

"All His Saints"

*Sing unto the lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.
Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.
Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.
For the lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.
Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.
Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand;
To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people;
To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;
To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints.*

It was eleven o'clock when Harry heard the knock on the door.

He very nearly didn't answer.

There were plenty of prospective good reasons for not answering a door at eleven o'clock at night, especially when one didn't live in the best part of London, but Harry's reason wasn't one of them. He just didn't want to see anyone. It couldn't quite be classified as too late, because he hardly kept normal hours, anyway, and it wasn't as if he couldn't handle nearly any sort of dangerous person who might have come to the door. He was a wizard, and anyone who might have tried to bother him could've been handled with a quick stunning spell and a call to the muggle police. More than that, he probably wouldn't have cared if there *had* been trouble.

The truth was, no one who Harry could imagine coming to his doorstep was someone he wanted to see. It turned out that he was to be unpleasantly surprised.

It took him a moment to recognize the figure standing on his doorstep, and only a quick move on Draco's part kept Harry from slamming the door in his face. They stared at each other for a long moment.

"Don't you *dare*, Potter," Malfoy said, a bit breathlessly, and Harry eased the door open, releasing Draco's arm, thrust inside to keep it from closing.

"What are you doing here, Malfoy?" asked Harry, giving him his best Gryffindor stare. "Come to throw things in my face, just like the rest of them?"

"You wish," replied Draco, crossing his arms.

"Who's sent you, then?" said Harry. "Just tell me what you want, then I won't have to ask you in."

"Just how paranoid *are* you?" snapped Draco, pushing past Harry before he could be kept out. "No one's sent me. I came to -"

He eyed the newspapers piling up on the front hall table with distaste, and abruptly stopped at the state of the living room. Harry glared at the back of his head, as if daring him to comment on the bottles of alcohol, or the Chinese takeout, or the undone laundry. He heard Draco inhale sharply and shoved away the shame that rose at being caught living like this by someone, a tight ache in his

chest.

"To see how far the great and mighty have fallen, Malfoy?" asked Harry, coldly.

Draco turned back to look at him, and Harry found himself feeling acutely conscious of the fact that he hadn't showered in three days or shaved in nearly a week. The look in Draco's eyes was almost recognizable as pity, and Harry had to resist the urge to shove him against the wall to wipe the emotion from his face. He didn't want Malfoy's pity. He didn't want anyone's pity. He didn't *deserve* pity.

"What do you want?" said Harry, suddenly feeling exhausted, and unwilling to argue. "Just tell me so you'll go."

"Most people would have offered me a drink," pointed out Draco. "I think we should start there."

"You've *invited yourself* into my house, and you want me to offer you a bloody glass of champagne?" Harry said, incredulously.

"Champagne would be lovely," said Draco, running his finger through the air above the dust on the mantle with distaste. "Good god, how can you -"

"I haven't got any," Harry interrupted, before Draco bloody Malfoy could engage in another attack against his housekeeping. "If you want a drink, it'll have to be something else."

"Find something, Potter," Malfoy said, sketching strange runes in the dust, which was beginning to glow faintly. It promptly disappeared, and Malfoy made a rather suspicious humming noise, which, from anyone else, Harry would've taken for a sound of distinct pleasure. But that wasn't possible, because Harry hadn't known that Malfoy knew dust existed, let alone that he was capable of happily cleaning it away.

"Show off," he muttered, under his breath, to assuage the dim feeling of being transported to a parallel universe where penguins could fly and Malfoy liked cleaning.

Draco rejected, in no particular order, beer, lager, vodka, gin, a questionable bottle of tequila, two types of juice, margarita mix, and, finally, a glass of tap water.

"Not with all the purification charms in the world," Draco informed him, with a shudder. He had rolled up his sleeves and was delicately cleaning dust out of the groove of the mantle with a tiny blue charm on the tip of his wand.

"So, you don't actually want a drink," muttered Harry, finally, exasperated.

"Of course not," said Draco, straightening.

"Was there a point to *asking* for a drink?"

"Don't be daft. Of course there was."

Harry waited, patiently, but Draco said nothing further, only poked at the ashes spilling out of the grate with the tip of his wand, muttering under his breath. Harry hadn't thought Malfoys were *capable* of muttering under their breath. He'd assumed they thought it beneath them.

"I'm going to bed," he said, after another long pause. "You'd better be gone when I wake up."

Draco didn't reply.

When Harry woke the next morning, Malfoy was not only still there, he was cleaning the kitchen. There was a broom sweeping dirt out the - open! - back door, a mop going over the area the broom had already done, and a rag wiping the counter, stopping occasionally to scrub at a stubborn spot. Draco, for his own part, was sitting in a chair next to a waste bin, flicking his wand at the open refrigerator door. Every so often, an empty carton of takeout or a bottle of sauce would zoom into his hands, which were covered in so many shielding charms they made Harry's eyes itch.

"What are you *doing*?" asked Harry, folding his arms and leaning against the doorframe.

Draco sniffed delicately at a jar of salsa, made a face, and tossed it into the rubbish.

"What does it look like I'm doing?" he replied, not even bothering to examine a jar of peanut butter before sending it into the garbage.

"Not being gone?" supplied Harry, fighting the urge to go back to bed in the hopes that Draco might have disappeared for good when he woke up.

"Right, that," replied Draco, getting to his feet and waving his hand absently at the food, which was hovering in the air. It all promptly dropped into the garbage bag, which tied itself up and floated out the door past the broom.

"Yes, that," said Harry. "The trivial detail of you being *in my house*, Malfoy."

"I was going to leave," Draco explained, gesturing at the broom, which stopped sweeping the walk and leaned itself against the wall. "Then I took a closer look at the rest of your living room, decided you needed some fucking help, and started there."

"Started?" echoed Harry, glancing at the living room, which was, somehow, spotless. He blinked, to make sure that he wasn't seeing things.

"I owe you," said Draco, simply.

"No, you don't," protested Harry, raising his hands to his temples and closing his eyes. "You don't - No one owes me anything."

"You didn't have to do what you did," said Draco, calmly. "Therefore, I owe you. Malfoys don't like owing people, Potter. It's not done."

"So you think you're going to pay me back by cleaning my kitchen?" said Harry, opening his eyes incredulously.

"No," replied Draco, turning to a cabinet and beginning to pull out jars. "I'm going to pay you off by giving you your life back."

Harry gave up and went back to bed.

The second time he woke up, Draco had finished the kitchen, the bathroom, and the second bedroom, and had moved on to the hall. He was murmuring cleaning spells at the ceiling, which was turning a dull shade of white again, bit by bit.

"That wasn't clean when I moved in," said Harry, a little defensively.

"I'm not going to live in squalor," replied Malfoy, with a sneer. "Even if you will."

"You're planning on *staying*?" Harry exclaimed.

"For a bit," Draco said, and, apparently satisfied with the ceiling, pushed past him into his bedroom.

"Hey!" protested Harry. "You can't go in there!"

"Of course I can," he replied. "*Someone* has to clean this."

He reached for the pillow and then, as if thinking better of it, pulled back, using his wand to strip off the bedclothes.

"That's my *bed*," said Harry, indignantly.

Draco directed the sheets into a second trash bag, sending it (presumably) out to join the rest of the trash. "You're buying new sheets," he informed Harry. "Those were beyond repair."

"I *liked* those sheets," Harry said, trying to calculate how many times he could hex Draco before it became illegal.

"Then you ought to have washed them, now oughtn't you have?" replied Malfoy.

He sounded remarkably similar to Molly Weasley. Harry thought, distinctly, that he should keep his mouth shut about that one, then remembered that Molly Weasley didn't talk to him, anyway.

"You can't just come in here and - and throw my things away," Harry said, sullenly, trying to get between Draco and the bookshelves before Draco did anything more drastic.

"Watch me," Draco replied, simply, steering the mattress out the door as well, with only marginally more difficulty than the sheets had given him. "You're buying a new mattress, as well."

"That was a perfectly good mattress!" cried Harry, wondering how on earth he'd ended up shouting at someone he'd been certain he'd never see again.

"Of course it was," placated Draco, aiming his wand at a wall, which slowly became a sort of beige.

"If you wanted back problems in five years. Terribly Gryffindor sentiment, Potter, taking the hard road about everything. You lot ought to realize there's very little point in being noble and brave about mattresses."

"It was *fine*," said Harry, through his teeth.

"You ought to have learned by now," Draco continued. "You can't fight every battle."

"Watch me," said Harry, and slammed the door.

Unfortunately, Draco appeared unphased by the slammed door, and five minutes later, Harry was nearly knocked over by an enormous heap of dirty laundry, which went straight out the door.

