on Harry. She started marching in his direction, robes billowing out around her, pointed hat bobbing with every step.

"Good evening mister Potter. I'm sure you are aware that you are quite early."

Harry nodded, "Apologies, Professor. I grew impatient..."

Minerva McGonagall eyed him up and down, "Yes, well... I suppose some things don't change, do they?"

Harry smiled, stuffing his hands into the pockets of his trousers, creasing the fabric. "You certainly haven't aged a day, professor."

Professor McGonagall raised her eyebrows, "There will be no need for flattery, Potter. Although I must say that I am relieved that you solved the mystery that hair combs seemed to pose to you throughout your time here."

"Well, one must tidy themselves up every now and again, don't you think? Not all of us can pull off a hat like that, after all."

They both chuckle, and start walking into the Great Hall in comfortable silence, Harry entranced by the house elves' decorating again. "Professor, why-"

"Are the house elves still here?"

Harry nodded, as there were remarkably many of them bustling about, even though the law had proclaimed all elves as 'free from enslavement'. They were also all fully clothed in proper garments, something Harry had never witnessed.

"We have your dear friend Mrs Granger to thank for that. Since her changes came to the Ministry, a lot of house elves- or, elves, I should say, were liberated, and so ended up here, just as eligible for education as any young witch or wizard. The elves that formerly served in Hogwarts were offered positions as staff or places in class. These ones are the former. No need for dirty pillowcases any more, thank goodness. They like to make their own clothes now. Though I hear a shop has been opened for elf clothing in Diagon Alley."

'If only Dobby had been here to experience this!' Harry smiled at the image of Dobby in potions class, or charms, probably turning pieces of parchment into birds.

When he looked around the castle again, from where he and his former professor were standing, it was as if a lens had fallen over his world. Everything was eerily green-blue tinted, dusk-like in a way, and an ominous tone distantly rang, as if he'd just come back to consciousness after being whacked over the head, hard. Debris scattered the floor, holes were blown through walls, stairs and arches, the dust still hung in the air. Dark puddles and crumpled heaps; people, bleeding, their wands still gripped in their cold hand.

Harry blinked, and the lens was gone, the sudden brightness around him was blinding. Where he had just been looking at a heap of rubble, two pillars stood in the hallway. To his left, where embers had been smoldering around a burned-out pile of ash and blackened wood, was the table that the teachers would sit at, covered in flowers and candles. The ominous ringing suddenly stopped, and Harry looked professor McGonagall in the eye.

"It was a hard job, clearing up this place, wasn't it?"

McGonagall, who had observed Harry during his few seconds of bewilderment, looked around and sighed.

"There shall be more guests arriving soon, you might be more comfortable near the entrance. You'll be surprised how relieved some of your peers will be that you're attending this

evening, mister Potter.”

With that, professor McGonagall swept from the Great Hall through a door at the side, and with a few final flourishes, the elves disappeared, leaving the space in a merry, colorful condition, perfect for an evening of reminiscing and remembrance. As Harry walked back to the doors, he spotted Ron and Hermione walking towards him, and he enveloped both of them in grateful hugs.

And a Pretty Face

“Kids alright?” Harry asked, after being unforeseenly almost suffocated in Ron’s hug.

“Yeah, no problems. My mum’s probably feeding them everything she possibly can at this moment.”

“Oh. Great.”

“No, Harry, you don’t understand,” Hermione interjected with a huff, “Rose recently became a little bit picky, and she lost the tiniest amount of weight, and now Molly simply will not relent in constantly feeding my children! She says she won’t have any grandchildren of hers being bony little scamps. Hugo’s not even six months old yet and she’s worried about him growing up skinny, for goodness’ sake!”

Harry exchanged a look with Ron, who rolled his eyes, and continued to nod along with Hermione’s rambling, as he had finally figured out that was her preferred form of ‘conversation’ when she had something to get off her chest. He guided her towards one of the standing tables while Ron went to clap someone he had recognised on the back.

“-which means that I now have to find them in the midst of two kids and keeping my research going, honestly Harry, absolute nightmare, though Ron has been helping me very well.”

“You’re both doing better now, then?” Harry asked cautiously, as Hermione had struggled with finding her footing in motherhood, what with there being so few books on the subject for mothers in the wizarding world and her being so book-centred.

Hermione nodded, “Yes, so much better. I’ve started keeping a diary, to order my thoughts and everything that’s happening every ohso hectic day. I’ve spent so much of my life reading, you would think the idea of writing might have come to me sooner.”

“Hermione, you could be a great help to other mothers, you know. There are lots of muggle-born witches that become mothers in the wizarding world and can really struggle. I remember Ginny telling me about it, she’s been doing research into this. She is a little unsure about writing an article about it though, since she’s really a Quidditch journalist.”

Hermione’s face lit up, “No way! I see no reason why she shouldn’t write it. Thank you Harry, perhaps I could talk to her about collaborating on the subject. Where is she?”

“Oh, well... She didn’t want to come tonight. Made up her mind the night the invitation arrived, and you know how headstrong she is. It’s sensitive, you know? Didn’t want to push her...”

“Push who?” Ron had appeared through the growing crowd, and handed Hermione a glass of wine and Harry a beer, and they all clinked before taking a swig from their drinks.

Hermione took another sip, then turned to Ron, “We were just talking about Ginny. Did you know she wasn’t coming tonight?”

Ron looked from his wife to Harry, “No, I didn’t. Why’s that?”

Harry opened his mouth to answer, but Hermione beat him to it, “She seems to have decided against coming weeks ago. I wish I would have known, Hugo and Rose could have stayed with her, instead of being stuffed like Christmas turkeys all evening.”

Harry and Ron laughed, and the trio chatted on, until a clinking stilled the conversations in the entrance. Everyone turned to face the far end of the hall, where a couple of teachers had gathered, professor McGonagall at the centre.

“Good evening everyone. I trust you all had safe travels up here. We’re very grateful that so many of you are here to attend this evening, and even though it is a sad day, I hope we can all

remember our dearly departed in the best way possible. This anniversary marks the years that we have spent in safety and peace, and we owe so much to the people who gave their lives for that cause. We can't bring them back. We can't erase the memories we have of war and destruction. But we can hold the ones we miss in good spirit, remember them at their best times-"

McGonagall's voice cracked at that, and even from this distance, Harry could see the glisten of tears, she no doubt watching images of students and colleagues in her mind's eye. One of the teachers stepped up and clasped her hand, and after exchanging glances, McGonagall continued,

"Being their true selves, happy, warm and safe. Let's remember them when they were strong, fighting for what they believed in, shoulder to shoulder with us. That's what they deserve."

Applause erupted, Harry, Ron and Hermione joining in. The teacher who had supported McGonagall stepped forward, and the applause thinned out to let the professor, who Harry now recognised as professor Hooch, his former Flying Instructor and Quidditch coach, speak to the crowd of former students,

"Please take your seats for dinner, sorting yourselves into your houses per table will not be necessary this evening."

Some awkward laughter rumbled through the evening's attendants, as everyone wondered where to take a seat in a flurry of low mumbles.

Picking up their conversation again, Harry and Hermione, oblivious to the others' dubiousness, took their drinks and sat down next to each other at the nearest table, which happened to usually be the Ravenclaw table. Ron took a seat opposite Hermione, and was joined by Luna and Neville moments after. Seamus and Dean materialized from the crowd as well, and excited catch-up small talk exploded from the growing group. The rest of the attendants seemed to relax, and simply took seats that were close to where they were standing, just like Harry and Hermione had done.

"Blimey, I'm glad you two moved when you did." Ron chuckled to Harry, earning him a confused look, but they were both pulled into the conversation between Seamus and Dean, who brought their usual chatty banter into the mix.

When food appeared along the tables, the remainder of the standing guests took their places, the four tables now all filled almost a quarter-way, with the Ravenclaw table being the most crowded.

Ron's eyes seemed to bulge as he looked at all of the food, "Blimey... As much as I love eating at home, nothing beats a good ol' supper at Hogwarts."

