

Second Hands of Time

By Sev1970 (mk malfoy)

Summary

Harry wants to go back and save Fred from the cruel fate that has been given to him, but he gets more than he expected when he discovers that someone has joined his little adventure. Canon and epilogue-compliant

Title: Second Hands of Time

Author: Sev1970/MK Malfoy

Pairing: Harry/Draco

Wordcount: 11,300

Rating: R

Warnings: language, epilogue-compliant, non-linear

Summary: "*How can you mix fire and water?*" the Fool finally whispers. Never pausing the Angel answers, "*You must have the right vessels and the right proportions.*"

Written for the 2008 hd_worldcup

A/N: Thanks to my betas and team canon teammates.

~*~

Time is a brisk wind, for each hour it brings something new ... but who can understand and measure its sharp breath, its mystery and its design? —Paracelsus

~*~

Harry Potter opened his eyes and the darkness momentarily confused him until he realised he had been dreaming. Draco Malfoy was not sitting next to him and this was not *that* day nineteen years earlier. Harry was in his bed, in the present. As he tried to calm his erratic breathing, he looked over at Ginny and saw that she was still asleep. Afraid he might wake her with his restlessness, Harry put on his glasses, got out of bed, walked out into the passage and made his way to the bathroom so he could use the loo. He then walked to Lily's room and cracked open the door so he could check on her.

She looked so small and vulnerable as she slept on her side, curled up just as James had always slept, and just as Al had preferred to sleep. A small lump formed in Harry's throat, and a frown found its way to his face. He wanted his children to be happy ... *always*. To that end, he would do his best to not let them down.

After he closed the door to his daughter's room, Harry returned to his and Ginny's bedroom and climbed into the warm bed. He settled down and got comfortable, or as comfortable as he could with his sore back. It had been giving him problems for almost a month, and Harry wasn't sure if it was a real pain or an imagined one that he was feeling—probably the latter, and that was not anything he wanted to think about because it was another reminder of a time long ago past.

"Harry? Are you feeling okay? I heard you get up," asked Ginny as she propped herself up on an elbow and looked at him, her brown eyes studying him intently.

A forced smile was Harry's reply. He hadn't meant to wake her. Now that she was awake, they were going to talk; there was no way to avoid it. She knew there was something bothering him— had known since their sighting of Draco Malfoy at King's Cross. What she didn't know was *why* Malfoy was causing such tension, and, if Harry could help it, she never would. This was something no one would understand, or maybe they would, but Harry had no plans of ever sharing these memories. Were he smart, he would have got rid of them long ago. He did have a Pensieve, after all. It would be so easy to place these memories in there and not have to ever think about them again, but on the few occasions that he had tried to do so, he hadn't had the nerve.

"I'm okay." There was little chance that Ginny would believe him, but Harry shrugged his shoulders and gave her what he hoped was a sincere smile.

"You know you can tell me anything," Ginny said, her voice almost a whisper.

"I know, Gin, but it's nothing. Really," he added when she sighed. She sat up and faced him. This wasn't good. She looked at him in that way that said she was about to say something important, and Harry had better not interrupt.

"I've not said anything about how you have changed over the past few weeks; I didn't want to think about what it could mean, but ..."

"But what?" Harry asked, frustrated, knowing he didn't want to hear what she was about to say. It was too late to be having this conversation.

"No matter what you say, I know there's something wrong. You've been distant and you haven't been yourself. And don't tell me I am imagining things. Am I losing you, Harry? You aren't happy, and Lily knows something is not right with us." The tone of her voice was matter-of-fact and her expression showed her fear about what her husband might be about to tell her.

His children. Ginny had to know that bringing them into the conversation would get his attention, and it angered Harry that she was using them, but he had to admit that it was possibly the only way to get him to talk. He didn't want to disappoint them, nor did he want to hurt Ginny. Honestly? Harry wasn't sure what was going to happen. It wasn't as if he had planned this. How could he have known that seeing Malfoy would have affected him as much as it had? How could he have known that nineteen years later, he'd still think about him? It's not as if he wanted to think of him; he just did. Harry looked at Ginny and studied her face for a few seconds.

"I'm not going anywhere, Gin." Harry wanted to believe it was the truth. There was no reply, but he could see the discontentment on Ginny's face as she settled back down under the duvet. Her eyes flickered back and forth between him and the wall several times, and then they closed. This conversation was far from over, and Harry dreaded what the morrow would bring. As sleepy as he was, his mind ran rampant with images of grey eyes and ... and ...

Steady rhythmic breathing from his wife allowed him to fall asleep.

The following day, after a busier than usual morning, Harry met with a few select members of the Wizengamot to schedule a meeting for the following week where all the members would be in attendance. The Ministry wanted the Wizengamot to take on a few new duties, and as

expected, the Chief Warlock was not pleased. As this was important to the Ministry, Harry had been asked to meet with them. (This was one of those *Boy Who Lived* tasks that he was asked to do from time to time). After the meeting was over, he told his secretary that he was leaving for the day: Ron, Hermione and he were meeting in Diagon Alley at two. Once outside of Ministry wards, he disappeared to *Quality Quidditch* so he could order James, who had made the Gryffindor Quidditch team as Chaser, a new broom.

The first game was in two weeks (Gryffindor against Slytherin), and Harry couldn't wait. Hooch had told him that James was as good as any player she had ever seen. Just thinking about his son playing Quidditch made Harry grin. There was little time these days for him to fly, and he missed the feeling of having the wind whipping him in the face as he raced through the air.

After choosing which broom he wanted for his son, Harry found the other Quidditch-related equipment James would need, then paid for his purchases and left. He had thought about going to see George, but he had spent longer than expected finding a broom, and Lily had been asking to visit her godfather, so Harry decided that he and his daughter would go see George the following weekend.

There weren't many people out and about, but when Harry entered the Leaky Cauldron, it was, as always, busy: hags, goblins, witches and wizards filled the tables, presumably enjoying their lunch hour. There were two witches near the till who looked familiar, but Harry wasn't sure if it was from Hogwarts or work that he knew them. He rarely saw his former year mates. Many of them had fled to far-off places after the Battle of Hogwarts, and Harry didn't blame them. Had it not been for Ginny, the urge to flee might have overtaken him as well. The only people Harry saw regularly these days, who weren't part of his family, were his co-workers at the Ministry. Ginny was forever trying to get him to go out and be more social, but Harry quite liked it when it was just he and his family.