"Honestly," said Draco, from the doorway. "The Gryffindor mascot ought to have been a *pig*."

"Shut up," said Harry, childishly, feeling that it was awfully unfair that Draco should be winning, and on Harry's own turf, as well.

"The house is clean," announced Malfoy.

"Are you going now?" said Harry, hoping he sounded hopeful.

"Now for you," Draco said, firmly, taking Harry's wrist in a surprisingly strong grip.

"*Hey*," protested Harry. "You wouldn't dare - "

"Yes," interrupted Malfoy. "I would."

"I could hex you," pointed out Harry.

"Nicked your wand," said Draco, helpfully. "Didn't seem like you were using it for anything."

"*Malfoy*," Harry said, incredulously. "That's my - my - "

"Wand," said Draco, pulling him into the bathroom. "Yes, I know."

Harry was too busy staring at the sudden whiteness of the tile to come up with an appropriate comeback. "I thought that was beige," he managed.

"Bleaching charms," Draco replied. "Look at me."

When it came down to it, Harry had never been very good at ignoring Draco, so he looked. Draco tilted his face up, reaching around behind him to begin running the bath. He tilted Harry's head up a bit more, critically. Harry flushed under the scrutiny, and at Draco's proximity. Even if they couldn't stand each other, he was still warm and close and distinctly male. Somewhere between seventh year and now, Draco Malfoy had grown into a casual, subtle sort of grace that would've made Harry's stomach turn over. If, of course, it hadn't been *Malfoy*, which it was. There was no point in dwelling on the fact that Draco bloody Malfoy was pinning him to his own bathroom wall, and examining his jaw line. No point at all.

"I might require an axe," said Draco, looking appalled. "Good god, Potter, when was the last time you shaved?"

"I'm not sure," admitted Harry, then promptly kicked himself for giving Malfoy something to use against him.

"This isn't going to work," said Draco, holding up a plastic disposable razor that Harry wasn't quite sure he'd known he owned.

"Sure it will," said Harry, but Draco had already transfigured it into a heavy, silver straight razor, which was distinctly not in possession of any sort of safety mechanism. He noted, rather faintly, that the handle had turned into a snake.

"I didn't know you were so good at transfiguration," said Harry, in the hopes of getting Draco to turn it back into the familiar plastic.

"Better than Granger, actually," noted Draco, leaning against a wall.

Harry winced - he didn't particularly want to think about Hermione. He removed his glasses and picked up the razor, carefully, looking at it doubtfully. Draco couldn't actually expect him to *use* this, could he?

"Potter," Draco drawled. "Don't tell me you haven't any idea how to use a straight razor."

"I like charms," said Harry, rather defensively. Charms weren't capable of severing your jugular.

"Charms only make the hair grow back faster," began Draco, pointedly. "Then you begin to look like Lupin after a full moon."

Harry wondered where Draco had picked up the habit of mentioning every Gryffindor he could think of in conversation. He wasn't going to think about Remus, either.

"Hold still," warned Draco, and flicked his wand rather lazily, with a careless sort of motion. Harry had never heard of a charm for applying shaving cream, but apparently, it existed.

Harry only flinched when the razor came towards him without appearing to actually be guided. "Hold *still*," repeated Draco, but Harry backed off. Draco hissed through his teeth in exasperation - another distinctly *unMalfoy* gesture. Harry wondered where he'd picked it up, then shifted to avoid the razor.

"Are you *trying* to get yourself cut?" demanded Malfoy.

"If that was what I wanted," snapped Harry. "I could've done it an awfully long time ago. *Without* any help from you."

Malfoy was, miraculously, quiet for a long moment. "Hold still," he said, again, but his hand was on the razor this time, and it was against Harry's skin before Harry could protest. Draco's face was

about three inches from his, and then, he couldn't have moved if he'd wanted to. His hand was remarkably steady, and Harry's eyes flickered from the pale expanse of his forearm - *unmarked*, thought Harry, but he got very little satisfaction at knowing, with certainty, that everyone had been rather wrong about Draco Malfoy - to his face, caught in a look of concentration. Harry caught himself wondering, idly, where else Malfoy might look so concentrated. He steered rather hurriedly away from that line of thought.

"More half-past midnight than five o'clock," said Malfoy, under his breath, then, with a last stroke, pulled back. "Done," he said, and promptly shoved Harry backwards into the bathtub.

"*Malfoy*," Harry said, resignedly. "I'm still dressed."

"I know," replied Draco, rather too cheerfully. "It's all right. We're throwing those out as well."

"We are, are we?"

"Soap," said Malfoy, tossing a bar at him from under the sink. He pointed to a stack of towels in the small cabinet. "Dry off, drain it, then run another bath. You're *filthy*."

"I don't need *two* baths," Harry protested, feeling like a very small child.

"Yes," said Malfoy, with a pained look. "You do."

"Prat," said Harry, under his breath.

"Don't forget to wash behind your ears," drawled Draco, hand on the door.

"Yes, Mother," replied Harry, rolling his eyes.

Harry was rather dismayed to find that the shower had turned on, and was spraying him with freezing cold water.

By the time he was through, Harry had gone through two baths and half of a shower, what he rather suspected was about half a bottle of shampoo, and nearly a bar of soap. He wondered how long it had been, really, since he'd been this clean. If it had been anyone but Malfoy, Harry probably would've thanked him, but it wasn't. He decided to see if Draco had another bright solution for his current problem.

"I have no clothes," Harry informed Draco, dripping water in what he hoped was a spiteful manner onto the kitchen floor, holding a towel firmly around his waist.

"Couldn't be salvaged," said Draco, without any trace of regret. He appeared to be reading a muggle book, was wearing glasses - *glasses* - and had eaten about half of a tray of what appeared to be the liquor chocolates someone had sent at Christmas.

Harry thought to warn him that they were probably poisoned somehow, but decided against it. Malfoy *deserved* to be poisoned. He was probably immune to it, anyhow, Harry thought, bitterly. Snake-blooded bastard.

"Do you suggest I walk around *naked*, Malfoy?" Harry asked, icily. He hoped he sounded scathing.

"Don't be sarcastic, Potter," Draco replied coolly, glancing at Harry over his glasses, which were small and rectangular and actually looked as if they fit his face. Harry *really* wanted to break them.

"*Well?*" said Harry, crossing his arms as best he could without letting the towel fall.

"Try the closet of my bedroom," suggested Draco, turning back to his magazine. "You may borrow clothes, now that you're *clean*. Then we'll go and purchase something."

"*Your* bedroom," muttered Harry, throwing up his hands in mock surrender. He grabbed the towel before it hit the floor, and swore under his breath.

"Somehow," said Draco, as he turned a page. "I get the feeling that you weren't compensating with the broom."

Harry stomped off to drip on his bed. Spitefully.

Fifteen minutes into their shopping excursion, Harry was beginning to wish that he'd done a lot more than *drip* on Draco's bed. So far, Draco had refused to allow him to buy anything in the shade of green he was used to, and had flat out vetoed anything scarlet. He also hadn't listened to a word Harry was saying, which was, all things considered, what Harry had expected. The thing was, Malfoy was being idiotically *sensible* about it.

The black winter coat was, damn him, warmer, and water repellent, and the green sweater had been badly woven. But that didn't mean that Harry had to like it.

"Yellow," mused Draco. "I think you need something yellow."

"Yellow?" said Harry, incredulously. "Yellow is for Hufflepuffs."

"Grow up," said Draco, rolling his eyes in what Harry longed to point out was a rather childish manner. "You can't live in red and gold your entire life."

"Why not?" said Harry, well aware he sounded downright petulant.

Draco, apparently, didn't deign to answer. "Try it on," he said, shoving Harry one-handed into a dressing room. Harry was beginning to suspect that Draco liked having an excuse to shove him.

"It's too small," Harry complained, tugging down at the sleeves, which only came a bit past his wrists.

"It fits," corrected Draco, obviously amused. "Can't live in hand-me-downs forever, Potter."

Harry threw the shirt at his head.

A few hours later, Draco agreed to do the food shopping, if Harry promised to actually put away his

clothing. Harry privately suspected that Draco just wanted to be rid of him, but he didn't particularly care. He folded the clothes, carefully if not neatly, and set them in their appropriate places. Then he crawled into bed, exhausted from three hours of bickering with Draco Malfoy over whether yellow was a suitable color and whether snitch boxers were acceptable in any circle. It was more human contact than he'd had in months.