Ron started piling cuts of meat, potatoes, carrots, gravy and the like onto his plate, everyone shortly copying him.

"Ten years Ronald, and you haven't changed in the slightest."

Ron answered with his mouth full, "Can't change what's perfect, love." He swallowed and grinned widely at Hermione, who scoffed, but couldn't help but laugh.

"Has Malfoy come tonight?" Harry asked, after looking around at the faces in the Hall, but to no avail.

"Erm..." Ron twisted in his seat, craning his neck to search the crowd, "He's probably..."

Ron suddenly swung his arm out and pointed triumphantly through a couple of people at who was unmistakably Draco Malfoy.

"How'd you spot him so fast?" Harry chuckled, shovelling mash into his mouth.

"Next to George and Angie, of course. George's been working with Malfoy, y'see."

Harry spluttered on his mouthful of food, and started coughing, so much that Hermione started thumping her hand on his back. It took him a full few minutes to regain his breath, teary-eyed and flushed.

Ron looked concerned, handing him his drink “Y’alright, mate?”

Harry took a long swig and cleared his throat, “What... Working together? What on?”

Ron shrugged and reached for a dish of peas, “Dunno. ‘parrantly, Malfoy’s rather a creative chap, clever, too. He’s created a couple’a spells or somethin’.”

Neville looked confused, “Really? I didn’t even know he was back in the country. Last I heard, he’d buggered off to... Where was it he went?”

“Ugadou, Neville. Africa’s wizarding school.” Hermione nodded, “It’s in the Rwenzori Mountain range.”

Ron’s brow furrowed “Where’s that then?”

“Uganda,” sighed Hermione, “Ugadou specializes in Alchemy, and he was always good in Potions class, I’m sure that’s why Malfoy went there. Or, just to get away from everyone’s judgement. Can’t have been easy for him, being a Death Eater, fighting on the wrong side of the battle, father in Azkaban. He seems to have found his place now though, he married somebody Greengrass.”

“I thought he would have married that Parkinson girl he was always hanging about with.” commented Neville, “Though I understand why he didn’t. She wasn’t a very nice person, really.”

Seamus elbowed Harry, “Nah, she wasn’t. Remember when she said we should surrender ye to Voldemort, Harry? Right nutcase, that lass. Also, me mam says Malfoy’s got himself a son now ‘n all, but his wife was a bit of a gloomy person. Threatening to off herself, she was. In the end, they got divorced. Sad really.”

Hermione sighed again, “Poor child...”

Ron, unaffected by the turn in the conversation, spoke up again, “Anyway, he’s doing some work with George now, but they only started a few weeks ago, as far as I know.”

Harry watched Draco from across the room, until it seemed he was going to look up, so Harry darted his eyes to George to avoid making eye-contact, downing the dregs of his beer to appear as uninterested as possible.

He cleared his throat again, “I’m surprised George has come to this. I sort of assumed that he would feel the same way about it as Gin.”

“I must admit,” Hermione said, pushing her cleared plate forwards so she could lean on the table, “I wasn’t sure it was a good idea for him to come tonight. It can be traumatizing, you know, revisiting the place where a loved one has died. Especially when you were as close to them as George was to Fred.”

“I think it’s good that George is here.” said Luna, for the first time she’d addressed the group as a whole during the evening, up until then she’d only talked separately to Neville and Harry.

“Closure can be different for everyone, and if George thinks he can find it here, then I believe that he’s very brave to be back.”

The group nodded in agreement, quietly finishing up the food on their plates.

“I said to Ginny, y’know, when the invitation had arrived, that there are a lot more good memories of Fred here, than bad ones. I guess she just...” Harry broke off, wondering how to phrase what he wanted to say, “Maybe she thought that the bad outweighed the good...”

“Well, that’s okay.” Luna laid her hand over Harry’s. “It’s up to each person to decide how they remember someone, and it’s alright to struggle to get over some memories.”

Harry smiled sadly. Luna had a point, and she knew just how to make it.

After a couple of moments of stilted silence, Seamus downed the last bit of his beer, and slammed the goblet against the table, “Speaking of memories, let’s have a challenge. I wanna know about all of your great memories of the people we lost in the battle. C’mon, to jog yer mind we should get walkin’. That way I can show you the dent I made in one of the doors with me head.”

Confused looks and chuckles were exchanged, but they all got up to follow Seamus into one of the corridors anyway. For a while, the group wandered the castle, recounting stories of the twins, of professor Lupin, Cedric Diggory and Colin Creevey as they went along. Ron and Hermione talked about Lavender Brown, tastefully looping around the “Won-Won” days Ron had with her as his girlfriend. Luna fondly remembered the twins collecting her shoes from around the castle and bringing them back to her. Seamus finally managed to get control over his proficiency for pyrotechnics with Lupin, and everyone did indeed get to see the forehead-shaped breakage in the middle of a wooden door that he claimed to have made.

Harry had drifted apart from the group at one point, and now found himself wandering a hallway covered in portraits, his wand lit up with a whisper of Lumos. Hanging on the wall, there was one of Albus Dumbledore, standing in his office, poring over some parchment. His phoenix squawked, and before the painted version of Dumbledore could look up at Harry, he moved on to the next picture. There was a canvas with a very large group of people in it, and he was about to look at the next picture, until something made him do a retake.

Upon closer inspection, his eyes hadn’t been betraying him; in the painting, was Remus Lupin, smiling with that knowing smirk on his face, and next to him was Tonks, laughing happily, their arms around each other. Unable to tear his eyes away, Harry scanned the rest of the painting. There was Fred, winking at him, and Lavender Brown giggling inaudibly, Cedric Diggory sent Harry an understanding nod, and he couldn’t help the tears that stung his eyes at that. Colin Creevey smiled brightly, Harry half expected the enchanted picture-version of him to produce a camera, but a sudden amount of light made him look up, shielding his eyes.

“Lost, Potter?”

The unmistakable drawl of Draco Malfoy cut through Harry’s thoughts like a hot knife through butter, and it evoked such a strange, conflicted emotion that all Harry could do was smirk.

“Evening, Malfoy.”

And a Ponytail, Hangin' Down

“No, not lost, I seem to have lost my companions, is all.” He’d adjusted to the light, which came from a sparkling ball that Malfoy had sent up to hover overhead. He undid the Lumos charm and looked Malfoy up and down. The suit he was wearing was grey, as was his shirt. No tie, and black dress shoes. What was new, was his long hair, which was tied behind his head somewhere Harry couldn’t see, and was long enough to lay over his shoulder. He seemed a bit taller than the time Harry had last seen him, but his whole demeanor and his looks were as damned breathtaking as they always had been.

“Sheepish as ever, then.” Malfoy took a couple of steps closer, studying Harry with an interest that made him want to squirm.

“Aw come on now, I thought you might be a nicer person by now.”

Malfoy seemed taken aback, “Whatever gave you that idea?”

“Well, I’ve heard you’re working with George on something. Must say, I never saw that coming.”

“Ah, yes...” Malfoy chuckled, “Quite pleased about that, it’ll be interesting to see how it works out. Listen, Potter, I was not a very pleasant person during my school years, and I can only apologize for my asshole behaviour.”

Harry looked away to hide his smile, “That’s quite strongly put, but, you’re not wrong.”

“I rarely am.”

“Maybe. You just proved you’re still an asshole though.”

Malfoy nodded, “You just proved you can hold a conversation for more than a few seconds. Impressive. Not unlike to how you look tonight. I hardly recognised you. Well, the scar helped.”

Harry looked down at himself, then cockily brushed his sleeves of dust that wasn’t there, “You know, McGonagall said something similar earlier. That she was thankful that I had found out that combs exist.”

“Your hair was rather a mess.”

“Are you kidding? I was rather a mess. Couldn’t keep anything together for five seconds while I was here. Mind you, I haven’t much improved.” ‘Shit. Why would I say that to Malfoy? Now I’m going to get it, big time. Anybody else want an invitation to make fun of my life?’