After he ordered and retrieved his butterbeer and a bag of crisps, Harry looked around for an empty table. At first glance, there didn't appear to be any available, but then he spotted one in the back corner, hidden behind a plant. As he walked towards it, a few heads turned, and there were several nods of acknowledgment, but no one tried to stop him, for which Harry was grateful. He sat down and took out the *Daily Prophet* he had brought with him to pass the time until Ron and Hermione arrived; it was not yet two, but if their previous meetings were any indication, Hermione would be arriving soon, so Harry knew he didn't have long to wait.

On the front page there was a picture of Neville Longbottom and his wife handing a cheque to the Head Healer of St Mungo's. Out of all the students in Harry's year, it had been Neville who surprised everyone. Few people had taken the boy seriously back then, but now, almost twenty years later, no one could deny that Longbottom had done well for himself. Teaching at Hogwarts and doing research on rare plants that could one day potentially reverse the debilitating effects of the Cruciatus had turned a once shy boy into a confident man. Harry would never again doubt how far confidence could take a person.

In the bottom corner, there was a picture of Arthur Weasley standing beside ...

Harry's gaze left the paper and traveled towards the entrance when he heard the door open. He expected to see Ron or Hermione, but it was neither: it was Malfoy. Fate was just as they said it was. *Please don't come over here, please don't come over here*, Harry pleaded with no one in particular.

Unfortunately, no one seemed to be listening, and Harry began to mentally prepare himself for what he was going to say. As Malfoy neared, Harry could see that he had been affected by their sighting of one another a month earlier as well; he looked nervous. Harry wanted to Disapparate, and knew he could if he wanted to. However, as if he had been Stunned, he remained motionless, and damned his weakness. It was disconcerting how a few tense hours spent in each other's company almost twenty years earlier had forever changed the way Harry looked at Draco Malfoy.

He'd give almost anything to go back to how things had been before ... wouldn't he?

~*~ Nineteen Years Earlier ~*~

Hermione and Harry sat with their backs against the wall of the Entrance Hall, knees pulled up to their bodies, arms wrapped around them as if they would detach themselves if not held in place. Two pairs of eyes followed the path from the stairs as Professor McGonagall walked towards them and then sat in a chair she had conjured. Her face was flushed, and she was breathing heavily as if she had been running. Harry glanced at Hermione and received a shake of her head in response. When he gazed at his Head of House again, it occurred to him that she looked older than she had a few hours earlier.

Harry wondered what she was thinking and how she felt. He wasn't sure if he felt anything: he had been scared, sad, happy, and resigned earlier, but now there was nothing inside of him. He was numb.

When McGonagall cleared her throat and looked at Hermione and him, Harry's tension began to ease. He was unsure why this happened, but he guessed it was because perhaps he felt a sense of relief that he wasn't in a position of responsibility, as he had been for the past ten months. He was soon to be on his own, where he would make the decisions in his life, but, for now, he wanted to let someone else be in charge.

"So you, Miss Granger and Mr Weasley found and destroyed all six of the Horcruxes? Is this correct, Mr Potter?" asked their Head of House, her brogue a bit more pronounced as she looked intently at them, awaiting their answer.

"Yeah, we di—well, Neville killed Nagini, but yeah, Hermione, Ron and I, er ... we destroyed the others." Harry tried to stifle a yawn, but failed, and received a commiserating glance from his Head of House. She looked as tired as he felt, and she wore the scars of battle on her face and hands, just as he and Hermione did.

"I have viewed the memories you gave me, Mr Potter, and it would seem that Professor Snape was indeed on our side. This has come as a great shock, I must confess. A pleasant one. He deserved better," she finished, almost in a whisper.

Harry nodded. He agreed. Part of him wanted to ask whether or not Snape's body had been removed from the Shrieking Shack, but he didn't think that was any of his business ... but ...

"Er, Professor? Have they removed his body?" Harry asked tentatively. Hermione looked at him; she glared and shook her head as if Harry were a child who had no tact. Perhaps she was right.

"I do not know, Mr Potter," replied McGonagall, her voice trembling slightly as her eyes traveled

to the door. "I have asked Kingsley Shacklebolt to take care of Professor Snape's body." Her voice seemed to crack ever so slightly as she mentioned Snape's body.

Harry thought he should probably say something. This ... everything ... it had all been done because of him. It was a lot to digest. "Professor, I ... this—"

"Don't you even think about it, Mr Potter. I regret many things: I regret that Severus Snape had to die, and I regret that so many others died, but I will never regret what we all did tonight: we came together as a school, and we did not allow Voldemort to get that which he wanted. You are very special, Harry, and don't ever forget that. Your friends, fellow students, your teachers—all of us— we chose to fight tonight. We believed in something and were not prepared to lose it. None of this is your fault and I will not allow you to think otherwise." Now McGonagall's hands were visibly shaking.

Harry turned towards Hermione and, as he had expected, tears cascaded down her face along the trails that had been created earlier. He nodded. He opened his mouth to respond, but a yawn came out instead; his four-poster in Gryffindor Tower was calling his name.

As he heard voices, he turned his head and watched Kingsley and another person, who looked like Fudge, talking to each other in the doorway of the Entrance Hall. It was curious that Fudge would be at Hogwarts. Whatever the former Minister for Magic was doing here, Harry knew Kingsley was here to deal with Snape, and to speak to Harry, and Harry really didn't want to talk to anyone else about what happened, at least not now.

McGonagall seemed unsettled to see the men; it was easy to see that she was exhausted, but at least now there were no other students around; she no longer had to mask her facial expressions.

The Great Hall now held silence within its walls, but mere minutes earlier students had filled the perimeters, some of the first and second years screaming and crying, others of them staring ahead, their eyes as vacant as a Dementor's victim. Madam Pince and Professors Flitwick, Slughorn and Trelawney had gathered the students and taken them to their respective common rooms. What was left behind now were the remnants of war: the bodies of the dead had been removed, the tables returned to their former places; there were scorch marks on the walls from the many curses that had been thrown, and sheets and blankets littered the floor, marking where the dead had lain. An hour earlier the Weasleys had been congregated around the blue blanket that now lay abandoned and crumpled. There had been such grief in everyone's eyes as they sat around that blanket which had held Fred's lifeless body, and Harry knew he would never be able to forget the haunting image of Mrs Weasley leaning over her son's body, sobbing as she smoothed out Fred's hair.

When Harry heard someone clear his throat, he turned to see that Kingsley was about to speak to McGonagall. The Auror didn't look any better than anyone else, but there was a stoicism about him that Harry envied.

"Professor McGonagall, may I speak to you? I'm sorry to interrupt, but it shouldn't take very long."