Harry woke up to the smell of cooking food and the realization that he was still wearing Draco's shirt, which smelled of soap and a cologne Harry couldn't quite place. He climbed out of bed, following his nose to the kitchen slowly, still not quite awake. For a moment, leaning against the doorframe, he forgot about the fact that the man humming in his kitchen was Draco Malfoy, and he forgot everything that had happened.

"That smells good," he murmured, voice a little rough with sleep.

"Sleeping beauty," acknowledged Draco, with a strange half smile, not looking up from the sauce he was stirring. "Where's the prince?"

"Got lost," said Harry, stepping forward.

"Notoriously bad at asking for directions, princes," Draco replied, the corner of his mouth quirked up a bit more. "I'm sure he'll turn up."

Harry realized that he was not only having a civil conversation with Draco Malfoy, who was cooking in his kitchen, but that Malfoy was *teasing* him, and he, worse still, was enjoying it.

There were very few things in Harry's life that might have been classified as constant, but enmity with Malfoy was one of them, along with the undisputed fact that Malfoy was a spoiled, arrogant prat. Finding that he and Malfoy were, firstly, capable of getting along, and, secondly, that Malfoy probably wasn't quite as evil as he seemed was a bit like waking up to find the entire world turned upside down. Harry wasn't sure he was capable of dealing with this. He rubbed a hand across his eyes, absently.

"Get a plate," suggested Malfoy, still stirring.

Harry had the plate and was letting Draco spoon pasta onto it before he realized just what Draco had made, why letting him in had been stupid, why letting *anyone* in was a terrible idea - because it was exactly the same thing Hermione had made, every time he'd gone over to her flat for dinner. He had dropped the plate before he could think about it, knocked the pot of sauce over, a spreading red stain across the floor.

Draco didn't even jump, just took a step back calmly. The saucepan tipped and fell, inches from his feet, and Harry caught his breath, sharply, eyes fixed on Draco's face.

He didn't flinch, didn't look shocked or scared, but there was a firm set to his mouth, and Harry inhaled, exhaled, inhaled again, Draco's eyes on him.

"Someday," Draco said, quietly, firmly. "You're going to have to start acting like a human again."

Harry wasn't entirely sure he knew how, but he didn't detect pity in Malfoy's voice, merely resignation and sorrow, so he didn't say anything at all. Draco stepped over the wreckage of dinner, and then there was a firm, warm hand on Harry's shoulder, pressing him down into a kitchen chair. Swish, and the plate was whole again, flick and the sauce was gone, the pot clean once more. Swish, both dishes were spotless, flick, they were both in their respective cabinets.

Then there was a glass of milk in front of him, bordering on hot, and Harry curled his hands around it almost gratefully, glad to have something other than Draco to look at.

"Was it the spaghetti, or the plate?" asked Draco, leaning against the counter. Harry could see him, out of the corner of his eye, examining his hands.

"The spaghetti," he replied, shortly. "Hermione used - used to make spaghetti."

"Rest assured, Potter," Draco said, in that familiar drawl. "Granger will doubtlessly make you spaghetti again."

Harry laughed, a little, bitterly. "Easy for you to say. She can't stand to be in the same room as me."

"Blind faith is a Gryffindor sentiment," Draco said, pointedly. "And so is hope where there is none. I see neither in that particular situation. Therefore, you're simply being maudlin."

"I'm not very brave, anymore," Harry said, finally. "I'm not sure I ever was."

"Stop feeling sorry for yourself," Draco informed him. "No one has ever questioned your *bravery*."

"No," said Harry, finally. "Only my motives, my actions, my loyalties - "

"Do you honestly think you were the only one who lost someone to the war?" demanded Draco, voice suddenly cold. "Do you think you're the only one whose life changed?"

"No," replied Harry, but then again, maybe he had.

"At least they're alive," Draco said, shortly. "You can't make amends with the dead."

"No," said Harry, hands still curled around his milk. "I don't suppose you can."

"You're not the only one who lost family to making difficult decisions," said Draco, finally, and with another flick of his wand, the milk warmed under Harry's hands.

"You never stop using magic," said Harry, quietly. "More than anyone else I've ever met."

"I couldn't, for a very long time," Draco replied, after a long pause. "It's - decadent."

"Malfoys like decadence," said Harry, with a slightly wry smile.

"No," corrected Draco. "I do."

"Oh," Harry murmured, more to himself than to Draco.

"I'm going to go take a shower," said Draco, a moment later, and that was strange. Harry had never thought of Malfoy doing ordinary things, like showering and brushing his teeth.

Harry listened to him leave the kitchen, and then listened to the dim hum of water through the pipes, and then the creak that meant the water was being turned off. Doors opened and closed, and he thought, idly, how funny it was that such a quiet person should make so much noise.

He wasn't quite sure how long he sat at the table, but by the time he got up, the milk had gone cold. He poured it down the sink, thoughtfully, and went to go to bed. He brushed his teeth, avoiding the mirror, straightened the towel Malfoy had hung on the back of the door without really thinking about it, and was quiet going down the hallway. Years of living with other people made it easy to remember how one was supposed to behave.

When he eased open the door to his bedroom, however, he found that Draco was asleep on his bed, quiet and vulnerable looking in the dim light from the hallway. Harry realized that he'd never seen Malfoy sleep before - passed out, yes, exhausted, yes, asleep, no. The darkness sharpened the curves of his face, with shadows beneath his cheekbones and jaw, eyelashes dark smudges against his cheeks. Harry watched him sleep for a moment, eyeing the deceptive rise and fall of his chest. Draco didn't become angelic in sleep, but there was an innocence there, as if the wary caution he'd always kept close had suddenly disappeared. He remembered, tiredly, when watching other people sleep had been comforting, a way to know that just for a moment, they were safe.

Harry thought, too exhausted to be annoyed, that he ought to wake Malfoy up and make him move back to his own bed, since there was no conceivable reason for him to be in Harry's, but against conscious reason, he eased the door shut again and continued down the hall to Malfoy's bed.

There was no reason he should, but then again, there was no reason he shouldn't, and Harry Potter had gotten rather good at giving in to other people.

Malfoy, in what Harry suspected to be some sort of cosmic joke, turned out to be terribly easy to live with. He was easier than Ron, easier than Hermione, and approximately a thousand times easier than Ginny. He was even better than Oliver, who had, when you got down to it, been as easy to stay with as he had been easy to please.

If Harry got water all over the bathroom, Malfoy didn't say anything, as Ginny would have, didn't clean it up himself with an exasperated sigh and resent him for it, as Hermione would have, and didn't spell Harry's bed to dry at the same rate as the water, as Ron had. He merely waited for Harry to realize that he had, in fact, left a mess, and if Harry didn't, then he put a towel on the floor and didn't complain.

Harry wasn't entirely sure whether Malfoy had changed or whether he had. He suspected it was a combination of both. Malfoy had learned tolerance, and, for his own part, he had learned to understand Malfoy. There were still sharp, cutting remarks, cruel and uncalled for, but they weren't any worse than things that Harry had said, after all. Malfoy had a sense of humor, sharp-witted and slightly sarcastic, and even if he wasn't particularly quiet, he kept to himself. He was blunt and he didn't keep his mouth shut, which Harry almost appreciated. Almost.

The next week was filled with strange things. Malfoy bought curtains for the kitchen, and the whole living room was covered in a sea of muggle classified ads. There was food in the refrigerator and a saucer of milk on the front porch for the cat that came around, and Harry walked into the kitchen more than once to find Draco Malfoy scrubbing the floor. He discovered that Draco couldn't bake cakes for anything, but he could swear more fluently than most of the aurors Harry had known.

Harry thought, after a week, that he might be getting an idea of Malfoy. It didn't surprise him to find Malfoy painting the bathroom, white paint in his hair and across his nose, and he got used to being woken at ten and dragged all over London. Somehow, it seemed right that Malfoy liked libraries more than even Hermione had, and that he knew all the secret coffee shops. Harry had always assumed, in a way he was learning was usually wrong, that Draco spoke French, but his fluent, smooth Castilian Spanish, accented and low, was easier to listen to.

"Did you spend a lot of time in Spain?" asked Harry, after Draco held an extended conversation with a street musician that Harry hadn't understood a word of.

"I liked Barcelona," was all Draco replied, which wasn't really an answer at all.

Harry didn't mind.

There was a scar on the inside of his forearm that Harry didn't ask about, just like he didn't ask about what Malfoy had really done during the war. *I cultivated enlightened self-interest*, Draco had said, the only time he'd tried, and that was that.

That didn't mean, however, that Malfoy was *incapable* of surprising him.

