

Something

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Sleep

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by

Speaks of this



Something To Sleep To
By SpeakSoft

Chapter One - Morning Sun

Never had the morning sun annoyed Harry so much as it did at the moment he woke up. Putting his hands over his eyes and burying his head under his pillows still did not keep the light from leaking through and making sure he was not going back to sleep. Cursing the gods of daylight, Harry tried to reconstruct the wonderful dream he'd been having. He was kissing someone deeply, he couldn't remember who, but he was enjoying it. 'Wish I could remember what was happening, and with who.' Finally giving into the morning's wishes, he sat up blinking in the new day. As the clouds in his mind cleared Harry's dream slipped fully away, but not before the face of Draco Malfoy, eyes closed and lips pursed, flashed before him. "AHH" Harry screamed out loud. 'Why had he been in there, of all the boys in the whole school to be in my dreams, why had it been Draco Malfoy?'

"Who left the stupid curtains drawn back?!" Ron yelled from the bed next to Harry's.

"I don't know but I could kill them right about now, I swear I made sure those were closed before I fell asleep." Seamus called from his top bunk, quickly followed by a grunt from the bottom bunk where Dean was being dragged from slumber land. "Although I really don't remember much from last night, anybody see me do something stupid?" Harry still was not sure how those two had combined two four poster beds into bunk beds and slept without worry.

"Nothing like waking up early on the first day of classes, I'm definitely glad we all took part in the welcome back celebration last night. My head feels about a hundred pounds too heavy." Groaned Harry, "I could have dealt with an extra half-hour of sleep and skipped breakfast, myself. Stupid morning sun!"

A tiny voice finally spoke up from the corner of the room where Neville stood getting dressed, "I thought it might be nice to wake up and see how beautiful it is outside today. I'm sorry not everyone agrees." Before anyone could apologize and say they meant nothing by anything they had said, Neville left the room in a huff.

"Damn, now we'll have to smooth him over at breakfast, you know I'm really regretting not sticking to non-alcoholic drinks last night." Ron moaned from the corner of his pillow, followed by three other moans agreeing.

The hot water was doing the exact opposite of what Harry had hoped, he was actually getting more tired as the water beat down and relaxed his shoulders. 'I bet Draco could relax me like this with his long fingers massaging my bare skin...' Harry shook the thoughts from his head; "I have to wake up!" Harry mumbled to himself before giving himself a loud slap in the face. 'And stop thinking of Malfoy. And, by the way, he is never to be called Draco in my mind again. He is simply, Malfoy.'

"Ouch! Careful there mate, that hurt me just hearing it." Ron said as he looked at the hazy form that was his best friend standing behind the shower door across the room. "I think I'll ask Hermione about an anti-hangover spell."

"I see that going well, I can hear her lecture now, and I can't wait to hear all about how she told us so."

"Well, at least those are headaches I can deal with, I'm used to her lectures, but right now my head feels like it will explode."

"Stupid alcohol." Muttered Harry as he turned the water off and left to begin his day.

The morning sun glistened through one of the many windows that stood open letting the cool morning breeze in, along with the sun. Hermione, who had been awake for at least an hour and a half, was dressed and could hardly wait to get to her first class. Smiling, she turned from her view at the windows and headed to the door. 'Surely they're up by now, what could be so hard about waking up for the first day back,' She wondered as she stepped into the commotion that was the first morning of classes in the Gryffindor common room. Slipping around a few first years that were wondering in a daze, she looked for Harry and Ron in the crowded room. She caught the back of Neville's head as he stomped out of the portrait hole. 'I wonder what they did to him this morning, poor Neville.'

Just as she'd decided to meet up with Harry and Ron at breakfast, they came stumbling slightly down the stairs to where she stood. Ron and Harry shared a glance, Harry slightly wincing, and then Ron asked the dumbest question she'd ever heard whispered from his gorgeous pouty lips. Although she would never admit her observations to anyone until she was sure Ron felt the same way.

"Uh...Herm, you uh, wouldn't know any charms to, well, you know, get uh, rid of hangovers would you?" Ron slowly backed out of arms reach as he finished asking what he knew he'd probably regret.

Hermione let them stand and wait for her lecture; slightly loving the way Ron looked when he was prepared for her worst, then just let it pass. "Yeah, I do. But you know what? I don't think I shall give it to you. Unless you can both look a little more pitiful." Hermione barely got all the words out before nearly bending over with laughter at their expressions. Finally she stood up, "Honestly you two, it's like you expect me to give you a lecture every time you don't listen to me and end up regretting it. Oh bother, I'll perform it on you as we walk to breakfast." Not wanting to pass up a rare I-told-you-so-free moment, they followed her past the picture guarding their door. "And just so you both know, I did tell you that you'd both regret it in the morning before you got pissed on fire whiskey."

Deciding that he would rather be talking about anything else, Ron asked as they walked down one of many flights of stairs from Gryffindor Tower, "Did anybody else have crazy dreams last night? I swear at one point I was flying around as an unbaked apple pie, asking people to please bake me. Damn alcohol." Ron was too busy cursing last night's refreshment to notice Harry turning almost completely red at the mention of dreams.

'I wonder what Ron would think if I said I'd dreamt of getting off with Draco...Malfoy, I said Malfoy.' Harry let a shudder run through him at the thought of how Ron would take to the idea of Harry liking

guys, let alone one of those guys being Draco Malfoy. Before his mind could work out all the ways Ron would kill him and any guy he was caught with, they had walked into the Great Hall. As soon as he was inside the doorway Harry looked to the Slytherin table for a glimpse of Draco to make sure he knew where his enemy was at of course, but didn't see his perfectly formed blonde hair anywhere. But before he had time to create any crazy possibilities, Draco came sliding to a halt just inside the giant doors, composed himself, and walked casually to his table and sat down as far away from everyone else as possible. 'That's odd,' thought Harry, but was soon distracted by breakfast.

He had nearly starved on Dudley's forced diet over the summer. Stupid git kept cheating so in the last two years he had not managed to lose hardly any weight at all. At sixteen years old, Harry thought he should have more for breakfasts than a quarter slice of grapefruit. But now that he was home again at school, Harry would never have to see a grapefruit again. Well, not for a good number of months anyways.