It was easy to discern that she did not wish to be interrupted, but just as Harry knew he was going to have to relive what had happened to him sooner rather than later, so would McGonagall. Her expression was one of resignation: her school had been attacked and, whether or not it was legally her responsibility, she, as well as Harry, knew that she was indeed in charge of its students now.

"Very well, Mr Shackbolt. Mr Potter, Miss Granger, I need the two of you to wait for me in my office. I shan't be long."

Once in their Head of House's office, Harry walked to the window. Early morning light was slowly revealing a landscape that had seen violence and death, but, in spite of this fact, the shadowed grounds looked eerily peaceful: scars and secrets buried, never to be seen again.

Birds off in the distance reminded him that a new morning had indeed dawned. Harry Potter, the *Chosen One*, had lived to see another day. It was not at all what he had expected as he had walked into the Forbidden Forest hours earlier. Taking out his wand, Harry ran his fingers over it reverently. He had felt lost without it.

"Do you think Professor McGonagall would allow me to Floo to the Burrow?" Hermione's voice was meek, very unlike her usual confident self. Such deviation from the norm served to remind Harry, not that he needed such reinforcement, that lives had been forever changed.

"Dunno," Harry said as he turned and leaned against the window. "Percy said his mum wants us to come as soon as we can, and George said that Ron needs you and me with him as much as he needs his family." Harry shrugged his shoulders and shook his head as he recalled how lost

George had looked. It was difficult to digest that this was real, but it was: Fred was dead, as were Tonks and Lupin. Harry now had a godson who didn't have a mum and dad. That hurt. As the permanence of the deaths continued to sink in, Harry took another shaky breath as his and Hermione's eyes met.

His eyes then traveled around McGonagall's office: she had a chess set on a table in the corner, a wardrobe against one of the walls with what looked like an award on top, a huge Gryffindor banner that adorned the wall behind her desk, and an ornately decorated umbrella stand beside the door to the passage.

As Harry walked across the room and was about to sit down, something atop the wardrobe, behind the award, caught his eye. It looked vaguely familiar. It looked like ... *surely not*. Harry's eyes dilated with the sight and with the knowledge of what he could do.

McGonagall wouldn't keep anything this important out in the open ... would she?

Although he knew how dangerous it was to mess with time, Harry couldn't help but think back to the end of third year and how he and Hermione had saved Sirius from the Dementor's Kiss. They had also saved Buckbeak. Changing what had happened that night had not adversely affected anything. Yes, Sirius had died two years later, but that had given Harry two extra years with his godfather.

What if he could go back and save Fred? Fred had just been in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Harry could change that.

McGonagall would be furious, of course, but Harry didn't want to think about that at the moment. It was odd that the Time-Turner had been left out where someone could find it, even if it had been halfway hidden. If she hadn't wanted him or anyone else to use it, then she shouldn't have left it for him to find.

He turned his head to see what Hermione was doing. She was now looking out of the window, her body shaking. If she knew what he was about to do ...

Harry had to stretch a bit, but he finally got his hands on the Time-Turner. He studied it briefly then slipped it into his pocket with the intention of going outside later to think about what he wanted to do.

For the next several minutes, he walked around the room and stared at the Gryffindor banner, more precisely, the deep red stitching that bordered it, as if hypnotized, then went and sat down, hoping he could perhaps get a few minutes of sleep before McGonagall returned. His stomach gave a slight growl; it had to be near time for breakfast. Now that Harry thought about it, he wouldn't mind a good fry up.

When McGonagall entered her office sometime later, Harry opened his eyes and watched as she removed her cloak and placed it in the wardrobe, and then his gaze followed her path to the desk chair where she sat down.

"I am afraid I'm going to have to delay this meeting. The Hogwarts Express is leaving at ten, so if the two of you would both be here at half nine, that would give us the time we need. I realise the two of you are tired, but you can sleep later."

Harry vaguely heard Hermione ask about going to the Burrow, and he partially understood that his Head of House said no, but for the most part, he wasn't paying attention to anything except sleep and the Time-Turner. He felt himself walking and knew McGonagall must have dismissed them.

What if he could go back?

But he couldn't ... or wouldn't.

Or would he?

Time was nothing to mess with; Harry knew that and understood why. So why was he even considering ...? He was exhausted and knew that he was never at his brightest when tired ... but he did have his Invisibility Cloak with him, so no one would see him.

"Harry? Are you okay?" Hermione asked, worry evident in her voice.

"What? Yeah, I'm fine," he lied. He tried to keep his voice neutral. "I need some fresh air. I think I'm going to go outside for a bit." Hermione would never leave him alone, and the look on her face confirmed that fact. "Don't look at me like that. I'll be fine. I'll be back in a few minutes. I just need to be alone." Yes, he sounded pathetic, but Harry pleaded with his eyes and hoped that would be enough. He could see as the slight change appeared in Hermione's expression—it had worked. Obviously, she was too consumed with her own emotions to fully comprehend how odd he was acting.

"Go on, just don't be long," said Hermione, distress evident in her every word. She didn't look sure of what she said, but she said it, nonetheless.

Harry nodded and watched as Hermione continued walking towards the Gryffindor common room, then he turned and walked towards the Entrance Hall. As he made his way through the different corridors, a few of which had sustained extensive damage, he noticed that some of the suits of armour had once again claimed their previous positions. It would be impossible to look upon the impressive, now dormant figures in the same way as he had before last night. As he passed by the Great Hall and neared the doors that led outside, he had to watch his step: rubies, emeralds, crystal balls and other unidentifiable objects littered the floor by the doors, and shards of glass that had been shoved against the wall to prevent injury were covered in unknown substances: some of it, blood. Torches illuminated the large room; shadows danced eerily against the walls. It was deathly quiet: the ripple of the lit fires the only audible sound.

Before he stepped outside, Harry turned around and looked at the room. On six firsts of September he had walked through the Entrance Hall, happy to be somewhere he considered home, and he had left it each ensuing June a bit melancholy about being away for two months. So many generations of students had stood in this very room, both anticipating and dreading what lay ahead. Harry could feel the history.

He then opened the door and stepped out into the cool morning and looked around him, his wand held at the ready. If there were any remaining Death Eaters in hiding waiting to strike, Harry wouldn't hesitate to Stun them. Shadows still hid much of the devastation, but a mixture of sunlight and clouds rained down upon the castle—its battlements and parapets gave testament to the wear and tear of the previous several hours.

Harry glanced towards the Whomping Willow. Four years earlier it had represented a rebirth of sorts. It had been there, or through its tunnel to the Shrieking Shack, that he had seen his godfather for the first time that he could remember. It now represented death, and not just physical death. Life wasn't fair and Harry knew that, but now, knowing that Snape had done everything he had for a reason that was just and good, and that it hadn't saved him in the end ... well, it was just another reality check.