"I think," he said, slowly, one morning, over his oatmeal. "That we ought to go and stay at the beach."

"Okay," agreed Harry, and when you got down to it, that was that again. It seemed to be an accurate way of summarizing life with Draco Malfoy.

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He'd thought, really, that it would be harder to convince Harry to get away, because getting away involved premeditated planning, and packing, and taking a train - the ministry had become terribly strict with long-distance apparation licenses - and someone who everyone assumed had been a death eater wasn't high on their list of priorities. Draco hated assumptions. They were nearly always false.

But in the end, it had been easy, and two days later, they were on a nearly deserted train. They had a whole compartment to themselves, and Harry couldn't stop staring out the window. Draco read until the side to side movement of the words began to give him a headache and then settled down to sleep, with Harry's coat over his legs and his own as a pillow. When he woke up again, a few hours later, Harry was still looking out the window, a hand pressed to the glass, as if in wonder. Draco wondered how long it had been there.

He looked, to see if the view was interesting, but it wasn't, just fields and some trees.

"I know you've been on a train before," he said, not quite cutting, but observant.

"It's been years," said Harry, blinking, as if he hadn't known Draco was there. "I never really noticed how the land moves."

"Don't strain your eyes," Draco warned, realizing after a moment that he sounded suspiciously like Severus Snape.

"I won't," said Harry, but he didn't stop looking, save for a brief glance at Draco.

Draco went to sleep again, waking to Harry's tentative fingers on his shoulder, shaking him.

"We're here - " he said, haltingly, then added, "Are you all right?"

"Of course I'm all right," Draco replied, reaching under his seat for his bag, standing to stretch. "Why wouldn't I be?"

"You slept nearly the whole way," explained Harry, looking almost guilty.

"Trains make me tired," Draco said, simply, with an odd half smile. "Like they make you stare out windows."

Harry flushed, lifting a hand to take off his glasses, rubbing his eyes a little. "I ought to have listened to you. Everything's a bit blurry."

"It goes away," Draco said, taking Harry's bag, too, too accustomed to this to be uneven on his feet.

"It does?" Harry asked, heels of his hands against his eyes, as if it might help reorient him.

"I didn't always sleep," Draco replied, with another secretive smile, and led him off the train.

By the time they got to the beach house, one of a multitude of properties Draco had discovered he owned, after the war, Harry was almost asleep on his feet. The eggs were threatening to slip out of the grocery bag he was carrying, but, in typical stubborn-minded Gryffindor fashion, he refused to let go. Draco didn't say anything, just slid the key in the lock and pushed open the door. Harry hit the light on the hallway, which was a dim sort of washed-out yellow and flickered, and Draco levitated the bags inside with a casual flick of his wand.

"Give me that," said Draco, almost exasperated.

"I've got it," snapped Harry. The eggs fell. Draco wasn't quite sure how he caught them, or how Harry's hands had ended up on top of his.

"Then again," Draco began.

"Suppose not," mumbled Harry, with a rueful smile.

"I'll take it," said Draco, reaching out. "Really."

Harry handed him the rest of the groceries and tried to cover a yawn with the back of his hand. "I could help unpack - "

"Go to bed," said Draco, firmly but not unkindly. "I can put the food away."

"I don't know - " began Harry.

"Sheets are in the linen closet," Draco interrupted. "Pick a bedroom, I'll take the other. Washroom's at the end of the hall."

Harry turned, halfway down the hall already. "You don't have to take care of me," he said, haltingly. "I was all right."

Once upon a time, Draco thought he might have said *who else is there*, or possibly *you've got a strange definition of all right*, but he found, somehow, that the desire to make cutting remarks to Harry Potter had disappeared somewhere along the line. "Go to bed," he repeated, instead.

Harry looked at him for a long moment before he went. "Sweet dreams," he said, then amended, "When you come to bed."

Draco couldn't quite figure out the intricacies of a world where Harry Potter didn't wish him nightmares and spent most of the night listening to the waves out his window, in and out, in and out.

If living in London had been like living with a sullen, dark version of the Harry he'd thought he'd known, staying here was like knowing an innocent one, child-like and filled with unashamed delight at the smallest things. His hands, quick moving and small, somehow seemed even smaller when they tugged Draco out to the beach before breakfast to watch the tide ebb. Harry found small crabs and things in the tidal pools and kept them in bowls in the kitchen, until Draco found him an old aquarium and reclaimed the diningware.

He caught small fish from the tidal pools and tracked so much sand in the house that Draco took to reading on the back patio, next to the hose, so he couldn't sneak in the house without washing off. Harry, Draco discovered, had never had proper fish and chips, with vinegar and with newspaper. He took delight in eating it for nearly every meal, once introduced to it. He was never dressed, and Draco privately found it quite amusing, after all, that the so-called Savior of the Wizarding World came out in freckles when exposed to the sun, a veritable connect the dots across his shoulders, with a faint dusting across his nose.

Draco took to keeping time not in days but in the number of books he'd read and the shade of Harry's shoulders - Marquez, Conrad, Milton, Kipling; pale, sunburnt, freckled, tanned, *dark*.

He got used to Harry being gone for long stretches of time, and to training his eyes on distant spots on the horizon wondering if they were him; he'd taken to flying over the ocean. Draco wasn't afraid that he'd fall - it was Harry Potter, after all - but sometimes he caught himself pulling a tarnished pair of binoculars out of an old cupboard to watch him fly. It seemed too much of a shame to miss

his delighted laughter over dizzying tailspins towards the water.

"Come to the beach with me," requested Harry, one morning, long before the sun was at a proper height for that sort of excursion.

Draco was loath to give up his coffee, or the newspaper, but he set his glasses on the kitchen counter and put on a t-shirt, leaving his shoes on the patio, following Harry down the old wooden boardwalk. Once he got down the (admittedly questionable) wooden steps, onto the sand, Harry presented him rather solemnly with a shovel and a bucket.

"We're building sandcastles," he said, simply.

Draco tried to hand back the bucket. "It's too early."

"It's the best time of the day," argued Harry. "You won't get sunburnt."

Apparently, he'd noticed that Draco stayed in the shade. "Potter, I am not building a sandcastle."

"Suit yourself," said Harry, finally, looking vaguely hurt.

Draco wasn't quite sure he had agreed, when he had told himself that something had to be done about Harry Potter and that he was going to do it, that he'd been mentally agreeing to build *sandcastles*. If he'd ever built one, it had been a terribly long time ago, longer than he could remember.

Somehow, he found himself on his knees in the slightly damp sand a few meters behind Harry.

"See," said Potter, infuriatingly smug. "You're not melting, are you?"

Draco didn't reply, choosing instead to very carefully begin building.

By the time he'd finished, Harry had built three sandcastles, and the sun was high enough that Draco expected he'd be sorry for not putting on sunblock. "There," he said, finally, looking up to find Harry *watching* him.

"What?" he added, finally, uncomfortable.

"It's a very nice sandcastle," began Harry, thoughtfully.

"It's better than yours," Draco replied, irritably.

"Probably," agreed Harry. "But mine isn't going to wash away in the tide."

Draco realized, rather belatedly, that he'd built behind the line of seaweed and shells that one was suppose to watch for and swore under his breath.

"It's very nice," repeated Harry, crouching next to him in the sand.

Draco performed a rather complicated switching spell, and suddenly, they were looking at Harry's sandcastles, and his was safe from the tide.

"Hey," said Harry, indignantly. "My *sandcastle*."

"It's lovely," said Draco. "But it's going to wash away, Potter. You really ought to be more careful where you build."

Harry threw sand at him.

"You're acting like a five year old," Draco informed him, shaking sand from his hair. "I'm going to go take a shower."

He waited until he was halfway up the boardwalk before spelling Harry's sandcastle to collapse completely. It was only fair, after all.

It wasn't that the washroom door didn't lock; it was that Draco had developed an irrational sort of fear, somewhere along the line, of locking doors behind him. He'd learned, somehow, that you had to pick your battles - he didn't fight it anymore, merely left the door unlocked. It wasn't as if anyone was going to come along opening them.

At least, he'd thought so, until he looked up from washing what felt like an entire beach full of sand out of his hair, shaking the water from his eyes, to find Harry leaning in the doorway.

"Potter," he said, exasperated and slightly embarrassed, feeling his skin heat. "Did you need something?"

"Draco," said Harry, finally.

"Well?" Draco prompted.

"Nothing," replied Harry, then, almost as an afterthought, "I made toast. There isn't any more bread."

"I'll be out in a minute," replied Draco, feeling oddly relieved. "We'll buy more this afternoon."