'If only I didn't have to go back to the Dursley's at all and just stay with Sirius. . .' For about the millionth time in the last four months, Harry was struck with the realization that his Godfather was not around anymore. 'He's dead because of me.' Forcibly pushing the smile back on his face, Harry focused on thinking of what was different about Malfoy again, as he sat down at the Gryffindor house table between Ron and Hermione.

The morning sun had no affect at all on Draco Malfoy as he woke to the sound of people moving around the sixth year Slytherin dorm room. Being in a dungeon with no windows did sometimes have its advantages. Sitting up and drawing the curtains around his four poster bed apart so he could get out, Draco made his way to the showers to start his day. The last clingsings of a dream where fighting to stay in his conscious mind, but were failing. Before they had completely been beaten back into the land of dreams Draco caught a glimpse of Harry Potter making a very lustful look over of him. 'What the hell? Why would I dream of Potter checking me out? Not that I would mind, but...wait a sec, yeah I would. I hate Potter, and especially don't want to shag with him, at least not exclusively.'

Draco quickly turned the cold water on full and stood under it to be both woken up and to get rid of the evidence proving he would very much like to shag "The Harry Potter."

'Stupid hormones. I HATE Harry, I really do, and stop calling him Harry - he's Potter.'

By the time Draco walked back into his room no one was around. He quickly threw on some clothes and charmed his hair into place as he dashed down the corridors trying to get to breakfast before Harry so he could watch him come in. 'Just to know where my enemy sits, of course.'

He was so caught up in thinking about all the things he never wanted Harry to do to him that he nearly ran right through the doorway into the Great Hall before realizing he had arrived. Refusing to enter looking anything less than composed he tried to stop in his tracks, but slid through the doors before he could come to a complete halt. Without looking around, he composed himself, then noticed Potter staring at him as he walked to his seat and sat away from everyone at the table. He could barely tolerate any of them this year. They were so wrapped up in their parent's dark politics; he didn't have anything to talk to them about at all. 'Like they can actually do anything to cause their

parents to rise in power, ignorant fools. They don't even know what they are placing their faith in and following.'

But Draco knew, he had seen those slits called eyes, he had heard that whispery voice, he had felt the scaly hands touching his arm. 'I would never place my devotion in something so disgusting.' Draco had heard his father's excitement every night at dinner as he talked of what it would be like once "our marvelous Lord" had taken power again. Draco had spent most nights vomiting up that same dinner trying to get the disgust out of his body. 'If any of these gits actually meet him they would run away.'

Draco was now an outsider, but he was here by choice, it was he who had told everyone to keep their ignorant glee to themselves and not bother him with the Dark Lord's glorious return to power. He now thought he could understand why Harry was so opposed to Voldemort. 'Who could follow a creature like that? Who could let such an evil abomination live and distort all good things with evil intentions? Well, my father for one...' the last thought did anything but put Draco in a good mood. 'Stupid power greedy people, stupid power hungry father, stupid power greedy world.'

Draco was now finding everything on the table in front of him repulsive and nauseating. Pushing the plate away from him he decided to take a look around the Great Hall and observe the people that he had terrorized for five years, the people who would hardly ever be willing to accept the idea of a Draco Malfoy that was anything less than a power lapping bully. 'To most of them I'm nothing more than a pile of shit that they try to avoid stepping in.'

He knew that he had to try to let people see the Draco Malfoy that now attended Hogwarts. The Draco Malfoy that really did not give a flying monkeys ass what anyone thought of him one way or another. After realizing the evil that was Voldemort, Draco had finally given up on the lies he had fed himself about his Father and the greatness of Voldemort being in power. He had even learned to respect some muggles over the summer who had treated him like one of their own when he would wonder into their village while he was avoiding being at the Manor.

'Anyone that could come up with something like Spongebob Squarepants couldn't be too bad after all.' Draco had discovered all the things that he figured Dumbledore and the rest of the muggle-loving wizards wanted to protect from monsters like Voldemort. It had gotten harder as the holidays had gone on to pretend to still hate everything muggle and to be obsessed with the death of Harry Potter. 'Well, everything will be different after this year, I will get everyone to see me for a real person and I will get rid of all these idiots, especially Voldemort and my father. Anyone who would try to use my true feelings for their evil deserves everything that comes to them, and I'll make sure they both get plenty.'

Voldemort stood staring out the large picture window in Lucius' office. He enjoyed watching the sun rise every morning and present to him the world he would soon rule over. The morning sun had become a prophet of sorts in this daily ritual, revealing the entire world in light that he would soon cover in darkness. He found it ironic that he enjoyed watching the darkness turned away for another day. He turned from the window at the sound of the heavy wooden door creaking open; to look upon the face of his most trusted servant.

“Good morning, my Lord. I trust this morning finds you well?”

“Better than others, Lucius. Have you heard from your son yet? Is everything going as planned, or have you managed to screw everything up by letting anything slip when talking to him.”

“My Lord, he only arrived yesterday and has not even begun classes at this hour. He was instructed to use caution when using owls though, so he may be trying to find the right words.”

“I did not get you freed from Azkaban because I enjoy looking at you, Lucius. I freed you because you are faithful. Be sure that your son’s actions do not cause me to doubt your family’s loyalties. If he even seems to know that his love for Potter is being abused, I will not hesitate to forget my promises of protection to you and yours.”

“Yes, my Lord. I will see that all is done as you wish it.”

Voldemort waited until he heard the door close behind Lucius as he left, then began thinking aloud to himself. He was his own best critic (and fan). “Potter can stand against me and fight with blind hatred, but let’s see what happens when the enemy he hates becomes the one he can’t live without. Will he be so willing to destroy me if his lover is fighting with me?” A slow laugh started and grew in him until he was near cackling in the early dawn sunlight. “Once again love will be a Potter’s downfall.”

As Harry sat eating his breakfast, he kept glancing at Draco to get better looks. ‘He’s thinner than I am, bloody hell, I’d have figured he be eating well in his manor.’ Harry was slightly worried about the other boy, though he was doing his best to not notice he was. ‘He looks as if he hasn’t eaten or slept properly for months.’

Draco, whose clothes and hair were immaculate, was still somehow looking exhausted and beaten. His eyes were a little more sunken than usual and the bags under them seemed to tell of long sleepless, dream filled nights. His body, that never seemed to have any extra weight to lose, was at least twenty pounds lighter than Harry remembered. But as Harry was critiquing Malfoy, Draco was doing the same from across the room. With casual, quick glances he had pieced together a mental portrait of Harry.