As he continued his trek towards the lake, Harry ran his hand over the Time-Turner that was safely ensconced in his pocket and yawned as he looked around the grounds that seemed so unfamiliar to him. No matter that he had walked this very path many times over the years, this time, there was a difference: over the past few hours Harry had seen the best and worst of humanity, and those experiences had changed him.

Only metres from the Forbidden Forest, Harry retrieved the Time-Turner and studied it. Part of him kept up a silent mantra that this couldn't happen, but another part of him, the part that had got him through the past ten months, told him that anything was possible. He glanced towards the castle and could see no activity.

Perspiration gathered on his palms and his breathing sped up. He removed his Invisibility Cloak from underneath his shirt and placed it around his shoulders. This was all a bit surreal; he was really going to do this. Securing the Time-Turner around his neck, he looked around him once again, hoping no one would stop him, yet secretly wishing they would. Upon seeing no one, he grasped the cool-to-the-touch contraption and began turning it. He felt something tug on his arm from behind, then he was moving. He had only done this once, but the sensation of going back in time had remained with him and, this time, there was something different—it wasn't a good different.

Harry panicked.

When he opened his eyes, he noticed three things: first, he had made a huge error in judgment (what had he been thinking, trying to go back in time in order to change things?); second, there were bodies strewn across the lawn and several people were fighting, sending jinxes and curses across the grounds (fortunately for him, none of them in his immediate vicinity), and third, which had actually been the first, but he hadn't wanted to believe his eyes, Draco Malfoy was staring back at him, standing far too close for Harry's comfort. Harry thought that he had somehow managed to go back in time and appear in front of the Slytherin but a few seconds of observation made it obvious that the Malfoy staring back at him did not belong in this earlier time: his robes were torn in several places and his face and hands were covered with dirt and blood—he looked exactly as he had when Harry had last seen him, not even an hour earlier, as he had sat between his mother and father, in the Great Hall.

So that was the reason for the tug Harry had felt. Malfoy must have grasped either him or the Time-Turner seconds before it had taken them back in time. Harry stared back, not sure what to say or do. It was a good thing Malfoy's mum's wand had been lost in the Room of Requirement. Harry continued to aim his wand at Malfoy. Both sets of eyes—green and grey—stared at the other.

The grounds, seconds before visible because of the rising sun, now lay hidden beneath darkness; it reminded Harry that he was in the middle of a battle that had taken place hours earlier. It was such a stark contrast. He looked around him; he needed to know what time it was so he could go find Fred ... without being caught. He could only hope that Malfoy hadn't somehow ruined his plans.

Harry continued to stare at Malfoy as if this were a challenge, and Malfoy did the same.

"What did you do to me, Potter?" came out of Malfoy's mouth as he removed his hands from Harry, his words short and clipped as he trembled. It was easy to see the shock in his eyes as they took in their surroundings.

"Keep it down, Malfoy!" Harry hissed out as he tried to control his own voice. This entire situation was bad. There were two choices as he saw it: they could hide themselves until it was time to meet the future again, or go ahead with his original plan and try to save Fred. They could also go back to the correct time, but what if they went too far into the future? Hermione had said something about not being able to go too far into the future because it hadn't happened yet, but Harry wasn't too sure he wanted to trust that information. Being in the future might even be worse than the predicament he found himself in now, although, at the moment, he hadn't a clue how that could possibly happen.

Bugger.

"I demand to know what has happened, Potter. What have you done? A Time-Turner? What did you think you were going to do with it?" Malfoy asked, his voice thick with anger. He then raised his hand as if he were about to slap Harry.

"I was going to eat it, Malfoy. What do you think? And put your hand down—it isn't as if you can do wandless magic," Harry said as he lifted his hand to halt the movement of Malfoy's. "And what in the hell were you trying to do, grabbing something I was holding? Didn't your mum teach you manners?"

"Didn't you learn that messing with time is a bad idea? Oh, but of course, the *Boy Who Lived and defeated the Dark Lord* is free to do as he pleases," Malfoy spat out as he raised his hands and shook them before letting them drop to his side with a flourish. "Potter, even you must know how completely idiotic this is. You know that our being here could alter the future."

Harry rolled his eyes as he watched Malfoy take a few steps back and turn towards the castle. Of course he was going to alter the future. He was going to do this ... wasn't he? Why had he done this again? Fear began to seize him. He hadn't thought this through, just as he hadn't thought it through when he had got Sirius killed.

"Give it to me; we're going back," Malfoy ordered as he turned back towards Harry and took hold of the Time-Turner. Harry grasped it tighter in his hands and shook his head as he pulled away, only barely avoiding being choked. "Potter, think for once in your pathetic life. You may not care about changing things, but I, for one, do. Has it ever occurred to you that anything you change could possibly change whether or not you or I die?"

Harry, furious at Malfoy and the situation he now found himself in, raised his hand to hit him, but about that time, he heard voices coming from the direction of the lake; they were getting closer.

This wasn't going to end well. "We can't be seen." Harry pulled the Invisibility Cloak from around his shoulders and watched as Malfoy stepped further away. Harry let out a loud sigh and mumbled under his breath. "Would you prefer I leave you here? If that's what you want ..." Harry finished, glaring at Malfoy, challenging him.

When the sulking Slytherin was once again standing where he had been previously, Harry covered the two of them with the cloak, then pointed towards the figure that was nearest them.

"Who's that?" Harry guessed it was a Death Eater.

"How should I know? Potter, you've really done it this time. You just wait until the Ministry hears about this. You'll be in Azkaban."

Harry stopped, turned, and pressed his wand into Malfoy's chest. Their bodies were so close; it was easy to feel both of their hearts beating. "And what will you say when they ask you how you know what happened? 'Oh, I just decided to tag along because I wanted a story to tell?' Yeah, likely story. Shut up, Malfoy. Quit acting like such a berk. We need to go inside. I used the TimeTurner so I could save Fred." Harry continued to point the wand at Malfoy for several seconds, then lowered it.

"You mean you used that thing to save Fred Weasley? That's ... very ... gallant of you, but ... even for you that seems a bit much. Where are Weasley and Granger? You don't ever do anything without them."

Harry said nothing.

As they began to walk towards Hogwarts, Malfoy began to fidget as he tried to keep from touching Harry; he was having little success. Harry elbowed him. "Stop it."

A glare was Malfoy's response. "You're hogging the cloak. Someone is going to see my feet," he whined.