"I can go," said Harry, after another long pause, and shut the door behind him.

It wasn't until after he'd gone that Draco realized it was the first time within memory that Harry had called him by his given name.

There were, however, still bad days. One morning, it took Draco almost past breakfast before he realized that Harry wasn't down at the beach; he merely hadn't gotten out of bed.

Draco wondered if he'd overslept, but when he eased the door open, the lump curled beneath the blankets moved.

"Are you all right?" said Draco, trying not to show concern.

"Go away," said Harry, after a pause.

"Potter," said Draco, firmly. "You are not spending the entire day in bed feeling sorry for yourself."

"Try and stop me," Harry replied, voice muffled by the blankets.

"I made breakfast," Draco tried. "There are eggs."

"Leave me *alone*," Harry snapped.

"No," replied Draco.

"Get out - " said Harry, sitting up, glaring. "Get out, it's my room - "

"It's my house," pointed out Draco. "What's wrong now?"

"Nothing - " said Harry, rolling to face the wall, then, "Ron and Hermione hate me."

"We've been through this," murmured Draco, leaning against the wall. "They'll come around. They're Gryffindors. Why wouldn't they?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Harry, dully. "Maybe because Hermione can never have children because I was five minutes too late, or maybe because Ron probably will never be able to see more than vague outlines again."

"Quit blaming yourself for things that weren't your fault," said Draco, flatly. "They're not the only ones who lost things, during the war. Everyone made sacrifices."

"Right," agreed Harry. "Because I destroyed London, so there's the suffering for most of the wizarding population. I got Kingsley Shacklebolt killed, check for the aurors. Hermione can't have children, so Remus can't either. There's their share of sacrifice. I ruined half of Hogwarts, there go the professors and the students, and if anyone in the Weasley family can bear to be around me, I'd be amazed."

"If you insist on being a pessimist," interrupted Draco. "Fine." He looked at the ceiling. "You have me, at least."

"That's just lovely," said Harry. "My only friend is a man who's only here because he feels indebted to me. I'm afraid you don't count for much of anything."

"Fuck *you*," replied Draco, coldly, feeling unexpected anger and hurt flare in a wave he could hardly control.

"Well, I'm right, aren't I?" asked Harry.

"If you really want to know the reason they haven't come, Potter, it's because they're afraid of what they'll find," said Draco, and shut the door in his face.

He told himself that Harry hadn't known or meant what he'd said, but no matter what he tried to convince himself of, Draco couldn't focus. He burnt the toast, and finally ended up throwing breakfast away.

Hermione came that afternoon, after Draco's terse owl. Draco said nothing about the gold wedding band on her left hand, and then said even less when Hermione left it on the kitchen counter with her coat. He silently left for town as Hermione disappeared into Harry's room without having said a word to him.

He came back after dark, a few hours later, just in time to catch Hermione in the kitchen, tight lipped and dark-eyed. In that moment, Draco's feelings on Hermione slid rather firmly back to what they had been in their schooldays: intense dislike that bordered on hatred. He was almost glad to hold open the door and let her out into the rain.

He made dinner and left a plate on the counter for Harry, supposing that if he was well enough to receive Hermione, he was well enough to get out of bed, and even went so far as to lock the door to his room. It was past midnight when he took the dinner dishes to the kitchen, intending to check the windows against the rain and to go to bed, but the light in Harry's room was still on.

Draco nearly walked past from spite, but he stopped and shouldered open the door. Old habits died hard.

The first thing he noticed was that the overhead lights were on, harsh and glaring. Harry hadn't turned them on the entire time they'd been there. They were so bright that Draco could only make out a dim outline of Harry's shape. He was hidden completely underneath the sheets and quilts, and small, breathless noises gave away the fact that he was crying, even if he was trying to hide it. There was a pile of ripped photographs on the floor by the chair, far enough from the bed that Harry couldn't possibly have put them there.

Draco suddenly hated Hermione again, if only to keep from hating himself.

He turned off the lights, waiting for his eyes to adjust to the dark, stepping into the bathroom connected to the bedroom to run a glass of water.

His face in the mirror was foreign. Draco could see a hot, uncultured anger there. It was an expression he'd seen on Harry's face, and Weasley's, and even Snape's, but it was not an expression he'd ever expected to see in his own. He shut off the water, focusing on the slow twist of his wrist against the tap to cool the anger, then stepped into the bedroom, the wooden floors cool against his bare feet.

Draco set the water on the nightstand and watched Harry's shoulders shake beneath the quilt. He yanked it back, and Harry curled tighter into the ball he was in. Draco put a hand on his shoulders, digging his fingers in a little.

"Potter."

Harry did nothing.

His skin was warm beneath Draco's touch, and when he slid a hand to Harry's face, he realized it was damp.

"Potter," said Draco, shortly, sitting on the edge of the bed, hand still gripped on Harry's shoulder. "You need to have some water."

"No," Harry said, voice muffled, child-like.

"You're going to get dehydrated," replied Draco. "You already have a fever."

Harry said nothing for a moment, then he rolled over to face Draco. Harry pulled Draco's hands down and took them in his own, looking tired and hurt and, more than anything else, young, as if he was eleven and Draco was seeing him for the first time all over again. He wasn't even wearing glasses.

"I'm so *sorry*," he choked, voice breaking. "What I said..."

"Shut up," said Draco, firmly, and somehow, he didn't need to hear it. He found that he had known that Harry hadn't really meant it, after all.

"No," insisted Harry, tightening his grip on Draco's hands. "If you wanted to go back to hating me, you have every right, but god, please..."

"No one hates you," replied Draco. "Stop saying that."

Harry looked down.

"Please," he said, almost begging. "Just... don't hate me too."

Draco raised a hand to his face, and Harry shivered.

"I'll forgive you," said Draco, finally, pressing the glass of water into his hands. "If you'll realize we're not keeping score anymore."

"You aren't any less important than them," Harry whispered, fingers clutching at the glass, hands shaking. "I can't even remember..."

"I know," replied Draco. "Be quiet, Harry."

Harry raised the glass and drank, and when he had finished all of it, he handed it back to Draco. Draco silently reached out and used his sleeve to wipe the tears from Harry's face, wondering when he had hit a point where he no longer cared about getting dirty.

"Thank you," Harry said, looking slightly more composed. "I don't deserve it."

"What did she say, Potter?" said Draco, finally, glad that his face was hidden by shadows, unwilling to show the anger evident there.

Harry looked at the wall, and Draco tilted his face back, until he could see.

"What did Granger say?" he pressed.

"She said," whispered Harry, and then his voice broke, and he paused. "Did you know it wasn't just... she was going to have a baby."

"Harry," said Draco, again. "It wasn't your fault."

"She said," continued Harry, quietly, letting go of Draco's hands to pick at the bedspread. "That it was. If I hadn't stopped to try to save Severus Snape, then I wouldn't have been too late to save her. What sort of friend was I, to choose my enemies over the people who'd always stood by me?"

Draco looked at him for a long moment, silently.

"Hermione said that if I was going to choose Snape, then, I might as well choose Snape. I could have him, but I wasn't going to bloody well have her too," he said, and his voice broke again. "And she said that it was all well and good of me to play God and choose who lived and who died, but could I please explain to her why Nymphadora Tonks and Severus Snape were more important than her?"

Draco picked up his hand again, absently.

"And I couldn't," said Harry, finally. "She's right. What sort of man am I, to save Snape instead of going to Hermione?"

"Severus's life isn't worth any more than Hermione's," said Draco, voice tight. "But it isn't worth any less either."

"Going back," said Harry, softly. "If I had to do it again, I still wouldn't have left him. Hermione wanted to know if that was my revenge for all those years of hating him, making him owe me, but I said it wasn't. He was a human being, and he was screaming. I couldn't leave him to *die* when I had the ability to save him."

"Hermione is grieving," said Draco, voice sounding hollow even to his own ears.

"I didn't know," continued Harry, sadly. "I thought, they just had her, I thought she would be okay for as long as I had to take. I knew they wouldn't kill her, and I thought about it, and I thought they might rape her, that they might hurt her, but they wouldn't *kill* her. They were going to kill Snape. They were going to kill Tonks. What sort of person does that make me, Malfoy? How could I have *made* that sort of decision?"

"Because you had to," replied Draco. "*We read that we ought to forgive our enemies; but we do not read that we ought to forgive our friends.*"

"I don't hate her," whispered Harry, finally. "Maybe I ought to, because I couldn't help what I did, and she hates me for it, but I don't hate her. Is there anyone left who doesn't blame me?"

"I don't," said Draco, firmly, getting to his feet. "Granger's an idiot."