“Oh? I’ve heard you’re quite the Auror, Potter. Wasn’t difficult to guess that you’d go into the profession, but nonetheless, it suits you.”

‘Wow. Malfoy is actually being nice. Or is it well-disguised sarcasm?’

Harry eyed Malfoy suspiciously, but he looked serious, neutral even.

“Thank you... Erm, must admit, we’re a bit stuck at the moment though, the other Aurors and I. There is someone- a wizard, going around the muggle world, melting metal objects during the night. You know, park benches, lampposts, fences and the like.”

“Well, how do you know that it isn’t some muggle with a substance of their own?”

Harry shook his head, “The case was brought to us by a member of the muggle law enforcement, a muggle wife of a wizard. She asked us to have a look, because they couldn’t identify it as any muggle-known substances. Sure enough, Appare Vestigium showed traces of magic, but not any kind of magic that we know. It’s new, independently invented, not taught.”

Malfoy slowly nodded, a look of understanding dawning on his face.

“Perhaps I could give you a couple of names, I know a few people who... Experiment with spells. Funny you mentioned my work with George, because that’s what we are doing. Nothing as complex as metal reduction, just a few things for his business.”

“Good on you both, and that would be great. Thanks, Malfoy.”

Harry’s eyes fell back onto the painting he was looking at before he’d been interrupted, and Malfoy followed his gaze. The mood chilled, and Harry noticed Malfoy looking at the faces on the painting.

“Did you lose anyone?”

Malfoy didn’t answer immediately, he simply looked at each of the faces for a few moments, then at Harry. His voice was distant, more disconnected than he’d been during the minutes prior.

“No one important.”

Harry looked back at the faces, smiling sadly.

He took a deep breath, “Wanna go back, join the others in the Hall?”

Malfoy nodded, “Alright then, just don’t wander off, Potter.”

“Promise, Malfoy.”

At his gesture, the ball of light followed Malfoy, illuminating the otherwise pitch-black corridors as they made their way down to the Great Hall again, where the atmosphere was warmed by candlelight and sweet memories. The teachers seemed to have retired to their chambers, and most of the guests were grouped around the standing tables or against a wall somewhere. Harry Transfigured one of the tall tables into a regular one with a couple of chairs around it, and both of them took a seat.

Draco tested the wobbliness of the table, then deduced that it was acceptable.

“Nicely done.”

“Thank you.”

“Just two things missing...”

Malfoy looked over at the table to the side of the hall, where drinks were lined up for the guests. A second later, two of them disappeared and instead stood in front of Harry and himself. He raised his glass to Harry, who was rather impressed by the magic, and quenched his thirst with a satisfying gulp. Grateful for the beverage, Harry downed nearly half of the beer before putting it back down. He then eyed the drink, wondering if it was his fifth or sixth of the evening. Or seventh? He shrugged and thanked Malfoy again, who smiled, and politely nodded in response before looking about the room again.

To Harry, Malfoy being nice to him, and himself being pleasant back, felt strange and unnatural. He was always so used to being on his guard around Malfoy, because he expected everything he said to be mocked. It seemed as though Malfoy had kicked that annoying habit. As if he could read his mind, Malfoy picked up the conversation on the same topic.

“It’s refreshing to be able to talk to you without everyone listening in, picking apart our sentences for us. You’ve also dropped the need to feel offended by everything I say.”

“Hang on now, let’s be honest, you meant to be offensive most of the time.”

“Touché, Potter.”

Harry leant back in his chair, looking at Malfoy, who was distracted by the extravagant garlands and decorations hung about the room. To Harry, in this light, Malfoy seemed less stark than he usually would come across. The yellow glow from the candles softened the

sharp edges in his face, and brought a gentle shine to his white-blond hair, as if it was lacing every strand with golden lining. Harry abruptly stopped his train of thought, and with a quizzical look on his face, contemplated the familiar yet unnerving feeling of nostalgia; he's been on this track of mind before. He decided to cut the silence.

"You know, you're actually not that bad. Well, back in the portrait gallery, you weren't. How can it be that we never got to talking before now? You're very easy to talk to when you're not being snarky or otherwise busy saying my last name as if it's some contagious disease. I'm confused as to why we were never friends during our school years. "

Malfoy laughed, "'Cause we hated each other's guts, that's why."

Harry's eyes slid from the contact they were holding with Malfoy's, to the stone floor. With a witty response lacking, Malfoy's smile fell, with eyes squinted and eyebrows creased in confusion.

"Didn't we?"

"Oh, for sure. I just... Now don't get me wrong, you could be a real prick, but whenever you were calm, y'know, chilled out... I had this stupid crush on you. Fuelled my hatred for you and all."

Harry cautiously looked back up at Malfoy, dreading the mockery to come. He shouldn't have drank all that beer, he was much too free with his speech while under the slightest amount of alcohol. Harry braced for impact, but was surprised when met only with Malfoy's dumbfounded gaze, his mouth ever so slightly open, undignified but seemingly uncaring about it.

"You're kidding." was the accusation that fell from Malfoy's lips, and Harry couldn't help but chuckle under the circumstances.

"You see! I knew it was a joke. Shame on you, Potter, saying stupid things like that."

"I'm not joking!" Harry said incredulously, his hands in the air as if he were surrendering.

"Yes, you are--"

"I'm not, promise."

Against his better judgement, Harry took a sip from his drink.

"I never thought I would have to assure you of the fact, I thought I would end up defending myself against the idea that I might have ever had feelings for my rival. But here we are."

"Former rival, Potter. I've no interest in petty squabbles with you anymore."

"Malfoy, you'll always be petty. Not that I know you all that well, but I know you just wouldn't be you without pettiness."

"You're quite misinformed Potter. You're simply not paying enough attention."

"To what? You?" Harry snorted at the ridiculous turn this conversation had taken.

Malfoy raised his chin, "Maybe. You certainly failed to notice--"

He was abruptly cut off by the group that Harry had lost, which had just entered back into the Great Hall from outside. Seamus and Hermione were stumbling, and both bore the traces of recent tears, all red and puffy-eyed, clutching each other tightly, but both smiling in between irregular sobs and gasps for breath. Ron was guiding them both by their shoulders, Neville was doing his best to be assuring, Luna supplying an addition to what he was saying here and there, while Dean was simply bringing up the rear. Harry stood up, concerned, and strode towards them, to which Draco rolled his eyes; 'Always swooping in to save the day...'

He picked up his drink and wandered on after Harry, curious as to what the upset was about this time.

When Draco caught up with Harry, all he could catch was something involving a hippogriff, and that Hermione had supposedly accumulated so much grief during the evening, that the

mention of Sirius- Sirius Black, no doubt, had caused her to collapse into tears. Draco didn't miss the ever-so subtle motion of drinking, followed by the less subtle pointing at Hermione and Seamus that Ron made to Harry, who nodded understandingly. When Hermione's expression foretold more crying, Harry hugged her, patting her back soothingly. He stepped back, and she took a deep breath, and he smiled. Seamus, meanwhile, was crying onto Luna's shoulder. Dean was behind Luna, trying to calm Seamus, while Neville was bringing his moral support to Luna from behind Seamus. Luna was being very calm and understanding about the matter, considering she was quite sandwiched and had a soggy shoulder.

"I think you and Ron should stay at my house tonight," offered Harry, knowing Hermione rarely drank any alcohol, and would feel terrible in the morning, physically as well as being ashamed for letting herself get so drunk, and since Harry could expect no early rising from her hungover husband, he should be there to support her himself. Hermione never really wanted nor needed help, so when she did, he would either make sure that Ron knew it, or that he himself was there to offer his assistance.

Ron began to protest, "Oh, no Harry, we'll stay at my Mum and Dad's-"

"Ron, it's nearly two in the morning, you can't disturb your parents at this time of night. Besides, there's no room for two more bodies at the burrow, Bill and Fleur are there with all three of their kids, so are George and Angie with their two. I'm certain that Ginny is over there with Jim and Alby as well."