Harry looked down towards Malfoy's feet. "Oh stop being so dramatic. Your feet are covered. If you don't—" the next word died in his throat as he peripherally saw movement out of his left eye. Lucius Malfoy had exited the Whomping Willow and was headed towards Hogwarts. The younger Malfoy next to Harry gasped and whispered what sounded like *Father*. Harry's heart plummeted when he realised what this meant: he was too late. Fred was already dead. "We didn't go back far enough," he then said, more to himself than to Malfoy or anyone else. It had all been for naught. It was all Malfoy's fault—if he hadn't stopped him, then the Time-Turner would have been turned back the correct number of times.

As Harry glanced towards the Time-Turner, he knew that he had to turn it back a few times. He placed his wand in his pocket then grasped the Time-Turner, but he waited a bit too long because a pale hand covered in dirt and blood came down over his.

"Potter, you are not going back any further. If we go anywhere, we are going back to where we should be."

"Take your hand off me right now, Malfoy." The two were once again glaring at one another. Harry wanted to scream; Malfoy was messing up everything. "Fine," Harry said venomously as he rammed his body into Malfoy's. "If you refuse to allow us to go back a few hours, then

we'll save Snape; I'm sure *he's* someone you won't mind saving. He's about to enter the Shrieking Shack and Voldemort's going to have Nagini kill him. We can stop him." Was he actually suggesting they save Snape?

"The Dark Lord is going to be ... in there ... with Snape?" Malfoy asked, his voice quivering as he took a few steps back. That he failed to ask why it was that Harry Potter would *want* to save Snape was telling.

"Yes."

"We can't do this, Potter."

Malfoy looked about as scared as Harry had ever seen him. Instead of trying to coax him forward,

Harry stopped. Malfoy didn't want to face Voldemort. A year earlier, Harry would have felt satisfaction at such a revelation, but now he felt nothing at all satisfying about Malfoy's fear. "You really are terrified of him ... Volde ... The Dark Lord, aren't you?" Harry wasn't sure why he had altered the title of Voldemort, but the panicked look on Malfoy's face might have been the reason, although, when had Harry ever pandered to Malfoy? "I thought you'd want to save Snape."

"Do you really want to save him? I thought you hated Professor Snape, Potter."

"No, I don't *hate* him." Not after what he'd seen in Snape's memories. Once again, Harry found himself in a staring match with Malfoy.

Some time later, Snape neared the Whomping Willow. It was odd to see the man, to know what was about to happen to him. Harry's breathing sped up. Until now he and Malfoy had been off on their own, but they were about to be in a position to change the future. They had begun to walk, but Harry stopped mid-stride and stared ahead. Malfoy stumbled into him. What if this didn't work? What if they weren't able to save Snape? And what if Malfoy ended up dead?

"Potter ... let me have the Time-Turner. You don't want to do this. Let's go back."

Now Harry was shaking uncontrollably. "Shut up, Malfoy. Let's go."

"But the tree. How are we going to get past it? It'll never let us pass."

Why couldn't Malfoy shut up? Harry rolled his eyes. "When we get there, I'll show you."

Seconds later, a scream echoed across the grounds. Harry turned to see that someone stood a few metres away from him and Malfoy.

Oh shite !

"He can't have seen us," came out of Harry's mouth in a whisper, but it was not said with any conviction. He then looked down towards their feet—they seemed to be covered well enough, but there was a possibility that they had been seen. This was bad.

There was another shout, although what was said, Harry had no idea. Malfoy's hand released its hold on the Time-Turner and his body fell to the ground. Harry stared at the now still body, retrieved his wand, then turned and looked at the Death Eater.

As the now hoodless figure, no one Harry recognised, neared, Harry aimed his wand at the man, but at that very second, as if someone had heard Harry's silent pleas, a jet of light lit up the sky and the Death Eater fell to the ground. Harry stood still for a second or two, unsure what had happened. Someone else must have sent a curse, but who? Harry looked around, but could see no other people near. This unsettled him, but there was no time to think about it. He knelt down in front of the still body of Malfoy and felt for a pulse. If he died ...

"Malfoy ... MALFOY!" Harry shook the seemingly lifeless body. What was going to happen now? Yes, Harry knew he was impetuous and that his recklessness had led to death in the past, but this ... Malfoy looked so vulnerable and Harry had done this. He touched one of the pale hands and lifted it, running his thumb over the wrist that was covered in dirt and blood. Too many had already died. This was too much. Harry had never meant for this to happen. He looked around helplessly and then looked back at Malfoy.

A small movement of Malfoy's right hand, the one Harry was caressing, gave Harry hope. He looked around again and was relieved to see no one anywhere near, so he let the Invisibility Cloak fall to the ground and he shook Malfoy again.

"Come on, Malfoy, wake up. This isn't funny. You want your wand back? You're going to have to wake up to get it." Panic was taking hold and Harry felt like running, but there was no where to run to.

A groan, a flutter of eyelids, and then a grimace. "Bugger. What in the hell was that?" Malfoy asked as he placed his hand on his head and looked up at Harry.

As soon as his breathing slowed enough to speak clearly, Harry did. "There was a Death Eater who saw us and he sent some curse your way, but I couldn't hear what he said, so I don't know what it was. Are you okay? You should go see Madam Pomfrey when we get back."

"I'll be fine, and just what would I say to Madam Pomfrey?" Malfoy asked haughtily as he sat up.

"My head doesn't feel so great, but I'll live."

A sound off in the distance caused Harry to cover them once again with the Invisibility Cloak. He glanced down at Malfoy, who did not look good at all. His hands were shaking as he looked up, his grey eyes showing his weariness. "Do you think you can walk?" Harry placed a hand underneath Malfoy's arm and began to stand.

"I'm sure I can." With Harry's help Malfoy stood and took a few tentative steps. "I'm okay," he said as he glared and jerked his arm out of Harry's grasp and reclaimed his hold on the Time-Turner. "How long have we been here?"

"Dunno." But Harry knew they had been there a long time ... too long.

For their first few steps, Malfoy was unsteady, but with each subsequent stride his gait became more normal. He continued to walk hunched over, however; he was in pain, there was no doubt about that.

"Thank you for not leaving me behind, Potter."

Harry stared at Malfoy, a bit awed. Did Malfoy really think that Harry would have left him behind? Malfoy had also saved Harry's life at Malfoy Manor when he had refused to identify him.

He gave Malfoy a curt nod.

Malfoy began to pant and clutched his side, but his glare dared Harry to say anything.