He pulled the blankets up around Harry, and reached a hand to smooth his hair from his forehead.

"Get some sleep, Potter," Draco said, a little roughly.

He was moving away when Harry grabbed his wrist.

"Stay," he whispered. "Please."

"I - " began Draco.

"Draco," said Harry, softly. "Please."

It wasn't as if there was anything he could say to that, after all. Draco silently pushed down the blankets and crawled into the bed. Harry pressed himself against the wall, carefully arranging himself so they weren't touching. Draco closed his eyes for a moment, and let out his breath. He looked at the ceiling, then the bedspread, then the floor, then the narrow path of the hall light spilling under the closed door.

"Don't be an idiot," he said, finally. "It's all right."

Harry's arms were instantly around Draco's neck, and he was crying again, with soft, wracking sobs that Draco could feel just as well as hear. He slid an arm awkwardly around Harry's shoulders and pressed his chin to the top of his head, a position he remembered Severus Snape assuming once, when he had gotten hurt as a boy.

"Stop crying," he murmured. "You're getting my shirt wet."

Exactly what Snape had said.

Harry laughed a little against his neck. Draco shifted, taking his arm away, but Harry tensed, so he merely moved it, wrapping it around Harry's waist.

"Be quiet," said Draco, softly, pulling him closer in an effort to stop the crying. "Stop being melodramatic, Potter."

Harry exhaled, hot against Draco's skin, and slowly relaxed. Draco moved a hand to the back of Harry's head, tentatively stroking his hair. He slid his other hand up to carefully remove Harry's hands from his shirt, where they were clenched. He shifted, uncomfortable about offering this sort of reassurance.

Draco had never been comforted like this, even as a child, and he was almost positive that men weren't supposed to hold other men like he was holding Harry. Harry didn't seem to care, though - unless he tried to move away - so Draco didn't quite protest. He waited until Harry had fallen asleep before he tried to untangle himself, but the instant he tried to remove his arms from around Harry, Harry woke up.

"Draco?" he said, the voice of a frightened child. "Draco? What are you - *Please don't leave* - "

"Be quiet, Harry," said Draco. "I'm right here."

Harry was asleep again almost instantly, and Draco resigned himself to a long night. He was surprised to wake up to sunlight coming in through the window, with Harry still sprawled half on top of him. He untangled himself - Harry didn't wake this time - and pulled on a coat, scribbling a note on the grocery list. It felt strange; Draco had never had anyone to leave a note for, before.

It was easy enough to apparate to London, without luggage and when it was only one person. Draco did just under the allowed kilometer limit, had a cup of coffee, did it again, stopped to look at a directory, then once more, where he had another cup of coffee. The last time was shorter than the rest and left him at the end of an unfamiliar street of narrow front steps and painted doors. He consulted the small scrap of paper in his pocket, taken from the muggle directory, and found the proper door - red, with geraniums in pots on the front steps, and a fresh coat of paint on the door itself.

He knocked, waited, then knocked again. He was getting ready to try the doorbell when Remus Lupin pulled open the door, in a dressing robe, clutching a cup of tea. He stared at Draco over the top of his glasses, looking older than he had the last time Draco had seen him.

"I hope," he said, looking grave and amused at the same time, a trait that Draco had always found infuriating. "That this is rather important, Mr. Malfoy, as it's seven o'clock in the morning."

"I need to talk to Granger," he said, deciding that honesty was probably more likely to get him through the door than anything else.

Lupin looked at him for a long moment. "She's gone to work already, so you'll have to tell it to me or send her an owl."

"Lupin," said Draco, bluntly. "Your wife is a cow."

Draco recognized the soft sorrow in Lupin's face and realized, rather abruptly, that even if he hadn't appreciated him as a child, he'd still respected him.

"What's she done?" said Lupin, in a weary sort of tone that implied that this wasn't the first time someone had shown up on his doorstep. "I'm terribly sorry - "

"I understand," Draco interrupted, slowly. "That allowances are to be made for grief, and for a sudden lack of hope, and for loss, but some things are inexcusable."

"I know," Lupin managed, then stepped back, holding open the door. "Will you come in?"

"No," said Draco, shortly, uncomfortable at the red of the foyer and the rise of stairs with piles of papers between the railings. "I'll come back."

"I'll take care of it," said Remus, after a long pause. "Whatever it is."

"Harry," Draco replied, fingers curling around the railing in a sudden rush of tight, cold anger. "She hasn't got the right to walk all over him, you know - he's just -"

Draco couldn't say, exactly, that Harry was just a child, because he wasn't, and he couldn't stay that Harry didn't understand, because Harry did. He found, rather abruptly, that he wanted to tell him that what Hermione had done was *not fair*, which was a terribly Gryffindor sentiment, after all. *Life's not fair*, he thought, just as Snape had always said when he'd used that argument, until he'd stopped using it at all, but the words didn't sound right anymore. It didn't matter whether or not it was; he *wanted* it to be.

"She did," finished Draco, quietly, "the worst thing she could have. He hasn't got any faith left."

"I know," murmured Lupin, with a long sigh. "This is, do you realize, going to result in my sleeping on the couch for the rest of my life?"

"Yes," said Draco, with a sudden, bright smile. "But you're a Gryffindor. You can be counted upon to do anything, so long as you think it's right."

"Slytherins," replied Lupin, but he was smiling too. "Are you sure you won't come in?"

"Yes," said Draco, turning. "I ought to be getting back."

"Draco Malfoy and Harry Potter," said Lupin, looking strangely amused. "I suppose someone ought to have seen that one coming."

"*What?*" Draco said, forgetting for a moment that he'd meant to be polite.

"Fine line, and all," said Lupin, hand on the doorknob.

"We're - " began Draco, again.

"You're you," Lupin replied. "And he grew up in a cupboard. What did you *expect*, Mr. Malfoy?"

"We're not what you're implying," Draco said, calmly, collecting himself.

"Really?" Lupin murmured, drawing the door closed. "Rather a shame, then, wouldn't you say?"

"No," said Draco, firmly, but it was strange to think that Remus Lupin might be right about something - stranger still to think he might be right about *that*.

It was awfully odd, Draco realized, to have learned more about someone from standing five minutes on their doorstep than from knowing them for years. He hadn't known that Lupin had a sense of humor. Perhaps there was something to be said for Gryffindors, after all.

When he got back, Harry was still sleeping, fingers clutched in the bed sheets, but he woke as Draco came in, sleepily watching him lean in the doorway. "Hi," Harry said, then, a bit less certainly. "You're dressed."

"Wasn't any milk," Draco murmured, smoothly. It was true, really - there hadn't been any.

He wondered when he'd started feeling guilty about lying. "There's breakfast."

"That's okay," said Harry, pulling the sheets up around his shoulders. "I'm not hungry."

"No," corrected Draco. "You don't want to get out of bed."

"Yeah," admitted Harry. "Something like that."

Draco brought him toast and jam, which Harry managed to neatly eat, keeping any crumbs from the bed. After Draco had returned the dishes to the kitchen, Harry watched him. He didn't say anything, exactly, when Draco went to put in a load of wash, or when he left to take a shower, but Draco noticed that Harry only relaxed when he came back, so he stopped leaving and read. He got thirty-six pages into *Lolita* before he realized Harry was watching him.

"What?" said Draco, shifting in the rather uncomfortable chair, stretching a little.

"You read a lot of muggle books," observed Harry.

"Yeah," Draco replied, a little shortly. "I worked in a muggle bookshop for awhile."

"You did?" said Harry, leaning forward a little.

"In Barcelona," said Draco, with a secretive smile. "Marquez is better in the original language."

"Why?" said Harry, obviously curious.

Draco let the smile widen into a rather self-satisfied grin. "I was shagging the clerk."

Harry flushed. "I mean, why did you work in a *muggle* bookshop in *Barcelona*?"

"Something to do," murmured Draco. "Paid the bills, I suppose."

"Oh," said Harry, looking rather unsatisfied.

"I was mixed up in things," clarified Draco. "Things I hadn't meant to be involved with. I thought I ought to get away, let it blow over."

"No one knew where you were," hazarded Harry.

"No," agreed Draco. "Sometimes it's easier to disappear."

"Sometimes," said Harry, rather softly, then looked up again. "Is your book any good?"

"Yeah," Draco said, finally. "I suppose you'll want me to read to you, then, Potter?"

"If you - " Harry flushed. "If you wanted."

"I suppose," said Draco, drawing the chair closer. "It's not as if I've got anything *better* to do, you know."

"Thanks," said Harry, softly.