‘By the gods, he actually lost weight this summer. How could someone that scrawny actually get more scrawny? Of course I’m sure I look loads better, having been able to actually keep little of what I ate inside very long and never really falling asleep for long.’

Both boys kept taking quick glimpses of the other until once they both looked up into the others eyes. Neither seemed willing to look away and both were quickly lost inside the others eyes. Harry found himself surrounded in a cool gray mist sweeping around him as it blew past. Draco was immersed in the purest of green foliage, covering him completely up and drowning him in a sea of jungle leaves and vines. Finding it easy to stay content where they were, both were shocked back to reality when Ron’s hand waved in front of Harry’s face.

“Hey, You awake still?”

“Huh?” Harry took a few moments to brush off any remaining mists and finally looked up at Ron.

“You had a queer look on your face, like you were off somewhere else.” Ron waited for Harry to explain it was nothing, but when no sounds came simply added, “We were gonna apologize to Neville about this morning before he left the Great Hall.”

‘What had he meant by queer? Does he know what I was thinking?’ Harry stopped himself from panicking quickly by figuring Ron was meaning odd, not gay. ‘Calm down, Potter, damn you’re jumpy.’

“Oh, yeah. That probably is best. Get it out of the way now I suppose.” Harry stood up with Ron, Dean, and Seamus and walked behind them as they walked towards Neville at the other end of the Gryffindor table. ‘I wonder why I got so lost in Draco’s eyes. I’ve never noticed how they can draw you in like that.’

Shaking the feelings from his head he focused on walking and not colliding with Dean, who walked in front of him.

Draco stayed frozen, unable to move after Harry broke eye contact. ‘Now that was interesting. I’ve never seen his eyes look that desperate before, Merlin it was cute. But it was still Potter, how could I let that happen? I can not be falling for Potter, not after hating him all these years anyway. But he does have that whole Gryffindor loyalty thing going for him. Not to mention the way he looks when he gets confused about what just happened. Look at him now, barely able to walk straight without colliding into Thomas. Pathetic, but very, very sexy.’

Draco shook his head free of the spell Harry had cast and decided to disregard anything he had just thought. Leaving behind his completely untouched breakfast, Draco set off for the day. ‘I just need to stay busy all day and not have time to think of Harry, that’s it.’

Not once did his mind question itself as to when Draco had become so comfortable with referring to Potter as simply Harry.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Two - Not Enemies, Old Friends

Harry stood watching people go about their early morning routines from the window in the owlery. He was not sure why he had come up here; other than to spend a few minutes alone and silently grieve. 'I wish I could send Hedwig with a note for Sirius. He could probably set me straight about this whole thinking I'm liking Malfoy thing.' Harry let the tears slowly slip down his cheeks and gather on his chin before losing their grip and falling to the floor.

"I'm sorry Sirius, I'm so sorry." Harry sobbed that phrase for a few minutes before he was spun around by a familiar voice.

"For what?"

Harry spun around ready to fall into the arms of his godfather, but forgot all about that when he finally took in what his eyes were looking at. "Sirius? But you're a . . ." Harry could not finish the statement, it would make everything that had happened in the last few months final, although nothing could help that anyway, still he was not ready for that step.

"I'm a ghost, Harry. You can say it." Sirius was smiling, waiting to see what Harry would do. "You know, if you don't move soon, I'm going to start to think you're the one that's dead and not me."

Finally giving into his emotions Harry rushed across the room to hug Sirius but only ran into the wall, following a dreadful feeling of falling into cold water.

"Uh, yeah, you can't do that anymore Harry."

"Sorry, I forgot." Harry rubbed tenderly at his head. "But why are you here, Nick said you wouldn't come back like he had, how come you did. Nick didn't make it sound like an easy thing."

"Well, I'm here for you Harry. I couldn't leave you alone after not being there for you all those years."

Harry was quickly becoming happier than he had been in long months spent crying for Sirius and all those he had lost over the years. A list that was growing much longer than that of most sixteen year olds. "I'm glad you did, cause I wasn't sure how I was going to get by without your letters, and now I can just talk to you whenever!" Harry liked the possibilities starting to form in his mind. 'This will be great; I can get his help on this whole Draco thing right now, I don't have to wait.'

"Sounds great Harry, it really does. But, hadn't you better get heading to class, don't want to be late for your first class on the first day."

"Oh, yeah. Damn, I have to get going. Promise you'll drop in the dorm later so we can talk, I really need your advice with something, and I was really not looking forward to having to ask Hermione a bunch of hypothetical questions."

Laughing slightly, Sirius promised an appearance and said farewell to Harry who immediately dashed down the stairs to the main part of the school.

“Well that went better than I'd worried. I hope I've been able to make him feel a little less regret about last term. He wasn't the only one to rush off at the drop of a hat to save the ones he loved.”

Running at full speed down the corridors, determined not to be late to transfiguration on the first day, Draco was not taking time to look around the corners he was dashing around. ‘Can't believe I was day dreaming and lost track of time. How could anything have distracted me like that?’ But the answer was screaming now as the two boys collided, both running at full speed.

“Shit!” Two voices screamed in painful unison. “Can't you watch where you're going? I mean, if you can save the damned world every year, you think you could avoid killing me in the corridors.” Draco yelled at Harry, being the first to recover enough to see what had happened.

It took Harry only about a second longer to see they had both been at fault.

“Damn it Draco, you can ruin even the best of moods, and I wasn't the only one not watching where I was going. You really are such an ass! Now if you don't mind, I need you off of me and my books so I can get to class. Unless you want to stay wrapped up together here in the hall.” Harry grew red at the last sentence to leave his mouth. ‘That really sounds like a good idea, I mean Sirius being alive and getting off with Draco in one morning, wait, damn, damn, damn...stop that. He may be the sexiest. . .stop it!’

“Well maybe I would, if you would let me get a little more comfortable, I'm not to big on my conquests getting me off with their shoes.” Draco fired back smoothly. Harry quickly disentangled himself from Draco when he saw where his foot was pressing. “That's better, now since when did you start calling me Draco? Not that I mind really, it sounds so personal and caring.” The automatic sarcasm dripped so heavily off these words, Harry could taste it. Draco kicked himself for falling on his old safeguards, instead of taking the opportunity to present the new Draco Malfoy to Harry.