Hermione huffed, "But I said that Neville, Luna, Seamus and Dean could stay with us, so they could celebrate Victoire's birthday at the Burrow with us tomorrow."

"Oh, well, I have a spare bedroom and a fold-out sofa, I'll take the armchair."

Hermione looked at him through wet eyelashes, "Are you sure, Harry?"

He nodded sincerely, "Of course."

Hermione giggled and flung her arms around him, Harry laughed as he caught her. He looked at Ron, who nodded in appreciation, and Harry answered with a smile.

Shifting the now passed-out Hermione from his own arms into Ron's, Harry produced his keys from his suit pocket and handed them to Luna, who seemed to be the most sober of the six of his friends. She stood for a moment, keys in hand.

"Why are you giving me these, Harry?"

"Because you're all taking these two," he pointed to Seamus and Hermione, "Home to my house, but I'm staying a little longer."

She nodded, and hugged him tightly, and so did everybody else, before they started to walk out of the castle, to where they could apparate.

Harry turned to walk back to the table where he'd left Malfoy, but halted when he saw him sitting barely a step behind him, leaned back against the table on his elbows, long legs elegantly crossed.

"Oh. Didn't know you were there..." He muttered, stepping over the bench to sit next to Malfoy, albeit facing the opposite way.

"Like I was saying, not paying attention."

"To you," Harry repeated, with a smile.

A Wiggle

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“And why should I have paid attention to the boy in Slytherin who so obviously hated my friends and I?”

His voice was light in a kidding way, but he was still intrigued to know the answer.

“I apologized for that, I intend to do so personally to all of them as well. That aside, Potter, had you not been so wrapped up in your own issues, you might have noticed that I was, in fact, quietly wondering what it would be like to be looked at by you, in the way which you looked at Cho, and later Miss Ginny Weasley. Well, Mrs Ginny Potter by now, I assume.”

Harry's face scrunched in confusion and looked away. A minute or so later, he looked at Malfoy, repeatedly taking a breath to talk, but deciding against it at the last moment, until he could fully form a sentence again.

“You're telling me that we-”

He gestured between them, “We were both, both, stupidly having feelings for-”

Malfoy was nodding, sipping from his drink while Harry attempted to process this information.

“For, for each other...” Harry sighed.

A few moments of silence passed, both of them lost in thoughts too intimate to tell, until finally Harry picked up on something Malfoy had said and he had overlooked at the time.

“You assumed wrong, by the way.”

Malfoy's gaze that met his was challenging, 'Tell me I'm wrong again, Potter, and so help me-

“About Ginny. And me. I mean, she's not my- we're not married.”

Draco had to hide his surprise by sharply clearing his throat, “You're not?”

Harry decidedly shook his head, “No. Divorced quite a while ago.”

“I see. Hadn't expected that. Although this evening has been full of things I didn't expect, so far.”

“Same here.”

The glimpse that Harry caught in Malfoy's eye, of something he knew was more intimate than anything just friendly, he quickly pushed aside. 'Those feelings belong to the teenaged me and no one else.'

“Do you remember...” began Malfoy, before trailing off without finishing his sentence, following the grooves in the wood of the table with a finger, as he dwelled on whatever memory he'd wanted to bring up.

“The twenty-first night of September?”

Draco looked up, confused, “Probably not. What year?”

Harry shook his head, “Never mind. You were saying...?”

“Well... I was wondering whether or not you recall the beginning of our third year. When the dementors stopped the express.”

“Oh... Unfortunately, I do.” Harry winced, “Why?”

“Well, when we were in the Great Hall, just over there, I think we were sat, and I asked you if you'd actually fainted when a dementor got close. To my regret, my friend noticed me asking

and started sniggering, and I'm sorry that I didn't tell him off. But I was being serious, I really was concerned about you."

Eye brows raised in disbelief, Harry sipped from his drink again. "Aha, I had wondered about that. I fainted an excessive amount during that year. I was eating very poorly at the time, if I'm honest. I was half expecting to faint again when Hagrid dragged me up to Buckbeak during that first lesson, I was terrified for a second."

"I still don't see how you getting onto that hippogriff could have been safe. My heart was in my mouth the entire time you were gone."

"Worried for me, were you, Malfoy?"

Draco sighed, "You're taking the piss, but unfortunately, I was..."

"If only hippogriffs could be driven off like dementors, eh? Save you from getting kicked in the arm again." Harry laughed and patted Malfoy's arm, who looked from it to Harry, then ignored the meandering thoughts in his mind. He didn't mean it like that...

"Indeed. A patronus against hippogriffs. Revolutionary. Must talk to George about this."

"Malfoy, I know you're joking, but it really sounds like you're mocking me. Anyway, what is your patronus? I never saw you produce one."

Draco shook his head and shrugged, "I wouldn't know, Potter. Never had the need for one."

Harry sat up straight, "You don't- Needing one isn't the point, though. It's an advanced spell, you have to practice it a few times before you can produce a full one."

"Potter, I hardly expect to come across a dementor, just like that."

Harry pulled a face and settled his elbows back down on the table, "That's what people said before the second wizarding war came along..."

"Well how do you expect I could learn it now, anyway? Take a class here?"

"Plenty of books on the subject, I'm sure."

"Alas. All of those include using a wand."

Harry looked perplexed at that. "So?"

Malfoy played with his cufflinks for a few seconds, pursing his lips. Harry's mind was whirring, though quite slowly due to his intake of alcohol.

"The school I attended to re-sit my seventh year was in a mountain in Uganda. It's called Ugadou (Wagadoo, for the ladies and gents and everyone beyond who might be wondering), and I managed to finish my education with a high proficiency in Alchemy. At Ugadou, magic is almost exclusively done without wands. Since I learned to do magic without a wand, I've never managed to complete a spell with one again. As if I betrayed it, somehow."

"Oh... No patronuses in Uganda?"

"No, they don't use dementors, as far as I know."

"Well... Would you like me to see if I could help? Unsolvables are sort of my thing."

Malfoy laughed, thinking that Harry was joking. When he saw him being serious, he rubbed the back of his neck and cleared his throat again.

"Erm... Yeah, alright. That would be great, Potter."

"Fantastic! Or, fine... Whichever." Harry cleared his throat and drummed his fingers against the table. "Anyway, I should go home."

"Right, so should I."

They both stood up, and quietly walked side-by-side down the stairs to the front doors. On the last step, Harry suddenly stopped, one foot hovering in mid-air.

"Shit." He whispered, then slowly took the last step down to the floor, next to Draco.

"What's wrong?" Draco chuckled, he was not used to the Chosen One swearing like that.

"I've just realized something. I have six drunk, exhausted, nearly-thirty-year-old friends passed out in my house."

"Yes, Potter. That was your suggestion."

"No, I know that, I'm just wondering if I'm going to get in. I gave them my keys. D'you think they'll wake up if I bang the door hard enough?"

"Why don't you just charm the door open?"

"Can't. Hermione enchanted my house against opening spells. And Neville usually silences his entire house from outside noises before going to sleep."

"Sounds like you're fucked." Draco couldn't bite back the comment before it was out, and his eyes quickly darted to Harry to see if he'd picked it up. To his horror, or perhaps delight, Draco's gaze very briefly met his, followed by both of them quickly looking away.

"Ahem... I'll be alright, I'll camp out in my garden for the night."

"You keep camping gear in your garden?"

"Well, no... I'll transfigure my outside parasol into a bed."

"I hate to tell you Potter, but your transfiguration skills are shite."

Harry choked back a laugh, "Excuse me!? I think you'll find them perfectly adequate."

"And I hate to say it, but I think not. That table that you transfigured popped back up after just an hour of us sitting at it."

"Oh... I suppose then, that no one ever died from a crooked back after sleeping on the patio once."

"Don't be ridiculous, Potter. You'll have to find some lodging for the night."

"No, no... I don't want to impose my hungover arse on anyone's morning, thanks. Besides, nearly everyone's gone home by now."

"Anyone would be happy to have you, Harry. It's not like they could refuse you, of all people."

"I know. That's also why I wouldn't want to ask."