"We need to go back; you're injured." Harry stopped walking. "But first we need to sit down; you need to rest. You shouldn't have tried to get up so soon." It was a testament to Malfoy's current state that he actually did as asked. Harry helped Malfoy sit on the ground and then draped the Invisibility Cloak over them. With a flick of his wand, he made it so the cloak would remain over them without them having to hold it. Then he placed his hand on the Time-Turner ... or more precisely, Malfoy's hand. He couldn't risk it; even a weak Malfoy might do something foolish ... just as Harry had done.

Malfoy looked up at him and, for a few seconds, Harry actually saw Ron and Hermione in those grey eyes. Malfoy was not someone Harry should loathe. Harry swallowed and shook his head.

What had he done?

"Potter, what was it like? When you thought you were about to die?"

Malfoy's body was so close; there was no doubt he felt it when Harry began to tremble. There wasn't an answer Harry wanted to share. What did *anyone* think about when they thought they were about to die?

Harry shrugged his shoulders and hoped that would suffice. Malfoy was looking straight ahead, his eyes blank. When Harry felt something soft running over his hand, Harry looked down towards his and Malfoy's hands, both of which had hold of the Time-Turner, and watched, mesmerized, as he watched a pale thumb as it made small circles on the smaller hand covering his ... that is until Malfoy noticed Harry looking towards their hands, then he abruptly stopped.

"Were you scared?"

Obviously, Malfoy wasn't going to give up his questions. This was not what Harry wanted to think about. "I was terrified. But it was what I had to do." Images of his mum, dad, Sirius and Remus as they had walked with him to his impending death began to flood his mind.

"Potter, we need to save Professor Snape."

What? It hadn't been much more than a whisper, but there was no mistaking what Harry had heard. Surely he had heard wrong. It wasn't difficult to see the fear as Malfoy's body trembled. Harry shook his head. Maybe he would come back later and save both Fred and Snape, but, for now, he needed to get Malfoy back. "We're going to get you some help."

"No. Professor Snape doesn't deserve to die. I want to save him. You could have gone and saved him, but you stayed with me. I can't allow my fear of the Dark Lord to prevent me from saving Professor Snape. If we can. Perhaps there is nothing we can do, but Potter ... we have to try. I'll be fine."

All Harry could do was nod. He didn't have a good feeling about this, but he helped Malfoy to his feet, then they began to walk slowly.

When they neared the entrance of the Whomping Willow, Harry looked down and spotted a tree branch. "There, see that branch down there? Pick it up and press down on that knot right there. See it?" Malfoy nodded but made no move to retrieve it. "Well, go ahead, get it," Harry said, not able to keep the exasperation out of his voice.

"You really are daft if you think I am letting go of the Time-Turner. I don't trust that you won't go back and try to save Weasley."

The thought hadn't crossed Harry's mind, but it would have been the perfect opportunity. Perhaps he needed to be a bit more devious in his thoughts in future. "Well, I'm not letting go, either. Use your other hand and grab the branch. No one else is around to see your arm." Harry quickly looked around them and nodded. "Do it now."

A few minutes later, Harry and Malfoy were standing in the tunnel.

"I still find it hard to believe that the Dark Lord had Nagini kill Professor Snape. He was his most faithful *follower* ... at least that is what Father told me. I don't understand," Malfoy said, shrugging his shoulders.

Harry snorted as the two moved over to one side so they were near one of the walls; they didn't want to be in the way when he, Hermione and Ron entered in a few minutes. There were quite a few things Harry would like to clue Malfoy in on regarding Snape, but now was not the time.

"What was the snort for, Potter? You might not have liked Professor Snape, but he was good to us Slytherins. Just because he was not liked by you or your house does not reduce his worth. He didn't deserve to die like he did."

Harry agreed. They continued to walk; neither spoke. As they neared their destination, Harry's breathing sped up.

Footsteps alerted him that Hermione, Ron and he were about to appear and, in less than five seconds, they did. Just as it had been in third year, seeing his self in the past was surreal. He looked at Malfoy and grinned at seeing the pompous Draco Malfoy staring ahead, his eyes wide and his mouth open. As soon as the others had passed them, Harry and Malfoy followed.

"Potter, earlier, in the Great Hall, it was said that Professor Snape was never really on the Dark Lord's side. How do you know this to be the truth?" Malfoy asked in a whisper.

Harry froze. Malfoy was going to give them away. But the three figures in front of them continued to look ahead as they neared their destination. Harry didn't know how to answer Malfoy's question regarding Snape. "I don't know what Snape thought or why he did what he did, but his main concern this year was the students of Hogwarts. He made sure that the Carrows didn't hurt anyone too badly." Malfoy sighed, but nodded.

"My parents really did think Snape was on The Dark Lord's side."

Everyone had thought Snape was on Voldemort's side. "I would guess your parents aren't so different from Snape, Malfoy. Did your mum tell you she saved my life?" As expected, Malfoy shook his head and looked dumbfounded. "When Voldemort sent the Killing Curse my way, it knocked me out." It was none of Malfoy's business what had happened in between, so Harry omitted that part and skipped to the relevant information. "Voldemort then asked someone to check me, to see if I was dead. Your mum leant over me and checked for my heartbeat. When she felt it, she whispered in my ear and asked if you were in the castle and if you were alive. I told her you were and then she told Voldemort I was dead. Your mum and dad and Snape—they just got in with the wrong sort. Voldemort ... he was really good at what he did. But he's gone now."

"She asked if I was alive and, because you told her yes, she saved your life?" Malfoy seemed a bit awed.

Harry nodded. "She's your mum, Malfoy, and she loves you. Your dad and she might have been followers of Voldemort, but that didn't mean as much to them as you do. I'm not sure about your dad, but I know your mum feels that way. You're lucky that you have a mum who loves you like that."

As the three in front of them stopped, so did Harry and Malfoy. They had arrived at their destination. They were going to do this. How were they going to do this? Harry stared straight ahead. He felt that thumb on his hand again and it helped. He turned and watched as Malfoy looked straight ahead at the wall in front of him—he had no idea what he was doing.

They watched ... or listened ... as that was about all they could do. Neither of them spoke. Malfoy's thumb, as it continued moving across Harry's wrist, was the only movement. Harry thought they needed to do something. *He* needed to do something. He was Harry Potter. He was brave. He was always there to save the day. He was the one who had brought down Voldemort. Certainly he could do this one more thing and save Snape ... couldn't he? He looked at Malfoy and saw fear. What did his own face look like, Harry wondered. Then he cursed in frustration. Why wasn't he doing anything? They needed to save Snape. Yet, they remained standing against the wall, both of their eyes staring ahead. "Malfoy, if we're going to do something, we need to do it now." Harry turned towards the room Snape was in, then turned back to face Malfoy, who was now looking at him.