“I did not call you Draco!” Harry shot back, unable to come up with anything better, “did I?” He began to turn even more red, both with anger and embarrassment.

“You did, and. . .” Draco watched Harry's eyes look away trying to avoid looking back at him and felt all his anger and sarcasm drain from his voice and his body. “Look, Harry, I didn't mean anything by it. Sorry.”

Harry stared back in shock. ‘Did he really just say he's sorry? Did he just call me Harry?’
“Don't worry about it, I guess. Uh..”

“Don't look at me like you've never heard me talk before, Potter.” Draco was a little surprised at himself too, but he would never let that show.

“I've never heard you speak those words before.”

“What words?”

“Sorry and Harry. You called me Harry, not Potter. You know what, I do like the first name thing better. But I guess everyone would notice that wouldn’t they. Besides, you’re still my enemy and we hate each other, remember?”

“Yeah I do, I just . . . well, it’s not like I can’t ever be nice . . . you know.”

“You never have before.”

“Look, Har. . . I mean Potter, why don’t we just forget all about this and move on with our lives. We still have a class to get to which by now we are extremely late for. Not that I don’t enjoy talking with you cuddled up on the floor. . . but, class calls.”

Draco stood and began walking down the hall, but then stopped and held out a hand to Harry. “I know we are supposed to hate each other and everything, but I’m not making any friends in my own house this year and I really don’t have the time to bother hating you too. So if you really don’t mind, could we just call a truce, or ceasefire, or whatever you want to call it. We don’t have to be friends or anything, just not enemies.” ‘But friends would be much better, or even maybe a little more.’ The last thought went unspoken and ignored by Draco.

Harry took the hand offered to him and stood up. He looked into Draco’s eyes and found himself plunging back into the world of gray mist. “Well, I guess we could be ‘not enemies’, if you really mean it. Just keep up the whole last name thing though, for the sake of the precious balance of good and bad at Hogwarts.”

“Ha, sounds good to me, you know I haven’t really hated you for a few years, mostly just been jealous of you. It’s hard to hate someone who looks so innocent and adorable most of the time.” Draco froze at the last words as they escaped his mouth, why in the world had he told Harry he was adorable? ‘Way to go Malfoy, he’ll think you’re hitting on him or something, which of course you are, but still. . . You can be such an idiot sometimes.’

Harry, still swirling in the mists of Draco’s eyes hadn’t really heard what Draco had said, but knew he should be reacting differently than staring into the other boy’s eyes. “Right, well I guess we should be heading to class now.” Harry said, thankful his voice had not broke. He tore himself back into the real world and began walking toward class, Draco beside him.

As they neared the classroom Draco cleared his throat to get Harry’s attention. “We might want to not be holding hands when we walk into class, Potter.” Harry looked down and felt himself turning red once again; he had never let go of Draco’s hand all the way down the corridor to the classroom.

Quickly drawing his hand back like he had been bitten, Harry muttered a quick “Sorry” before opening the door and going in. Draco following closely behind him. Professor McGonagall was standing at the front of the room looking, if at all possible, more serious than usual. “I suppose you both have a good reason for strolling in to class fifteen minutes late, both looking ruffed up a bit.” At these words everyone in the class gave both boys a thorough look over. Some snickering and others turning away with a knowing look on their faces, but most seemed reluctant to let any emotions show on their faces. Except of course Ron, who stood up and took Harry’s side straight away.

“Tried to take him in the halls when no one was looking did you, Malfoy. Looks like he got the best of

you. Too bad he's too good to hex you into something nasty and slimy, but then I guess he could have. Not that anyone would notice anyway." Ron looked very proud of himself for getting all those words out at once, but quickly sat down with a cowed look when McGonagall turned around on him.

"Really, now. That's more than enough from you Mr. Weasley, do sit down." Then without even taking a breath she rounded on Harry and Draco, "Is this true, were you both fighting in the halls, choosing to act like children instead of coming to class. It's the first day back and you couldn't even make it to your first class without fighting. Just unbelievable!"

"Actually Professor, we just happened to run into each other on our way here, it's only coincidence that we were both late." As Draco finished, Harry let go of a breath he'd been holding. 'Well, it is mostly true; he just left out the parts about being tangled on the floor and deciding to not hate each other anymore. Not that I have hated him really for a while myself, but it was nice to hear Draco say it first.'

"That's right Professor, we weren't fighting or anything, just both showing up late." 'That was real smooth Harry, next time just let Malfoy do the talking. So there's going to be a next time then?' Harry looked back at the other students in the class, hoping that if anything, they believed Ron's version about them fighting. He really doubted that some of them had any thoughts he wanted to know about why they both showed up together, late, flushed, and with untidy robes.

"Well, whatever the reasons for you being late, I will not permit it. You both will serve a detention for your careless time management. Sixth years are to set an example for all the younger students." With that, they both found a seat and did not look at each other again, for fear of what everyone might assume their glances would mean.

"Are you serious?" Hermione asked in a breathless whisper. She was trying her best to keep quite, seeing as how they were in the library. "He just asked you to not hate him anymore because he didn't have the time to hate you back? I can't believe it."

"And you shouldn't, either of you. Malfoy is a lying git and will always be one. He's up to something and I'm sure it's nothing good for Harry."

"I'd like to think that it was that simple Ron, but I just think he was being sincere." Harry whispered. 'Now I'm defending Draco's intentions to Ron. What could possibly happen next? I shouldn't have asked that, cause now I'll find out for sure.'

"You can't be serious Harry, he's hated you since we were eleven and now all of a sudden he decides to be pals after you get his father thrown into Azkaban and keep Voldemort from rising to power again." Ron looked about ready to slap sense back into Harry.

"Well, he also said he hadn't hated me for a few years now, just been jealous. Truthfully, I've only hated him cause he's been hating me." Harry admitted before he'd really wanted to.

"You've what!"

“Oh, no Harry. You can’t think you can save Malfoy too?” Hermione looked deep into Harry’s eyes.

“Of course not, it’s just that, well what if it was all his father and not him, I mean just imagine how we’d all have turned out living in that place. I can only imagine how much more worse it was than the Dursley’s, almost makes me glad for what I had.” Harry kept getting quieter with each word until the last word said at just above an audible whisper.