Draco nodded in understanding. People taking you in because they have to, either in fear or, in Harry's case, because they think they owe it to him, isn't a pleasant reason to stay with anyone. He stood in the huge doorway with Harry for a few moments longer, shifting his weight, until he had gathered enough courage to ask. "What if I offered for you to stay with me, then?"

Harry looked at Draco with a half smile, as if he were really considering the idea, glad to have it proposed at all, but Draco was let down by his response.

"That's very kind of you, Malfoy, but honestly, I will be fine. Already looking forward to the guilt-waffles that Dean might make tomorrow morning for me."

He flashed Draco that cheeky grin of his, and Draco's stomach flipped, and he could have sworn that his knees almost buckled, had he not used the wall to steady himself.

"Alright there, Malfoy? Too much to drink, perhaps?"

"Perhaps." Draco repeated, pulling his jacket straight. "At the very least, let me assist in trying to rouse your friends? Two pairs of fists are better than one."

Harry bit his lip to hide his smile, "I'm sure they are. Mmmh-hm."

Malfoy scoffed, "For Merlin's sake, Potter! I meant against a door."

"Oh, I know. Pounding away-" Harry cut himself off laughing, and gestured for Malfoy to follow him just outside. Regaining his breath, he let Malfoy hold his arm, before he apparated them both to his house.

As expected, the house was silent, and so was the street. None of the lights were on inside, and there was no movement to be seen. Harry walked up to the front window and shielded his eyes to look inside.

“Seamus and Dean are passed out on top of each other in my living room, d’you think we can wake them?”

Draco had walked over to look inside as well, “I suppose we can only find out...”

They looked from each other, back inside, then both started frantically knocking against the glass. Not a budge from either of the men inside. Harry moved to the pigeonhole and started shouting their names through it, Draco still knocking on the glass.

After a good few minutes of noise making, Harry looked into the house through the window again.

“Damn. They’re out cold.” He slid down the wall and closed his eyes, knackered.

“And quite strongly enchanted. Anti-burglary with silencing, you’ve no chance of getting through.”

Malfoy looked down at Harry, and knelt down to lightly tap his shoulder. Harry lazily opened his eyes with a groan of discontent.

“Come on Potter, get up. You can stay with me tonight.”

Harry swatted him away and closed his eyes again.

“I’m perfectly happy here. Can barely keep my eyes open, I’ll be asleep in moments.”

“You can’t sleep sitting against the front of your house.”

“Fucking watch me, Malfoy.”

A few minutes of silence set in, during which Draco was simply confused at Harry’s resolution to be annoyingly stubborn and his determination in the matter. The night air was clearing Draco’s mind a bit, chasing away the alcohol-induced cloudiness in his mind.

Harry’s hair had become messier than it was at the beginning of the evening, but somehow it was a comfort to Draco, to see some of the old Harry again. Those smart dress robes and the well-groomed stubble didn’t fit in with the Harry that Draco remembered. His headstrong attitude had never gone though, and he’d heard how well that trait worked out for him while he was doing his job.

His school year abroad had been followed by some advantageous apprenticeships with powerful witches and wizards in Uganda, Mozambique and South Africa, and the sheer enjoyment of being with like-minded people who shared his interest and fascination made him wonder whether he would ever want to travel back home. It took an insistent letter from his mother, expressing how much she missed him, for him to finally return, and when Draco had arrived back in the UK, circumstances managed to wrap him up so much that he stayed. By circumstances, he meant his trainwreck of a marriage, that now had him so grim about life that only his son could bring him happiness, and as much as he hated to admit it, that was also something holding him back from bettering his life. He couldn’t go back to Africa anymore, not until Scorpius was old enough to understand why his dad was gone for several months, and waiting that long was becoming more unbearable by the week. Only recently had his new collaboration with Geoge managed to alleviate some of his hopelessness, but there was still so much about Alchemy that he had to learn, so much more knowledge to be acquired, if only he could travel back to his acquaintances in Africa.

Draco was brought out of his thoughts by a soft snore, to the serene image of Harry Potter,

sound asleep against the brick, head lolled onto his shoulder at an odd angle. Draco winced, he couldn't imagine that sleeping position to be comfortable. He dropped down to crouch next to Harry and tapped his chest a few times, to which Harry barely responded. With a sigh, Draco took hold of Harry and, after several attempts, managed to get him on his feet. It helped that Harry had stayed lean, and that he was a bit shorter than Draco.

With a short crack, he apparated them from Harry's Oxford home to Edinburgh, or more precisely, the concierge's office in Draco's apartment building, abandoned for the night. The sound of apparation would have Mrs Cambell knocking on his door within moments, no matter the time of night, and he wasn't in the mood to entertain small talk. Draco cast a spell over Harry, so he drifted along instead of being dragged. Draco took a moment to catch his breath, there was more muscle mass on Harry than he'd expected, and that stirred a curiousness inside of Draco that he wouldn't admit was anything but platonic.

Draco stuck his head out of the door, checking that there was no one wandering about, though at this time in the morning, he doubted it. He walked out of the office, guiding the floating, somehow still asleep Harry, by his back, towards the elevator.

Chapter End Notes

Kudos, if earned, are always appreciated ;)

And a Walk

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Draco managed to get Harry into the apartment with relatively little sound, and he was relatively sure that he'd alerted no one to their arrival. He closed the front door and locked it with the key and an enchantment, then cast a silencing spell, just in case. He ended the spell on Harry, and helped him onto the sofa after taking his jacket off and folding it over a chair. Draco covered Harry with a blanket, then meant to retreat to his bedroom, but Harry had caught hold of his lapel with one hand, and his wrist with the other. Draco looked up, straight into Harry's heavily lidded eyes, who drew a slow breath.

"I didn't know until tonight, that I've always regretted not doing this earlier..."

Harry pulled a willing Draco down to press their lips together in a feather-light kiss, that had Draco lingering for seconds after it had passed, barely able to believe it. Harry, on the other hand, looked perfectly content as he dozed back off to sleep.

Draco managed to make it to his bed, only to lay awake with butterflies in his stomach, pondering the evening's events, going over and over the conversations he'd had with Harry, and... Their incident in the living room. He permitted himself to wonder- not hope, just wonder...

The next morning, with sun streaming into the flat, Harry pushed himself up to sit with a heavy groan. He stretched, but stopped mid-yawn when he failed to recognize his surroundings. He blinked a few times against the sunlight to his left, through the windows he could see the buildings of a city he couldn't place, and when he looked around the room over the back of the sofa, he was even more confused. He reached for his wand, but realised he wasn't wearing his jacket, which was over by the dining table. He got up, intending to retrieve it, but the headache that split its way through his head had him grabbing the sofa for support. He groaned again, and marched his way over to the dining table, where he could see through a doorway into a kitchen, where Malfoy was nonchalantly standing, coffee cup in hand, reading a newspaper. Harry's brow creased,

"Malfoy? Is this...?"

Draco looked up, smirked- to which Harry's lungs responded by stopping for a moment, so Harry could cough to regain his breath.

"Morning, Potter. Coffee?"

"Erm... Tea, if you have any."

Harry's voice was gravelly and hoarse, and he had to clear his throat a few times- although Draco wished he hadn't, before he spoke again.

"When did- How'd you...?"

Malfoy only smiled in response, and handed him a mug of tea once the kettle had boiled.

Harry took it gratefully, and stood opposite Malfoy against a kitchen counter while he silently sipped it, slowly going over the shreds of memory he had from last night. One in particular made him take another swig of tea and shake his head, as if that would make it go away... Or make it clearer. He looked up at Malfoy, who was eyeing him with that expression of knowing a little too much, and narrowed his eyes.

"Did I...? Oh, Merlin, I did." The image in his mind and the memory of what he'd said slowly

trickled back, embarrassment and regret with them, though they were gradually overpowered by the fireworks of feelings that his action had evoked. He cautiously met Malfoy's eyes again, "Didn't I?"

Malfoy laughed, "Oh, Potter, you most certainly did."