"We're not going to save him, are we, Potter? He's really going to die."

Harry inclined his head, then looked away.

Minutes passed.

A scream. Snape's scream. Harry felt as the hairs on the back of his neck came to life.

Then they were walking forward and could see the other Harry as he knelt before Snape's body.

Harry turned to see Malfoy's face lose what little colour had been there.

Harry let go of Malfoy's hand and the Time-Turner as he watched himself looking at Snape and retrieving the memories. Then he watched as those black eyes looked into his and it was as it had been the first time. All those emotions. Harry slid down the wall and watched as he, Hermione and Ron left the tunnel.

Before Harry had time to register what had happened, he and Malfoy walked out of the tunnel onto the grounds of Hogwarts, which were once again blanketed with the morning sky, thick with clouds.

Not able to speak, Harry looked around him, trying to calm himself. Could they really be back where they were supposed to be? "What if you didn't do it right? How do we know what time it is?" Harry said, his voice shaking.

"Potter, look around you. It is daylight and no one else is outside: the grounds are quiet. Everything has happened already."

It had to be true. Harry nodded ever so briefly and looked towards the castle, then back at Malfoy, who sounded weary. Harry looked down and realised his and Malfoy's hands were still on the Time-Turner. He removed his hand and then Malfoy did the same.

"Were you being truthful about my mum saving your life because she wanted to know if I was alive?" The pleading in Malfoy's eyes was evident.

"Yeah, I was."

"I'm sorry about Weasley, Potter. He didn't deserve to die like he did."

Harry nodded as he let go of the Invisibility Cloak. "I'm sorry about Crabbe ... and Professor Snape." Harry didn't know if he was as sorry about Crabbe as he should be, but it seemed the right thing to say. Why was Malfoy looking at him as he was?

"You didn't want Professor Snape to die. I thought seeing him die would make you happy, but you didn't want him to die, did you, Potter?"

It was clear that seeing what he had had affected Malfoy profoundly. Harry opened his mouth to respond when he heard footsteps. He looked towards the school and his eyes widened when he saw his Head of House making her way towards them, her expression not one Harry wanted directed at him. He heard Malfoy curse under his breath.

"Mr Potter, Mr Malfoy, might I inquire as to where the two of you have been?"

"Er, we went ..." Harry didn't know what to say, but he needn't have said anything because Professor McGonagall's eyes were focused on the Time-Turner.

"Remove that at once, Mr Potter and hand it to me. I want the two of you in my office immediately. I am certain I need not add that what the two of you have done is most serious. You should both hope you have not done any irreparable damage."

~*~ Present Day ... Nineteen Years Later ~*~

"Malfoy."

"Potter."

Harry heard himself speak, but it was almost as if it were someone else doing the talking.

"What brings you here ... to Diagon Alley today?" Harry asked as he looked around to see if anyone was looking at him and Malfoy. They were fairly well hidden from the entrance, but ... if Ginny found out ...

"Astoria is having a small get-together tonight for some of her friends and needed a few things, so

I'm here to get them. What are you doing here?"

"I had to order James a broom, and Hermione, Ron and I are meeting at two."

"You look like shite. Weasley not taking proper care of you?"

"My wife takes very good care of me, Malfoy. You don't look that wonderful, yourself." His face was a bit flushed, his shoulders were hunched, and he seemed a bit paler than even a Malfoy should be, but, of course, he was dressed impeccably: turquoise robes just did manage to peek out from beneath a black velvet cloak.

"I've had better days."

"Why are you *here*, Malfoy? Don't tell me you have come to pledge your undying love for me after all these years." Harry then grinned as Malfoy frowned.

"Very funny, Potter. You seem to have lost your love of the adoring public that so likes to fawn all over you. When I saw you earlier, I knew it might be my only opportunity to see you for the next ten years."

"And I should be happy that you graced me with your presence?" Harry worked hard to keep his happiness hidden.

"Of course. Oh and ... well, I did have another reason for coming to see you. I had to ask if it was true."

"If what was true?" Harry asked, not so sure he wanted to know.

"Scorpius, my son, owled me to say that there was this boy at Hogwarts named Albus Severus Potter. Astoria said she recalls reading about his birth, but I have no recollection of such a thing. I see in your face that it is true. So, you decided to honour my Head of House. I think he'd approve."

A laugh escaped Harry. "You think so, do you? Somehow, I think he'd shake his head and say I was a hopeless Gryffindor."

"Well, you are." Malfoy allowed a slight grin to slip and it made him look ... nice. Then that grin faltered.

Harry took a sip of butterbeer and waited for what Malfoy was about to say.

"Look, Potter, I know I shouldn't have come in here, but since I saw you last month, I've been having dreams about us ... that day. My father would surely disown me if he knew what happened."

Not that it should have, but the reference to Lucius shocked Harry. It wasn't as if Malfoy was hurting ... *financially*. Why would Malfoy care one way or the other what his father would think about what his son did? But then again, Malfoy Sr had always had a rather strong hold over his son, hadn't he? "Yeah, he'd not be too happy. How is *your father* these days?" From what Harry had heard, the man wasn't doing so well.

"He's been better."

"Your Mum?"

"She's good. She and Astoria just got back from Florence yesterday." Malfoy was looking around as if he were afraid of getting caught, not so different from Harry. "Potter, Astoria's been asking me questions and I don't know what to say to her. I mean, what does one say to one's wife in this situation? 'Well, you see, Astoria, Harry Potter and I, we shared something rather intimate a long time ago and what we went through isn't so easy to forget. Oh, and we kissed and did other things you would frown upon.' I don't think she would understand."

"No, I don't guess she would. Ginny would think me mad if told her what we did; she thinks I hate you."

"And you don't?"

Harry let out a slight laugh, not quite sure what to think. "What kind of a question is that, Malfoy?"

"Well, you never did try to contact me."

Oh, the arrogance. Malfoy hadn't changed. "You thought that I ... that I would contact you? Why? You were the one who walked away without a word. What was I supposed to think? And why was it up to me to contact you? You could have contacted *me*." Harry met Malfoy's eyes and raised one of his eyebrows. He couldn't wait for his answer.

"I thought about it, but, it just never seemed the right time. Then Astoria and I got together and then got married, then we had Scorpius, and, well, you had your own life."

Harry raised his butterbeer in a toast. "That I did."

"So are you and Weasley happy?"