Ron was unable to talk anymore; his face just grew redder and redder until Harry was worried he’d blow a blood vessel or just blow. Realizing the library was a little too public of a place for Ron’s temper to explode, Harry stood up. “Look if you can’t even just talk to me about this than there’s no use sitting here, I’m going to find Sirius and see what he thinks.” Harry spun on his heel and made a quick exit.

“Did he just say he was going to talk to Sirius?” Ron was too angry to even answer Hermione’s flustered question. He just nodded and then shook his head, wondering if his friend was more screwed up in head than everyone thought.

Deciding that leaving Harry alone right now seemed dangerous, they both got up and followed his retreat all the way to Gryffindor Tower and through the portrait, receiving a yelling for being rude and impatient with the Lady in the picture. But Ron lost none of his anger, not until he walked into the sixth year dorms, the same room he had shared with Harry for six years. Then what he saw drained any thought he’d been carrying completely from his brain and a small squeal of surprise from Hermione.

“It can’t be...”

“Sirius?” Both Ron and Hermione said in unison. “I thought we’d never see you again.” Hermione breathed as she moved forward to get a well-needed hug.

“Wait, Hermione. . .” but it was too late, she found herself face down in a chair with Sirius’ head projecting out of her butt. Her teeth began to chatter and goose bumps sprang up all over her. Ron and Harry were laughing too hard at the look on Black’s face and then at the more awkward view as Hermione worked her way out of the chair.

Face entirely flushed with embarrassment and anger at her friends for laughing, Hermione just huffed irritably, “Oh really!”

“Sorry about that Hermione, but don’t worry, Harry collided with a wall earlier when he tried to hug me.”

Ron, who was still laughing way harder than he had to be in Hermione’s opinion, was still able to get a question out. “So, you’re a ghost then?”

“Well, Captain Obvious to the rescue. Thanks, Ron, I don’t think we’d have ever gotten that one figured out without you.” Hermione let the words bite more than she really meant them to, but was glad when it shut Ron up.

Figuring it better to end it now, Harry spoke loud to make sure everyone heard. “He found me this

morning in the owlery and we were just talking about stuff when you both came charging in, by the way, you both have the cutest 'it can't be' faces."

"Well you can't blame us for being shocked. I thought you said Nick had told you he wouldn't come back."

"I was just about to tell Harry about that, Hermione. I told Nick not to tell anyone that I'd come back because I didn't want Harry to be caught up on trying to get here to me over the summer or go looking for me alone. Although, it really doesn't make sense to even me now, but that's what I'd figured best then. I was just worried Harry would try to sneak in here on the holidays and either get in trouble, or caught on the way by Voldemort. I'm sorry now to hear about all the unnecessary pain that I caused you over the summer Harry. I hope you can forgive me for thinking I knew what was best again?" Sirius was looking straight into Harry's eyes; his face set in a serious tone, but his eyes nearly laughing out loud.

"Well, it does piss me off a little to think you were here all the time while I was crying over losing you. But, now I just wish I could hug you, instead of get a cold spirit bath every time we touch."

"Harry, why didn't you tell me you were hurting so much still when you were staying with me most of the summer? I would have tried to help." Ron seemed a little hurt that Harry had cried at night to hide his pain rather than share it.

'I was afraid you would comfort me and then while you were sitting next to me I'd get turned on and you'd figure I was some sort of pervert.' What Harry said out loud was, "I just had a hard time trying to say it out loud and didn't want to bring you down too." Harry knew it was mostly a lie, and if Ron wanted to believe that Harry could lie, he would have easily seen through it, at least Harry thought so.

"You both are just pathetic, Ron telling me how much he hates to hear you cry at night and you trying not to be heard, didn't it ever occur to you just to talk to each other? Merlin, you can both be dense!"

"Hermione!"

"You could hear me at night and you never said anything? But you could run right off and blab to Hermione about how your cracked best friend was losing it even more?" Harry was not sure why he reacted so quickly and angrily, seeing as how he had figured Ron heard him sometimes but had been glad he'd never brought it up.

"Well...I...thing is..." Ron fell silent, unable to defend himself against the fast mood swing.

"Excuse me, but I was wondering if we could finish talking about this whole being gay and having feelings for Malfoy thing now, or if you all wanted to fight this out and come find me later."

The only answer Sirius got was a room of dead silence. No one was even moving, except Ron, whose mouth was still slowly dropping to the floor.

Harry slowly turned around from his friends and looked dead into Sirius. 'I'm going to give him the

most deadly death stare, course already being dead I don't see this phasing him much.' "Sirius!"

"Oh, damn, they didn't know anything about this yet." He looked at the three faces staring at him to confirm the answer to this.

"What do you mean by 'being gay and having feelings for Malfoy thing.'" Ron asked slowly, as if making sure each syllable was understood completely. "Who's gay and why do they feel anything but hatred for that slimy git!"

"Now Ron, it's not like the whole gay thing is much of a shock. I've been pretty sure that Harry has been since third year after Ginny told me he never reacted to her in a more than friendly way, ever." Hermione had grabbed Ron's arm, readying herself to hold him back and to give it a comforting squeeze.

"It's bloody well a big shock to me! If I had known I was being fondled by my best friends eyes I would have been much less inclined to shower and dress with him in the same bathroom."

"Holy fork Ron! It's not like it changes anything between you and Harry; you're his best friend, not his conquest. You really can be stupid sometimes!" Hermione had lost whatever cool she'd been trying to give Ron.

"Well, whatever, I don't really care about that, it was just a reaction, but I do really, really care about Malfoy being the guy you want to get off with! How in the world could you ever see him as anything but completely evil? He's a slimy prick, a good for nothing, lying, murdering Death Eater! Come on Harry, you can do much better than that, much better!"

Ron had advanced a few steps on Harry, but had lost all murdering tendencies for the moment after venting it all out in his tirade. "Ron, I've never looked at you in the shower rooms or even in your room when we're both getting dressed in the mornings, and certainly never in here. I could never feel that way about you cause I know you don't feel that way about me, you have always been in love with Hermione." 'There, now I'm not the only one with accidentally spilled secrets in this conversation.' Harry watched as the famous Weasley temper somehow managed to turn Ron's face even more red than it had been.