Harry didn't much like the amount of enjoyment that Malfoy seemed to be taking in this, though he couldn't deny liking the look on his face when he took a few steps closer, now barely inches away from him. Harry attempted to apologize, running a hand through his dishevelled hair, but Malfoy stopped him with a hand on his arm.

"If you get to do something that you regretted never doing before, then so do I."

Harry half-expected Malfoy to slap him after that comment, so the moment that their lips met again was a relief, if not confusing at worst and complicated at best. Harry managed to drop his thoughts though, and slide an arm around Malfoy, pulling him closer, as Draco tilted Harry's chin up with his hands. When Harry went to break apart, Draco placed a hand firmly behind his neck, bringing him back in, sliding his fingers into the mess of hair, and Harry melted in the grasp Draco had on him.

Heavy breaths finally tore the kiss to an end, foreheads rested against one another as they basked in the sunlight and mutual lust for each other. When Harry finally opened his eyes again, he met the pale blue irises that were barely visible around Malfoy's wide-blown pupils. Harry chuckled, the situation seemed obscene and was ethereal at the same time. Malfoy didn't manage to stop his cheeks from lifting into a genuine smile as well, and all Harry could think was that he could stare at that smile for years and years.

At some point, Harry left Draco's apartment, but only after some stilted conversation, Malfoy being insistent that Harry borrow some of his clothes because he wasn't going to let him walk around in last night's suit, and another kiss. He apparated in front of his house, which was now easier to get into because Neville had woken up, and he opened the door for Harry with a very sluggish and confused expression.

"Blimey, Harry, did you never get home?"

"Erm, no I gave you guys the keys, and forgot that I'd need them myself."

"Oh. Where've you been all night then?"

"Someone offered me their sofa." Harry wondered how vague he could keep being before someone caught on to his secrecy, and the answer was probably 'very', when he considered the beverages that had been downed last night by his friends. In any case, he attempted to redirect Neville, Dean and Seamus', both of whom had just woken up and had followed the last bit of conversation, attention onto another subject. "So. Hangover cures, coming right up."

Several minutes later, Harry handed glasses full of smoothie to the people who were awake, now also including Luna and a miserable looking Hermione.

The latter gratefully took the glass from him with a half-hearted smile, and Harry patted her shoulder, letting her know everything was okay.

Moments later, Ron stumbled into the kitchen, with a bedhead of hair and Harry's bathrobe falling open, revealing more than anyone felt necessary.

Harry knew Hermione would be alright when her usual sharp tone came right back up to put her husband in line, "Ronald, really? Tie that robe properly."

As if he'd barely noticed he was wearing it, Ron looked down at himself and started knotting the waistband, eyeing Harry suspiciously, "Why are you dressed like a pretentious snob, mate?"

All eyes were back on Harry, who quickly shoved his hands in his pockets and hunched his shoulders with a shrug, "I, erm... Borrowed them..."

"They look like something Malfoy would wear," Seamus joked, but Neville seemed to catch on.

"Harry, was it Malfoy's sofa you slept on last night?" he guessed.

The tension in the room strained and became near unbearable, so Harry nodded, "Yeah, he was kind enough to offer."

The room went quiet for a moment, until Dean wolf whistled and the room exploded into opinions and mild shouting. Ron felt he had become a nice chap, Hermione was pointing out all of his shortcomings, Luna defended his actions as a Death Eater while Neville countered them, and Dean and Seamus simply sat nodding with big smirks and winking at Harry, as if they could tell by Harry's unwillingness to let all of this on, that something significant had happened.

"Alright! Let's calm the hell down." Harry managed to bring the room back to relative peace, and had the attention once again. "Remember that we have Victoire's birthday today, we should start getting ready to get to the burrow on time."

Hermione and Luna disappeared upstairs, Harry handed Ron, Neville, Dean and Seamus the packages that had just been dropped off by owls; suits to each of their preference and size. The Weasley's parties were all but small and required a certain level of dressing up. The fireplace lit up and out stepped Andromeda and Ted, who looked very smart in his blue suit with a grey tie, holding a present with sparkly wrapping and a large bow that spurted fireworks, "D'you think she'll like it?" Ted asked, holding the present up for Harry to inspect.

He laughed and took the present from Ted, then pulled him into a hug, "I'm sure she'll love it, buddy."

Andromeda had wandered into the house and was helping the men with spelling their suits into place and setting their hair straight. Harry asked her if she was coming, but she shook her head no, "I'm not up for it, dear. Give everyone my love, though, and here's a card for young Victoire," she handed Harry a beautifully decorated envelope. He smiled and hugged her, and she stepped back into the fireplace, but not before complementing Luna and Hermione on their dresses. Luna was wearing a silky yellow dress and had wrapped her shoulders in a sheer pink shawl. Ron was awestruck by Hermione, monochrome in lavender heels and a quarter-sleeved dress that passed her knees. Dean, wearing dove grey and a tie matching Dean's, twirled Luna around with a smile, "Looking lovely as ever, ladies." All eight linked arms and Ron apparated them to the burrow.

There was a large marquee already up, and even though the morning wasn't yet through, there was a bustle in and around the house that seemed to make the air fizz with excitement. There was a squeal in the distance; Victoire had spotted Ted and was running over to fling herself into a hug. Ted handed her the present, wishing her a happy birthday, and she giggled and thanked him. Harry gave her the card from Andromeda, and Neville handed her a box on behalf of himself, Dean, Seamus and Luna. After she thanked them all graciously, she and Ted skipped off to put them with her other cards and gifts.

"Good kid. More Delacour than Weasley, thank Merlin." commented Seamus with a decided nod.

"Hey!" Ron whacked him over his head, "What's wrong with Weasley?"

Seamus rubbed his head with a dramatic expression, "Nothing, you tosser. I just meant that

she doesn't seem very mischievous, like most of you are."

"Well, I don't know about that," Hermione cast a quick glance around and lowered her voice, "She's clever, knows how to direct herself around people. Wouldn't be a bad interrogator, actually, I'm sure she could squeeze every ounce of knowledge out of people."

"How about you set your recruiting aside for now, love." Ron patted her shoulder, "And let's celebrate our clever nieces' eighth birthday."

Dean and Seamus went off to where George was standing, Neville and Luna joined Rolf Scamander by a half-decorated table, and Harry stayed with Ron and the other Weasley siblings to assist in the hanging and spelling of decorations. He was about to charm a stick into a garland, before he hesitated, wand mid-swish. Ron noticed, and finished his spell to enchant the ceiling of the marquee to walk over to him, "Y'alright there, mate? Have you forgotten the spell?"

"Ah- No, just something Malfoy said yesterday. Apparently my transfiguration skills are shite."

Ron laughed, nodding, "Sorry to say Harry, but he's not wrong. Remember when you turned a stone into a garden chair for me when we went camping last year? One moment I was sitting next to the fire, right, enjoying the evening, the next I'm whalloped to the ground with a cracked spine cause I fell on top of a bloody rock!"

Harry had to contain his laughter, "From rocking chair to rock chair, am I right?"

"Merlin's beard, Harry..." Ron chuckled, "I spilled my beer that night and all. That's a beer I'll never get back."

They finished jazzing up the marquee, just as Ginny came out of the burrow, carrying a sleeping Albus and James running ahead of her at Harry, who crouched down with a wide grin to catch him. "There's my Jimmy James! Have you been a good boy?"

James nodded and wiggled to be set down so he could career off again, and Harry was joined by Ginny, who transferred Albus into his arms, "Yes, they've both been very good this morning, they were wondering where Dad was though. Yesterday, not so good."

Harry looked up in concern, but Ginny shook her head to let him know it wasn't too serious, "There's, erm- Tomato sauce smeared across the kitchen wall. I cleaned the floor but it stained the paint and it still smells of tomato in there."

Harry chuckled and let Albus run off after his brother, "I'll sort it tomorrow, don't worry."

Ginny nodded, then her expression changed to something Harry couldn't read, "How was the service yesterday?"