Harry refused to answer that question. "How are you and Astoria; are the two of you happy?" Harry glared.

"Potter, I'm sorry I left without saying anything."

Harry set down his butterbeer a bit harder than he needed to and it sloshed onto the table. "You don't owe me anything, Malfoy." And it was the truth. It was Harry's own fault that he couldn't forget the past and that he allowed it to remain at the forefront of his mind. They stared at each other for a few seconds and Harry shook his head. "It would be so much easier if I could just forget, but I can't and I guess I really don't want to." He then pointed to a chair at the table. Where were his manners?

Malfoy's hands shook as he placed them on the table and he looked at the chair, then at Harry and shook his head. "I should go."

Harry nodded. There was so much he wanted to say, but he knew those words would never reach his lips. And he knew there were similar thoughts going through Malfoy's mind. He would have never entered the Leaky Cauldron knowing Harry Potter was inside, otherwise. "Just so you know, Malfoy, I've never told anyone ... about any of it. I never will."

"Neither have I. It's nobody's business. Er ... I really do need to go. Astoria is expecting me and I still have to get the things she sent me here for." Instead of leaving, however, he remained where he was and looked as if he were contemplating something important.

Harry sighed. "What do you want?"

"I want to forget, Potter. I want to forget that there was a time and a place where ..." Malfoy left the rest unsaid as he looked around the room, then up towards the ceiling before he returned his attention to Harry.

How was it that those grey eyes could get to Harry as they did? It was almost the same as it had been when the two sat together by the lake all those years ago. "Where what?" It came out harsh, but Harry wasn't angry—he was confused.

Malfoy shook his head. He wasn't going to answer.

"What do you want from me, Malfoy? Do you want us to see if what happened meant anything?"

Tell me. I won't leave ... I just can't do that to the kids, Draco."

"Scorpius is having problems at Hogwarts. If I left, it would tear him apart. I won't do that to him." It was evident that Malfoy was unsettled, but so was Harry. A minute or two passed, and then Harry saw a small smile appear on Malfoy's face as he nodded. Harry grinned. Malfoy and he might be like fire and water, but they could agree when the need arose.

Then Malfoy did turn to go, but stopped, his back facing Harry. "Perhaps in seven or eight years, Harry ... perhaps then we can see if there could be anything else." Then he did leave.

Not ten seconds later, Hermione and Ron entered.

When the three parted company that evening, Harry Apparated home with a heavy heart, but smiled when he saw Lily running towards him. He had everything he had ever wanted ... well everything that had been attainable, and he was happy. Whatever had happened in the past was just that—the past. The present was what mattered, and the present was where Harry wanted to be. The future was open and anything could happen, but for now, he had his family and the memories that he and Malfoy had shared.

~*~ Nineteen Years Earlier ~*~

In two hours, the Hogwarts Express was scheduled to leave, to take everyone away from the once safe castle. It would one day soon be safe and whole again, but for now, Hogwarts sat atop its hill overlooking the vast moors and lake, damaged and forever changed, much like Harry.

As he sat by the lake, his back against the beech tree, Harry couldn't stop thinking about the previous year: so much had happened and everyone had lost so much. When he heard footsteps, he glanced to his left and saw Malfoy walking towards him, looking as if he hadn't got any sleep, just as Harry hadn't.

"Mind if I sit here?"

Harry raised an eyebrow and shrugged his shoulders as he studied the Slytherin who looked inordinately uncomfortable: his eyes alternated between Harry and the castle, and he fidgeted as if he were not sure he should be where he was. He had acted much the same at Malfoy Manor. Harry watched, disinterested (or so he tried to convince himself), as his former foe sat down and stared straight ahead. Neither spoke.

Hours ... well, probably minutes later, Harry stood. He needed to go meet with McGonagall. He looked at Malfoy, who continued to stare ahead, at ... what, precisely? The lake? At nothing? Harry didn't know. "I need to go meet with McGonagall." He turned to leave but twisted back around when he heard the grass crunch behind him. Just what he expected, Harry didn't know, but it certainly wasn't what he saw: Malfoy stood before him, his hand extended, his face impassive. Harry extended his hand as well and shook the one offered him as he recalled a similar experience when he had refused to shake that same hand during first year. Times had changed, as had Malfoy. And for that matter, so had he, Harry mused. Time had a way of changing everyone.

They stood there for a few minutes staring at one another, then Harry turned and began to walk briskly towards the castle.

"I'm sorry I tried to stop you," Malfoy said, a bit louder than was necessary. Harry guessed this was so he was sure to hear.

Harry stopped mid-stride, not quite certain if he had heard correctly. Perhaps the curse from the Death Eater had messed with Malfoy's mind. Regardless of why he was acting as he was, Harry wasn't sorry that Malfoy had tried to stop him. "I'm not. I must have been mental to think that I could go back and change anything. I could have got myself and you killed. I'm the one who should be sorry."

Then Harry felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned around and, before he could register what was happening, Draco Malfoy was *kissing* him on the lips. Harry resisted for possibly a second, but then he decided not to think about it. He wrapped his arms around Malfoy and kissed him back. He felt himself stumble backwards as he clumsily kissed Malfoy and then let out a groan when he felt his back hit something: a tree. The bark cut into his back, but the pain was mitigated almost completely by the jolts of electricity that shot through him as Malfoy and he continued to kiss and frot against one another. There was an almost feral look in Malfoy's eyes, yet it didn't scare Harry. The kisses were rough, needy, and selfish. Malfoy took what he wanted, as did Harry. They never spoke, never did anything more, but the intensity was such that when Harry and Malfoy collapsed against the tree as their orgasms hit them a few minutes later, Harry knew that it was enough.

Then it was over and Malfoy was gone without a word. Harry stared at the space where Malfoy had stood and ran his fingers over his lips. At any moment he would probably wake up and find out this had been a dream.

A bit dazed, he retrieved his wand and cast a cleaning charm on himself (he wondered what Malfoy was going to do since he had no wand, but at least he had been wearing his school robes). Somehow, Harry had to return Malfoy's wand to him. He could give it to Slughorn ... yes, that was what he would do.

As he entered the Entrance Hall, Harry tried to regain his breath as he walked up to his Head of House's office. It would never do for Professor McGonagall and Hermione to inquire as to why he was flushed and out of breath. When he made it to her office, he knocked on the door and then entered. Professor McGonagall's gaze was locked onto him, her face still pale. When she pointed at the chair across from her desk, Harry sat down, careful not to lean back. His back was sore from the tree. He could have healed it, but he hadn't wanted to.

He wanted this pain to last as long as possible.

~~~ The End ~~~