"Damn it Harry, you weren't supposed to tell anyone that. I can't believe you would just shoot your mouth off and tell Ron how I felt about him." Hermione instantly realized she'd gotten something wrong in the translation when Ron wheeled around on her with a great look of surprise.

"You like me too?" Figuring it was too late and painful to take it back now, Hermione just meekly nodded a yes never taking her eyes from Ron's. "But, how come you never told me?" Ron had now moved away from Harry and back towards Hermione, for the moment forgetting everything but her.

"I guess for the same reason you never told me."

"Didn't want to ruin the friendship if it didn't work out." They both said as if reading the other's mind. Laughing at each other, they moved until there was barely room between them before Harry gave a polite cough to remind them they weren't alone.

Slightly shaking his head, Ron looked back at him, “Look Harry, I really am going to be angry about this later and we’ll need to talk, but right now I think the two of us are going to go for a walk...somewhere else.”

“Where are you going?” Harry was feeling a little put off. ‘I did just come out here to my friends, well I guess not really but now they know, and they’re just going to go off somewhere and expend all those years of built up tension. Damn them. I want to let off tension. . .there’s always the shower again.’

“Somewhere else.” Ron barely whispered as he and Hermione found their way back out the door and down the steps, never turning from each other.

“That was weird.” Harry said aloud to himself, forgetting that Sirius was still floating in the chair.

“Very, I didn’t figure they would ever get that out to each other.”

Harry jumped noticeably and then spun back to Black’s chair. “Shit, don’t do that. I forgot you were there.” Harry was panting as he held his chest.

“Well that’s always nice to hear from your godson.” A goofy smile was working its way across Sirius’ face. “I thought I was going to lose my mind last summer when those two were at the headquarters for the Order. They were so obviously crazy about each other, yet scared to death to admit their feelings. How have you survived being their friend all these years without killing them both?”

“A lot of patience, but I’m still surprised at what just happened.” Harry said pointing to the door over his shoulder. “But all in all, I’d say that worked out better than I’d thought it ever would.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Because I’m still living.”

Neville stood in front of the mirror straightening his robes over his body, trying to hide what he thought had to be the biggest gut in Hogwarts history. “How am I ever going to get Ginny to like me if I can’t even get a robe to fall straight and not bulge out.” Neville said to the empty bathroom, looking unhappily at his reflection. He felt a little worse the minute he saw the last person in the world he wanted to see reflected in the mirror walking into the room. Deciding to just ignore the other, Neville stared straight ahead at his own reflection. After a few minutes he nearly screamed when the other boy spoke from the other end the mirror.

“What in the world could be so enthralling in the mirror, Longbottom?”

“Stuff it, Malfoy.” Neville spoke with a lot more courage than he felt, being that he was terrified of what the other was going to find amusing doing to him.

“Fine! Merlin, you try to talk to people and they bite your head off.” Draco finished straightening his already perfect hair and had just turned to leave when Neville spoke again.

“You’re so lucky, you know that?”

Spinning back and looking Neville’s reflection in the eye, Draco asked “And what am I so lucky about, exactly?”

“You have the perfect hair, nicest clothes, a great body, and everyone notices you if they want to or not. I can’t even get just one single person to give me the time of day in my own house, while you have girls and guys falling all over you from all the houses.”

Draco was not sure how to take what Neville had said, his first response was to just agree with him, Neville was about as opposite from Draco as was possible, but he suppressed his ingrown reflex and simply tried to make Neville feel better. Since he had never said anything of a comforting nature to anyone before in his life, other than himself, Draco had trouble finding the words. Finally he just opened his mouth and let the first thoughts pour right out.

“Don’t be so down on yourself, Longbottom. You’re not as bad as all that. Thanks by the way for what you said about me, but you have the better qualities to be someone to fall in love with. I may look great, but I have anything but a great personality. You just need to be a little more out going, I mean don’t let everyone just walk all over you like I used to. Which by the way, I’m sorry for. No one deserves the hell I’ve put you through the last five years.” Deciding to leave it at that before he got any more cliché and ridiculous, Draco turned and walked out of the door, leaving behind a very stunned Neville.

Turning back to his reflection he repeated the advice Malfoy had given him, “Be a little more out going. Well I guess I could try that, but of course she’d have to see me to notice that I was being more out going anyway. Well, have to start somewhere,” Neville proclaimed to the once again empty restroom.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Three - Unless. . .

Draco struggled for the words to write his father, knowing he would want to know if Draco was sticking to the plan. The plan had been to simply get close to Harry so Voldemort could use their love against them both to kill Harry and test Draco. Lucius had of course told his son all about Voldemort's plans the minute he had learned of them. Draco tried to sound as clueless to the true nature of his mission, knowing Voldemort would most likely be reading this letter as well as his father. The only problem with the plan was that Draco was in love with Potter, Voldemort must have seen the signs by using some dark magic; but Lucius, who thought Voldemort was cracking, did not believe that his son even had feelings other than hatred for Harry.

'He raised me to hate him, so he assumes that I do. I stopped being his good little clone in fourth year, the year I fell for Harry.' Giving up on the prospect of ever getting anything down, he rolled the parchment back up. "Well, at least I can save a trip to the owlery."

Draco looked around the empty room; it was much nicer when everyone was avoiding you because they were not sure what to make of you anymore. Draco was no longer the predictable little Slytherin. He had become probably a bit too moody and was even more likely to chew a person on the spot and spit them out in a few mangled pieces.

"All I have to do is look pissed and they all run the other way, where as they used to at least try to challenge me to a game of insults." Draco was speaking to an empty room, or himself he guessed, but had found how good it feels to hear your thoughts spoken out loud. Of course, never without the proper silencing charms in place. Draco knew that there was a down side to his behavior, "all these fools will be reporting to their daddies that Draco Malfoy has slipped, hoping that it can help them somehow." Draco also knew that his strange behavior was easily explained to Voldemort by the fact that he was now falling for Harry and would be mentally tortured over his dilemma, not wanting his father to know he's gay and not wanting to give in to his love for Harry. "But that's all a load of nothing. I've already dealt with all these emotions and really didn't give a flying elephant what my father or anyone else thought."

It was not the first time Draco was playing a few different sides against each other for his benefit and amusement. It probably wouldn't be the last either, although he had vowed he would never string Harry along, ever. He could never give him a real reason to hate him. Never. In the back of his mind though there were doubts, a lot of them.