He sighed, "I'll be honest, it was more like one large, alcohol-fuelled therapy session than a memorial. I feel a bit guilty."

"Why? A memorial is, as the name suggests, a way to keep the memory of them alive. If that memory, as well as a place so full of trauma, called for a way to cope, surely that's alright?"

"I suppose. There's a great painting in the gallery, Ginny. Fred's in it, so're Tonks, Lupin..."

"That's... Lovely. It's good they have a way to show the current students who fought for their school." She still got uneasy when Fred's name was mentioned. "I heard the same from Draco, actually. Apparently you two managed to reconcile last night. Took you long enough."

"Erm, yeah..." Harry decided to move on, "About Hogwarts, d'you reckon Teddy'll get his letter this year, or next? I know he only just turned ten last month, but that would mean that he'd turn eleven in his first year. He's really anxious to go."

Ginny smiles, "Sounds like you're also really anxious for him to go."

"When you say it like that, you just make me look bad. No, I can't wait for him to go so he can experience Hogwarts. I know I loved every minute of it. Alright, nearly every minute."

“Harry, your Hogwarts experience was a train-wreck. There was a disaster of some kind every single year.”

“I know, but now when Ted goes, he can tell me what things are like without all of those disasters going on.”

Ginny giggled, “Oh, Harry Potter... Only you would want the complete opposite of living through someone vivaciously.”

Chapter End Notes

The fic is named what it is after Harry and Draco's patronuses, or, in Draco's case, supposed patronus. I went through a loooooong list that had every animal alive on it, but narrowed it down to animals that were predatory, shy and intelligent. Through this, I came across the Grey Fox, or Fox just for simplicity. I think it fits Draco well as a patronus, but if anyone disagrees, I'd like to hear some alternatives :)

A Giggle

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Harry and Ginny stand at the edge of the Weasley's orchard in comfortable silence, watching Bill and Fleur greet the arriving guests on Victoire's behalf, and casually commenting on their clothing choices, until Harry turns to her with a confused crease in his brow, "Hey, you said that Malfoy had already told you about the painting at Hogwarts. When did you talk to him?"

"He got here a little while before you all did, to drop off some papers for George. They were talking about the memorial in the kitchen, and he mentioned it. And you, that's how I knew you two were on better terms. He was really nice as well. You know how much Alby hates travelling by Floo and throws a tantrum? Well, Malfoy was kind enough to entertain James while I calmed him. He also helped Fleur and I with arranging the centerpieces. Oh, did you know he was gay?"

'If he wasn't, I'd be worried,' Harry thought, but shook his head, "It didn't come up in conversation last night. I don't think arranging centerpieces makes him gay, though."

Ginny sighed, "Oh, don't be silly, he told me he was gay when I asked about Astoria. Anyway, we invited him to stay, of course, and he wanted to refuse. I understood, it's a little odd being somewhere where you hardly know anyone and everyone else knows each other, but you know how Mum is... She pretty much told him he shouldn't be rude and that he must stay because now he'd already help set up."

Harry's eyes shot wide open in surprise, "What, he's still here?"

"Yeah, being all shy though and staying inside the house," Ginny answered in an aloof tone, slowly losing interest in the conversation as guests started accumulating under the marquee.

"Oh..." Unable to stop the subconscious action, Harry, looks over at the Burrow. Ginny notices his staring, and gently nudges his arm,

"If you've got more to say to him, you probably should."

"You think?"

"Before the opportunity leaves and you're left with regret."

Harry doesn't move for a few moments, but after a meaningful glance at Ginny, crosses the lawn, and finds Draco in the kitchen, standing over a cauldron.

"Afternoon, Malfoy."

"Alright there, Potter?" Draco doesn't turn, but Harry doesn't miss the smile in his voice. He cranes his neck to inspect the contents of the cauldron,

"Not poisoning us, are you?"

Draco glances over his shoulder at Harry with a barely contained smirk, a simple look conveying a simple, 'Really?'.

"You offend me, Potter. As if I'd let you discover me while I sabotage a party." Draco said with uncharacteristic drama, but with his trademark sarcasm. Harry chuckled, stuffing his hands into his pockets and looking down, unable to deny the flutter of his insides at the sight of Draco in a crisp white shirt, top buttons undone, and navy slacks. He clears his throat,

“Not a fan of birthday bashes, then? Hiding out in the kitchen and all that.”

Draco looked out of the window, and paused for so long that Harry wondered if he'd heard him or if he was doing it for effect.

“It's wonderful to see so many people together for a good time, young Victoire is lucky to grow up in such a large family that loves her. I'm grateful that my cousin can experience the Weasley's warmth.”

Harry seemed puzzled by the last, so Draco nods and elaborates, “Ted's grandmother is my mother's sister- Andromeda is my aunt.”

Harry smacked his forehead, “Of course, Andromeda is from the Black family.” Suddenly remembering that he'd heard very little mention of, let alone seen, Malfoy since Hogwarts, Harry ventured a question, even though he was fairly certain of the answer, “Have you met Teddy yet?”

It was Draco's turn to look down at his shoes, “I can't say I have...”

Without a second of pause, Harry takes Draco's hand and leads him out of the house, pauses just outside the door, then strides through a few groups of people, until he halts Teddy mid-run, letting Victoire tag him and run off again.

“Hold your horses there, Teddy boy, I'd like to introduce you to someone.”

Teddy looked Draco up and down, then holds out his hand and Draco shakes it, “Hello Ted, it's great to meet you. My name is Draco, we're cousins.”

Teddy's eyes light up, “Really? I thought I didn't have any cousins, I didn't even know mom or dad had siblings.”

Draco noted his mistake, “Well, technically I'm your first cousin, once removed.”

Suddenly very interested, Ted beckoned Draco closer so he could whisper, “What were you removed for? Don't worry, I won't tell anyone.”

Draco laughed, but went along with it. Matching Ted's whisper, he crouched lower, “I trapped the family cat in the attic.”

Ted nodded understandingly, “Was it Crookshanks? 'Cause I'd be fine with you trapping him in our attic for a while. I wouldn't have removed you for that, just so you know.”

“Thank you, that means a lot to me.”

Teddy gives Draco another nod, then goes off to find his friends.

Draco stands up and watches him for a few moments with a loving smile, then turns to Harry when he disappears out of sight.

“He's great, Potter. You've done a good job, raising him.”

“Well, it wasn't all me, not even close. Andy- Andromeda, is always there to pick up my slack, Ginny too.”

Having none of Harry's modesty, Draco insists his praise, “Even so, raising children is a skill that you seem to be very good at. No surprise there, but co-parenting is arguably even harder. Communicating with each other in a way that doesn't distress the kids, sharing time on busy and irregular schedules... Worrying about whether you're there often enough for them to know that you're still their dad and will still be there for them, or if you're there too often and infringe on how much time the other parent can take of you sitting about and interacting with the kids, wondering if they're being silent because they are wishing that you'd leave, or actually listening to what you're saying, and if they think what you're saying is acceptable or not, if they are the right things to say, the right answers to the never-ending questions...”

Draco had to take a breath, worried that he'd gone overboard with getting carried away. Harry found himself looking at Draco in a way that one would look at someone who just hit a punch bag so hard that it swung right back, squarely into that someone's face, "Wow, Draco... I don't know about her wishing that I'd leave or how much of what I tell my kids is acceptable or not to Ginny, but I agree with the never-ending questions part. Sounds like you've got a lot on your plate. I didn't realise you had kids?" He cast aside the tidbit of gossip that had crossed through the conversation last night, which had in fact let Harry know that Malfoy did have a son, deciding to start anew with the direct source instead.

Draco smiled, and Harry knew exactly the feeling that Draco had in that moment, the warm and fond feeling of thinking of the giggling face of your children, something that would make any parent smile.

"Yeah, a little boy, Scorpius. Turned two last January."

"Is he talking?"

"A little. Now and then he surprises me with full sentences."