"Now I've got to start over," murmured Draco, without any real malice.

"Sorry," said Harry, but he didn't sound very sorry at all.

He got to page seventy-four before he realized that Harry had fallen asleep, covers still pulled up around his shoulders.

"Prat," said Draco, under his breath, and fixed the pillows so Harry wouldn't wake up to a crick in his neck before closing the book and heading for the dim light of the back patio.

He opened the door for the owl, which waited very politely on the railing, and counted words instead of reading. He was on two hundred and eighty-one when Harry came out, jumper on backwards, trying to get both his shoes on at once. His hands were shaking with excitement. They were the only part of him Draco could really see.

"Hermione - " he began, and Draco couldn't quite bring himself to look up. Disbelieving joy was evident in Harry's voice.

"Told you so," murmured Draco, reading the same paragraph five times.

"Slytherins," called Harry, but he was already half way around the end of the drive, stepping away to apparate.

"Gryffindors," said Draco, to himself, but he didn't really mean it.

He took a chair to the beach and read until it began to rain, getting drenched walking up the path. Its edges were indistinct in the rain. Draco tiredly put on dry clothes and shut up the windows against the driving, icy thunderstorm. He stood at the window and watched the lightning play against the water until it got dark, then made a cup of tea and settled down to read on the couch.

He woke up to water dripping on his face and a blanket tucked around him. "Harry?" he managed, sitting up.

"Fuck," Harry said. "I was trying not to wake you up."

Draco turned on a lamp, revealing a soaking wet Harry Potter giving him a rather sheepish look. "Sorry," he said.

"It's okay," said Draco, looking at his hands. "Did it go all right?"

"Yeah," said Harry, and Draco caught the glimpse of a wide grin out of the corners of his vision.

"Yeah, it's sorted. I talked to Ron, too."

"I should go," said Draco, abruptly.

"What?" Harry replied, after a long pause, smile fading.

"Go," said Draco, dully. "I'm - you're all right, I mean, aren't you? That's the point."

"It's your house," said Harry, voice a little higher than Draco was used to. "You can't - "

"It's okay," said Draco, examining the calluses on his hands. "You can stay as long as you'd like. I should go pack."

"It's the middle of the night," Harry managed. "Don't - at least stay until tomorrow morning."

"Okay," Draco agreed, mostly because he was too tired to argue.

He went to bed and, in the end, wasn't terribly surprised when Harry climbed in beside him.

"Window was open in my bedroom," said Harry, close enough so that Draco could feel his breath on his neck. "Bed's all wet."

Draco knew he'd closed it, but somehow, it was all right, just this once.

"I'm sorry," Harry whispered, finally.

"I know," said Draco, after another long pause, and went to sleep.

It wasn't as hard to pack as he'd thought it would be, in the end, or as difficult as he'd imagined it might be to gather his things from around Harry, still sleeping, sprawled across the entire bed.

He'd thought to leave without saying goodbye, but in the end, he couldn't, and Harry woke up anyway, just long enough to pull his sleeves down over his hands and see Draco to the door, opening it to the rain.

"Goodbye," said Harry, finally, then, a little desperately, "Draco, don't - " He swallowed whatever it was that he'd been going to say, and Draco managed a weak smile.

"I'll see you around," Draco said. "Maybe."

"Yeah," said Harry. "You'll come visit, won't you?"

"Sure," said Draco, even though they both knew he was lying. "I've a train to catch."

"Goodbye, then," said Harry, and swallowed before shutting the door, as if he couldn't quite bear anymore.

"Goodbye," said Draco, to weatherworn paint and rather solid wood, and went to catch the train.

In the end, he got to the compartment before he realized that he'd made enough mistakes in his life to know what one looked like, and enough to know that he wasn't about to make this one.

It took him twenty minutes to get back to the house. He let himself back in through the door, shutting it quietly behind him. Harry was in the kitchen, at the sink, elbows on the counter, head in his hands. The water was running, loud enough to drown out Draco's quiet footsteps, and a pile of dishes was half-dried, dripping onto the sideboard.

"Hi," said Draco.

Harry jumped, turned, stared. His eyes were red. "Did you miss your train?"

"I forgot something," Draco murmured.

"What?" Harry said, looking rather defeated.

"You," said Draco, simply, and crossed the kitchen.

"Oh," said Harry, very softly, more of an exhalation than a word, as Draco stepped closer, until they were almost touching. The rise and fall of Harry's chest was so close he could feel every breath.

Harry's eyes fluttered closed as Draco slid a hand to his face, fingers firm behind his jaw, to tilt it up. "Do you mean it?" he murmured. "I don't think I can - if you don't - "

Maybe Draco hadn't been so wrong then, after all. He kissed Harry, long and slow, until Harry was almost limp against him, arms around his neck, body pressed close against Draco's. "Yes," Draco said, hand sliding to the back of Harry's head as he leaned down for another kiss, open-mouthed and warm.

He watched Harry, a little dizzily, as he pressed him back against the counter, hands sliding to his hips to pull him closer. Harry looked like he was counting breaths, eyes still firmly closed. "Look at me," Draco said, and Harry opened his eyes. Draco kissed him before he could close them, holding Harry's gaze. Harry made a startled noise in the back of his throat, so Draco bent his head to press languid kisses across Harry's collarbone, stopping to dip his tongue in the hollow of his throat. That drew another low noise.

"Please - " Harry said, voice rough, hands tangled in Draco's damp hair. He let go, for balance, lifting himself up to sit on the counter so he could tug Draco between his thighs and lean down to kiss him, deep and hard.

Draco hissed softly when Harry tilted his head back to expose his throat, and Harry hissed back, something low and primal and a bit more than *just* noise. The translating spell he'd cast on himself years ago tugged at the edges of the thing, and he laughed, a little, when he realized that Harry was repeating *mine* and *fuck*, probably without quite knowing what he was saying.

Draco slid his hands up Harry's thighs, open-palmed and slow, and Harry leaned back on his elbows to watch, breathing hard, eyes half-closed.

"I don't think we ought to do this *here*," said Draco, but he didn't stop, tracing fingertips beneath Harry's jumper, across the warm curve of his hip, spreading a hand absently across Harry's stomach, feeling muscles tense beneath his palm.

In reality, he thought that perhaps they oughtn't do it at *all*, because people didn't confess undying love and fall into bed together. If you cared, you were supposed to say, *I enjoy your company* and perhaps *would you care for dinner*, and then, if things went well, you were allowed to lean in on the porch and give in to the overwhelming hesitance that came quickly between breaths and *kiss*.

"Don't stop," said Harry, hoarsely, shifting uncomfortably beneath Draco's hands as he leaned forward to kiss him again, hard and hungry.

Then again, Draco thought, when had Harry Potter ever followed the rules?

"Sorry," Draco managed.

Harry slid forward so he could slide his hands under Draco's shirt, cool against his skin, and Draco found that, suddenly, he was against Harry, swallowing at the solid warmth of his body. Harry removed his hands to drape his arms across Draco's shoulders, leaning until their faces were almost touching, pressing his hips forward against Draco's, breathless and flushed.

"Oh," Harry said, when Draco reached to pull Harry's shirt over his head, following with steady, deliberate pressure of his hands across warm skin, and then - "*Oh*."

He slid off the counter - slow, demanding friction that made Draco's stomach drop - and pushed Draco back, a little, so he could pull him across the kitchen and into the bedroom, fingers warm and tight against Draco's wrist.

Harry had Draco pushed down against the bed before Draco could quite think about it, fingers everywhere at once - awkward brushes against the inside of his wrists as Harry struggled to find an angle to undo his cuffs, against his skin through thin cotton as Harry undid clasps. Draco was too breathless to laugh when Harry broke half of them because he hadn't the faintest idea of how to undo this sort, so he took his hands and showed him, instead. Then there was steady pressure against his stomach from the heels of Harry's hands.

It wasn't hard to figure out that Harry was all angles - elbows digging into Draco's hips as they kissed, a knee to his thigh when Harry moved to undo his trousers - or that he was too heavy. When he sprawled across Draco's chest, Draco couldn't breathe. Harry was too quick moving and too nervous for Draco's to tolerate, no matter how much Draco *wanted* him, so Draco rolled to pin him, nudging Harry's thighs apart so he could lower himself down, sliding a hand up to hold Harry's wrists above his head.

Harry arched into his weight almost immediately, but Draco managed to get a hand between them to undo Harry's jeans, pulling them down before Harry could try to kick them off.

This was all right - the slick heat of Harry's mouth under his own, the hard heat of Harry's erection against his stomach when Draco slid down to lick across his collarbone, the slow slide of Harry's skin against his own, made easier because Draco was still damp from the rain.