"Damn it!" Draco looked at the clock and realized he was going to be late for breakfast again and would not be able to watch Harry come in. "I've got to stop getting wrapped up in my thoughts, especially ones about Harry. I may like him more than anyone in my life, but I will not be controlled by my desires. I am still a Malfoy." Dashing off quickly to the great hall, Draco drove down the last thought that had tried to escape but he'd caught.

'Haven't you already given in to those desires by choosing Harry over even your own father?'

“Where’s Ron and Hermione?” Dean asked across the table to Harry. “I saw Ron leave early this morning, before I had even been able to really wake up. He was bouncing around and humming.”

Harry smiled to himself, glad that his friends were finally allowing themselves to be happy with each other. “I think he and Hermione have finally admitted their feelings.” Harry did not think it would be something that could be or stay a secret long anyway.

“Well it’s about damned time!” chimed Seamus from beside Dean. ‘Are they ever apart?’ Harry thought to himself, he was starting to wonder if he was the only one in the Gryffindor sixth year dorms that Ron had to worry about peaking in the showers. “You’d think that people could see their feelings as easily as everyone else in school, though I guess that would ruin the whole point on betting if people would ever realize what everyone else knows ahead. . .ow! What the fuck was that for Dean?”

By the way Dean’s eyes grew larger, he had not expected his warning nudge to be broadcast. “I was just going to. . .ask you a. . .uh, question you idiot.” By the time he had gotten it out, Harry knew something was up, and it probably involved him and what Seamus had been saying.

Turning red at the thought of people betting on his love life, and wondering what it was that everyone else already knew, Harry looked them both straight in the face. “So, who is it that everyone’s betting I’ll end up with if I ever get over myself and ask?”

Sharing a look that plainly said neither wanted to answer this question, Dean quickly tried to back out gently from an answer and certain death, “I didn’t know that you were on the board, you know. Never thought about it though. I wonder why they would skip you; anyone would wonder who you would end up with, at least I would think so.” Running out of things to ramble about, Dean just let an uncomfortable silence settle on their section of the table. Neville took the moment to just get up and walk away before anyone asked him any questions. Harry was about to push further, but was distracted by the glint of nearly white blonde hair easing through the door and moving to the far end of the Slytherin table.

Harry watched Draco without blinking until the other had sat down, gotten a plate of food and had started eating. Only when Draco looked back at him with a questioning glance did Harry come to his senses. Forgetting completely what he’d been talking about, Harry stood up and said goodbye to his friends. As he passed through the doors, Dean turned to Seamus, “looks like the odds against Harry and Draco just went down, and the obvious outcome of them getting together just got more likely.”

“Damn, I guess I just lost my money on Harry and Ron having a friendly go at things in the shower.”

“Seamus, why is it you always come up with things to ruin my appetite when I’m in the middle of eating?” Dean asked with a decidedly disgusted look on his face.

“It’s just one of my many charms, I guess.”

Hermione stared out at the early morning mist as it was slowly burned away from the lake. Ron,

who had thought to come out here last night, sat beside her without making a sound. His arm draped over her shoulders where their hands met and held tight.

“You know, I’ve always wanted to do this with you. Watch the sun come up and greet the new day being held in your arms.”

“Me too.” Ron breathed in admission.

“Why did we take so long to ever let this happen?” Hermione leaned a little more against Ron, allowing herself to be held.

“I just don’t know, but I feel like an absolute pansy for never taking the chance before.”

Sighing as the mist fully disappeared, Hermione let the rest of the world slip piece by piece back into her brain.

“I think we missed breakfast.”

“Yeah.” Was the only answer Hermione could breathe as she felt the moment slipping. “I guess we’d better head back now.”

Getting up together they walked slowly back to the front of the school and up the stairs. As they made their way to their first class of the day, Ron suddenly realized that he had never wrapped everything up with Harry, or even talked to him since yesterday in the dorms when they had found out about Sirius and themselves.

“You don’t suppose Harry and Malfoy met somewhere and lost track of time yesterday do you, before class I mean? I really wish he’d fallen for anybody else, and I mean anybody. Why couldn’t he have gone over for a Gryffindor, Neville’s a good guy?”

“Oh, Merlin. Ron, never mention Neville in that way again, especially in regards to Harry. I mean, look at them, they’re perfect for each other and they’re cute together in a weird sort of love hate way.”

“Harry and Neville?”

“What? Oh honestly Ron, don’t you listen? I clearly meant Harry and Draco. And what did I say about mentioning Neville in that way.” The conversation stopped as they neared the door and saw Harry waiting by the door to go in.

“I wondered if you two would remember to come back to school or not before class started. It didn’t look like you were even awake out by the lake.” Harry was grinning big, truly happy to see his friends in love with each other.

“You saw us?”

“Yeah, but only cause I went to try and say hello to Hagrid, but he wasn’t around his house.” Harry let the briefest of worried looks cross his face. Moving fast to another subject before speculation

got the better of him, Harry asked his friends about what Seamus had almost let slip at breakfast and the way Dean had dived away from any sort of answer. “Even Neville ran for it.”

Ron looked like it was all news to him and had no clue about what it could mean. But Hermione was looking anywhere to avoid eye contact with either of them. “Hermione,” Harry asked in the most annoyingly sweet voice possible, “do you know anything about this betting on people’s love lives, and who it is that everyone knows I belong with.”

Hermione slowly moved her eyes from the entryway to Harry. Realizing it was only a waste of time to avoid the question, she relented and let Harry know what she knew. “I found out about the betting in fourth year by accident. Pavarti was trying to get some insider info from me before she placed her bet, but slipped up and told me who it was people figured I would end up with. She begged me not to tell anyone that she’d told me or that I knew because it would ruin it all. I naturally wanted to know who they had for both of you guys, although I figured Ron’s was the same as mine. But it was what a lot of people thought about you, Harry, that shocked me. Of course after thinking about it, it seemed about right. So that’s what it’s all about.”

Harry was clearly not going to let it go at being told what he already knew and pressed for more, “Who am I supposed to have unknown feelings for, Hermione?”

“You have to promise not to get hysterical or anything, but everyone’s been waiting for either you or . . . Draco to admit having feelings for the other.”