Harry remembered that stage of surprise, "Alby, my youngest, he's two in August, and usually just copies whatever James says and does. James loves that, and will go around the house pointing at things, loudly exclaiming what they're called, so Albus knows as well,"

Harry chuckled at the thought, "If they stay as close as they are now, they'd be the type of brothers that would follow each other to the end of the earth, just like..."

"George and Fred," Draco offered, cautiously, still unsure of how triggering the name was to Harry. To his relief, Harry just sighed.

"Yeah, just like George and Fred."

"So, from what I can gather after that little exposition, it's a bit tense between you and Scorpius' mum?"

"Yeah, but that's not a party conversation," Draco murmurs, as he'd become increasingly aware of the nosy glances directed at their way.

Harry didn't need to ask for an explanation, "Alright, so tell me about your escape to Africa." Grateful for the smooth change of topic, Draco smirked, "Heard about that, did you?"

"Yes, well, you can't escape dropping into conversation completely when you bugger off to some mountain for potions classes."

"I'll have you know that Uagadoo teaches advanced alchemy, and that I owe my career, and by extent, my life to that school."

"Your life? How's that?"

"Coming back to Hogwarts would have been miserable after the Battle. Epecially after I crossed the courtyard and seemed to join Voldemort. But we're getting off-track. I finished a re-sit of the seventh year in Uganda, and I was taken on as an apprentice by a renowned witch. She taught me a few more advanced brews, but I wanted to learn more, so I ended up being referred to a different witch, and through her I met a couple of wizarding people who were all very obliging in teaching and even working with me on a few potions of my own invention, mainly against hereditary illnesses amongst muggles."

"Whoa, sounds like quite the adventure. Admirable of you, very humanitarian to dedicate time and effort into curing ailments. A lot of academic people in your friend circle?"

Draco wobbled his hand so-so, "We'll call it a colleague circle, friendship with alchemists that you work with won't last very long, it's easy to disagree on ingredients or methods, and those arguments can get heated when both parties start pulling out books."

“Wow, I’d pay to see a bunch of old chemists batter each other with dusty manuscripts!” Draco tutted at Harry’s distasteful assumption, “Such violence, Potter? They are philosophers, not Beaters on a Quidditch field. I meant that alchemists like to prove their point by citing past research and tests.”

“Of course you did.” Harry moved on from the disappointment, “Alright, so no mixing business with pleasure-”

As if he were summoned, Seamus walked up, looking much too happy about catching the last snippet of Harry’s sentence, “What’s this about pleasure?”

Harry rolled his eyes, “Of course that’s what you pick up on.”

Seamus rubbed his shoulder against Draco, “Well? Is there anything going on...?”

Wedging his hand between Draco and Seamus to push them apart, Harry shot a look that could kill at the intruder, but didn’t have a chance to say anything before Draco beat him to it, “Jog on, Finnigan.”

“Touchy, touchy... Done any of that yet, maybe?” Seamus made a point to obviously eye Draco up and down with a smirk, then at Harry, “Malfoy looks stiff as a board, I’d say he could use a pair of hands on his-”

Cutting him off with a loud cough and an apologetic glance at the other guests stood near, Harry clenched his teeth to contain his stirring frustration, even if there was something strangely amusing, “Seamus, please, this is a kid’s party. Now shove off, would you?”

Seamus finally retreats with a wink, and joins Dean, where he immediately fills him in, and they both look back with thumbs up.

Finding the whole thing rather funny, Draco looked from Dean and Seamus to Harry with a growing smile, “Do they...”

Exasperated, Harry yielded, “Your clothes gave me away this morning, I’m afraid. Took about three hungover minds and maybe five minutes before the penny dropped, but they caught on to the fact that I’d slept over at yours. So far, I think it’s just Dean and Seamus that suspect...” they catch each other’s eyes, only to swiftly avert them again, “Something.”

Draco cleared his throat and leaned closer to Harry, “I think they agree with what you said last night. We had it coming, let’s be honest.”

Pushing away the flutter-y feeling in his chest, Harry nodded, “It was long overdue.”

“Agreed.”

They grin at each other, and if he could, Harry would have paused that moment in time, he would happily have stood there for hours with Draco, marvelling at the complexity of emotions that he felt whenever Draco was near. Whenever they spoke, always so candid and plain, and the feeling of being understood and understanding, even though he had yet so much to learn about the man that he’d known for so long but only just really met.

Tragically, the spell ends prematurely when Molly bustles up to Draco asking about the punch, and he disappears with her into the house. Harry didn’t even have a moment to process the thoughts and revelations that he’s just gone through, because seizing the spot just opened up next to him, Hermione moves to stand next to Harry, conspiratorial glint in her eye and all.

“That looked like quite a comfy conversation, and I swear I saw fireworks flying at the end, when you both looked into each other’s eyes as if you were all the other could ever want and more.”

Harry chuckled, massaging his brow, "Oh, please 'Mione, it was just a little small talk-" Refusing to let him downplay any more, Hermione resolutely held up her hand, "Save it, Harry. I'm no idiot, I do have eyes, you know. And I can see that you're still not over each other, now even less than before."

Barely following what she was saying, he looked at her as if she were on the other side of an opaque window, "Are you saying that you knew I liked him in school?"

"Please, everyone knew, Fred and George had everyone placing bets on you two. You might want to talk to George about getting a slice of the winnings."

Harry simply nodded vaguely before falling silent for a few moments, re-running what Hermione had said in his mind, "All the other could ever want, eh?"

She rolled her eyes, "Oh Harry, you're hopeless. Malfoy wants you. There, is that put plainly enough for you?"

"Right... What should I do about that?"

"Merlin's sake, ask him out, of course. Get coffee, find something to do together."

"I'm going to help him learn to do the patronus charm. And he's going to assist on a case at work, do those count?"

Stumped, Hermione blinked, "Wow. What do you need my help for? Tell me, how did you get that far, without realising he was into you?"

Harry shrugs and pulls her into a hug instead of answering the question. They don't pull apart until someone walks out with the birthday cake, and everyone starts singing. Victoire blows out her candles, people cheer and the cake is cut.

For the rest of the afternoon, Harry involves himself in party games with the kids and Ginny, and doesn't get a moment to talk to Draco for a while. Ending up at the buffet table at some point, he fills a glass with punch, and goes looking for Draco, who he finds next to Angelina. She politely excuses herself, and Harry raises his glass at Draco,

"This is exquisite."

Draco scoffs, but not without looking pleased with the compliment, "I should hope so, it is essentially my area of expertise."

Forgetting whatever else he had planned to say, Harry merely nods and looks around. Draco picks up on his loss for conversation starters, and takes the opportunity to address something that had been lingering in his mind for most of the day.

"If it's alright with you, I would like to get to know Ted a bit better. I know I told you about Scorpius and it might seem like-"

Harry shakes his head understandingly, "It's alright, you don't have to explain. I get it. Of course you can see Ted, he's already ten and you've only just met him. After his grandma, you're his closest relative, after all." Harry stops to consider the request for a moment, "He spends most days with her while I'm working, but the three of us could get dinner some time this coming week. Or I could drop him off at the restaurant and make myself scarce for a while, if you prefer..."

"No, it would be great if you'd stay. That would probably make it easier."

They work out that they'll meet up on the following Tuesday, after which Draco excuses himself to thank Molly and congratulate Bill and Fleur, then leaves. Harry watches him until he walks into the fireplace, then wanders about until he finds Ginny, holding a sleeping Albus and James who are cuddled up against her in a lawn chair.

Pleased to see him, Ginny waves, “Harry, there you are! Could you bring me a glass of punch, I’m in dire need of a drink.”

Harry crouches down to ruffle both boys’ hair, then smiles fondly at her, “It’s alright Gin, I’ll take over now. I need to get these two home, are you alright to have Ted over with you tonight?”

Ginny agrees and rouses James, leaving Albus to sleep while she gently hands him over to Harry, who takes both boys home after saying his goodbyes.

Once home, he puts his sons to bed, and after a few attempts to read a page of a book, Harry gives up and settles into sleep as well, wiped out after the day.

Chapter End Notes

What do you think?

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!