"Ah," said Harry, spreading his thighs a little so he could pull Draco closer, pressing up against him and rubbing slowly. Draco pressed a thigh between Harry's legs, and Harry made a noise Draco hadn't known anyone was capable of making.

He had to shift to get Harry's boxers off, but it was more than worth the trouble; when he curled his fingers around Harry's erection, Harry almost whimpered.

"Oh my *god*," Harry managed, breathlessly, twisting a little, fingers tight against the sheets.

"Like this?" Draco murmured, sliding the edge of his thumb across the head of Harry's cock, slowly.

Harry made a low, strangled noise. "Oh -"

"Or do you want - " Draco tightened his fingers and Harry moaned, head falling back against the pillows. He was panting.

"God - " Harry said, exhaling slowly. "Oh - "

"Been awhile?" Draco murmured, sliding up to close his teeth on the curve of Harry's shoulder as he stroked, moving to nuzzle along Harry's jaw when Harry's breathing quickened.

"Yeah," Harry gasped, fingers tightening against the sheets as he pushed up into Draco's hand. "I've wanted - "

"Shut up," Draco said, twisting his wrist slowly, and Harry stopped talking with another low moan. Draco only had to do it once more before Harry came, back arched almost entirely off the bed.

Draco pressed close against Harry's side and waited for him to begin breathing again. "Can you?" he managed, a little tersely, already aching hard, when Harry opened his eyes.

"I think," Harry managed, leaning up on one elbow to kiss him, long and slow. "It's too soon to ask you to fuck me, isn't it?"

Draco exhaled, slowly, against Harry's mouth. "Probably."

"Will you?" murmured Harry, voice dangerously low. Draco wondered when he'd lost control of the situation.

Draco pushed him back against the bed instead of answering, pressing close. Harry slid his hands, flat-palmed, up and down Draco's back, until Draco shuddered and thrust against him. Harry's skin was hot against his own, a warm electric current down his spine. He caught his breath when Harry hooked his thumbs in the waistband of his boxers and tugged them off, closing his eyes against the sudden onslaught of smooth, heated skin.

Harry slid up on his elbows to nip Draco's earlobe, sounding suspiciously like he was laughing. His mouth was almost too much to bear when he bent his head to lick along the curve of Draco's jaw. Harry's hands slid up to tangle in Draco's hair, tilting his head slowly back for easier access, as he

slowly arched up against him again, half-hard already.

"Turn over," Draco whispered, against Harry's shoulder, sliding back to kneel between his thighs. Harry complied easily, almost lazily, pressing his hips down against the bed. Draco ran his hands down Harry's sides to rest at his waist, reaching for his wand to murmur low spells, one of which made Harry moan again.

"Okay?" said Draco, slowly setting his wand on the bedside table, ignoring the fact that his hands were shaking.

Harry lifted his head off folded arms to glance at Draco over his shoulder. "Yeah," he said. "I'm not that fragile - "

Draco disagreed based solely on the noise Harry made when he slid two fingers inside, a bit more quickly than he'd meant to.

"Ow," Harry mumbled. "Just - hold still -"

"Awhile translating to never?" Draco said, sliding his other hand down Harry's spine, stroking slow circles with his thumb.

"Awhile translating to about three years - " said Harry, catching his breath when Draco pressed deeper. "*Don't* - " he said, through slightly gritted teeth, then caught his breath in an entirely different sort of way.

"Don't?" Draco prompted.

"Don't *stop*," managed Harry. Draco laughed.

"Shut up," managed Harry, breathlessly.

"Just because I'm sleeping with you," murmured Draco, still laughing, adding another finger. "That doesn't mean I *like* you, you know."

"Good," panted Harry. "Because I - I -"

"Shut up," murmured Draco, pulling back. "And get on your knees."

"Because I hate you," finished Harry, but he complied, turning to look at Draco over his shoulder.

Draco watched him for a long moment, trying not to notice the way the gray light from the window fell across his skin, because that was too stupidly poetic to remember, and shifted to settle his hands on Harry's hips, almost absently. "All right?"

"Yeah," said Harry, quietly, and tilted his head back as Draco slid inside.

Harry made another soft, low noise, so Draco waited, stroking a hand up and down his side until Harry's breathing evened.

"Okay," said Harry, finally, and Draco began to thrust, slowly.

"Fuck," said Harry, then, "*Fuck.*"

Draco laughed, low and rough, pulling Harry closer, fingers tightening as he leaned to bite again, where Harry's neck met his shoulder. He kept Harry steady with one hand as he slid the other up to stroke a thumb across his shoulderblade, twisting so he could let it fall to spread across Harry's stomach.

Harry moaned again, desperate and breathless. "*Oh -*" he said, voice rough. "*Oh god, please -*"

Draco smiled against Harry's shoulder and shifted his hand down to wrap his fingers around Harry's erection, stroking hard. Harry came almost immediately, and Draco caught his breath with a low hiss.

Harry turned his head to kiss him, hard. The angle wasn't quite right for it to be anything more than rough, but Harry's entire body twisted, and Draco came, with a soft gasp against Harry's mouth.

Harry let him catch his breath before he shifted away, pulling Draco down onto the bed with him.

"Has anyone ever told you -" began Draco, rolling away before tangling his fingers with Harry's, across his stomach. He stopped to murmur a cleaning charm.

"Sorry," said Harry.

"What?" Draco said. Harry shifted, uncomfortably.

"I told you it had been awhile -" he mumbled.

"Oh," said Draco. "No, I was going to say, your ceiling leaks."

"My ceiling leaks?" repeated Harry, incredulously.

"Rather, my ceiling," said Draco, gesturing, before easing away from Harry to stand up. He stretched, and, after discovering that his clothes were still distinctly damp, pulled on a pair of Harry's swim trunks, drying over the back of a chair.

"Where are you going?" said Harry, leaning up on his elbows. Draco thought he looked rather endearingly concerned.

"To get a glass of water," replied Draco, and went into the kitchen.

By the time Harry arrived, with a sheet wrapped around his waist, Draco had gone through two glasses of water, and half a peanut butter sandwich.

"Want one?" he managed, around the crust.

"Normal people," Harry informed him, gravely, "go to *sleep* after mind-blowing sex."

"Have I ever given the impression of being normal?" Draco said, taking another bite of his sandwich and swallowing. "And it wasn't mind-blowing. Merely very good." He thought for a moment before amending, "Or, good. You came too quickly, and I never actually got around to - "

"*Draco*," interrupted Harry, exasperated.

"Besides," Draco added. "I slept all last night. I *didn't* eat breakfast."

Harry pulled himself up on the counter, feet dangling towards the floor. Draco leaned against the kitchen table, finishing the last corner of the sandwich. When he looked up, he realized Harry was watching him again.

"Are you always this strange?" Harry said, propping his chin in a hand.

"Potter," said Draco, with a sigh, opening the icebox to rummage for something else. He located a rather pathetic looking apple, and started in on that.

"I thought you were calling me Harry."

"You know," said Draco, conversationally. "I was only nice to you because you needed someone to be nice to you. Now, I'm - "

"I went to the village yesterday," Harry interrupted.

"And?" Draco said.

"And," continued Harry, "there's a bookshop. With an opening."

Draco paused. "And?"

"And," said Harry, "I don't particularly want to go back to London."

"And?"

"And," said Harry, taking a deep breath. "I don't want you to go either."

Draco crossed the kitchen, extending the apple. Harry took it warily.

"Hold that," Draco said, leaning in to kiss him, holding himself up with a hand on either side of Harry. Harry made a small noise against his mouth, and Draco reached up, absently, to brush a lock of hair off his forehead.

"I can't go," he said, so close their noses were almost touching. "You're still an idiot."

"Shut up," said Harry, affectionately.

"So what," said Draco, reclaiming his apple, "are you to do while I'm playing at being a librarian?"

"There's a biologist," Harry informed him. "He needs help collecting from rock pools."

"Ala *Cannery Row*," murmured Draco, laughing.

"What?" said Harry.

"Someday, I'll tell you," said Draco, collecting a shirt from the radiator and pulling it on. "Let's go to the beach."

"It's raining," Harry protested, looking rather confused.

"It's stopped," explained Draco, extending a dry pair of jeans to Harry, who pulled them on slowly.

"Why?" Harry said, finally.

"I owe you a sandcastle," Draco said, as if it were obvious, holding open the door.

Harry laughed, ducking underneath Draco's arm to begin the walk down to the beach.

Draco locked the door behind him, and that, in the end, was that.