Harry could feel his face growing warm and his mouth go dry. ‘How is it that everybody knows so much about my sexuality, when I’ve only started figuring this all out in the last month or so? Well, admit it to myself anyway. Have I been that obvious about how I feel for Draco that the whole damn school knows?! Bloody Hell!’

“So everyone decided I was gay years ago and that Draco and me were bickering cause of our suppressed love for each other?”

“Harry, calm down. You get any redder and you’ll burst a vessel or something. This is why I never told either of you anything about it, well I was really tempted to tell Ron to see what his reaction would be to being paired with me, but that’s different.”

As Harry felt his embarrassment building to the point of blowing into Hermione, Professor McGonagall stepped up behind him. “Mr. Potter, I have your detention set up for tonight with Mr. Malfoy. You will report to my office at no later than eight o’clock this evening.”

“Yes, Professor.” Harry had somehow kept any anger out of his voice. Before he could return his full attention back to venting on Hermione, Draco came gliding down the hall towards the class. Once again, this was all the distraction he needed to completely get lost somewhere far from where he had been. Once again two people shared a knowing glance with each other, although one of them had just been let in on the biggest piece of Hogwarts gossip for the last three years.

As Draco drew close enough for Harry to talk to him and be heard without screaming for all to hear, he told him about their detention and what McGonagall had said.

“Thanks, Harry. I’ll look forward to it.” Draco breathed into Harry’s ear as he passed by and into the classroom behind him.

Goose bumps sprang up all over Harry and the hair on the back of his neck was prickling. ‘I wonder what he meant by that?’ Deciding to let everything go, Harry apologized to Hermione and followed her and Ron into class. He had a feeling this was going to be a slow, dragging day now that he had something to look forward to that night. Something with Draco, hopefully alone.

‘Wait, slow down there cowboy. Do you know what you’re thinking? Can you really hear yourself there?’ Harry knew the answers to all these questions, but rather than explain to himself again why he could never let them happen, he just ignored himself, hoping he could make it to eight with his sanity intact.

It seemed to take weeks to get to lunch, and it did not help having Draco in every class that morning either. Harry had not been able to stop watching Draco’s every move and he knew he had caught Draco doing the same numerous times. Harry guessed he could see where everyone was getting their assumptions, but was sure they had not both acted like this before. Deciding it was yet another question he would have to ask Hermione now that they had a chance to really talk and not be interrupted by a teacher trying to teach or Harry’s temper. Although he wasn’t sure he could keep that one under control if some of the answers he got weren’t what he’d decided they would be.

Turning to his right, where Hermione was sitting beside him eating, Harry figured there was no time like the present. “Hermione, has it always been so obvious about Draco and me, I mean, have we always spent most of the day watching each other?”

“Honestly, yes. Although at first I figured it was to keep an eye on your enemy or something, but you both started having this look about you that said you were off somewhere doing anything but hating each other.”

“Why didn’t you ever say anything! Merlin, I feel like such an idiot. Here I am trying to figure out how in the world this could have happened since I saw him on the way back, and everyone’s been waiting for us to make a move!” “Well I hadn’t expected that answer, and there goes that whole keeping my temper thing. That was fast.”

“Harry I’m sorry, I just didn’t really think anything about it, I figured that you would work it all out eventually and decide what you wanted to make of you and Draco.” Hermione was quick to answer, so Harry knew she’d expected his response and had worded hers carefully already earlier in the day. ‘She’s always prepared, which is why we love her.’

“I never noticed a thing until today, mate. But you and Malfoy hardly looked anywhere else than at each other. But I guess I’ve never been looking for you to be looking.” Ron seemed reluctant, as though fearing he would go too far and say something completely ignorant and set Harry off.

‘Even Ron could see it today, so I’m sure everyone’s about ready to collect their winnings the minute Draco and me get back from detention. They probably all figure that it will happen tonight if anything’s going to happen soon. But I swear nothing will happen tonight. Nothing at all. Nothing.’

Unless...’ Harry grinned to himself at the thoughts that followed.

Across the room Draco was involved in thoughts of his own. ‘I wish Harry would try to be a little more discrete when staring at me. Although I’m sure I’m being painfully obvious that he’s not the only one having trouble focusing on anything other than tonight’s detention.’

‘But nothing is going to happen. Nothing, do you hear? Unless. . .’

Draco let thoughts of what unless could mean drift around in his mind, coming up with nearly the same things as the boy sitting across the room from him also staring off into space, dreaming of what tonight could bring.

Both swearing never to every thought that came to mind.

Neville stood out in the hall trying to work up the courage to go into the Great Hall. He’d been trying all day to be more forceful and not get walked on, but had only managed to piss a few people off in his house for being rude over nothing. It would not have been too bad if Ginny had not seen the whole thing and left with a big grin on her face.

‘I’m such an idiot, can’t even be more out going without looking like the biggest fool in Hogwarts.’

Deciding that he didn’t have the courage to follow through with the latest advice from Draco on how to win Ginny, he stuffed the rose into his pocket and reached to open the door.

Unfortunately, his hand slid past it when it started to open and he ran straight into the side of the door with his face. “OW!” Neville grabbed his nose that had started to bleed and looked out through misty eyes into Ginny’s, that were looking at him full of concern.

“Oh, Merlin, Neville! I’m so sorry.” She reached out and took his hand away to look at his nose but put it back to keep blood from going everywhere. “Let’s get you to the infirmary. I can’t believe I just did that to you!”

Neville could hardly speak, he was feeling both extremely embarrassed that Ginny was seeing him all clumsy again and elated that she had not laughed at him, only was concerned. “Doon be snorry, Ginnee.”

“Oh you poor thing, let’s go.”

Despite the pain in his nose and the slight light headedness he felt, Neville walked all the way to the hospital wing with the biggest of smiles spread across his face. Never had he enjoyed walking the halls of Hogwarts as much as he was at that moment with Ginny Weasley walking beside him with an arm over his shoulder and his around hers, draped on her collar bone.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Four - Exchange

Eight that night found Harry and Draco standing together outside of Professor McGonagall's office door. Both looking to each other, hoping the other would go first, and also enjoying just looking at each other. Neither really wanting to look away for fear that they could never look back again, not willing to lose this possible last chance to be lost in someone else. But, eventually, both boys realized what they were thinking and forcibly made themselves withdraw and go back to making sure nothing at all happened tonight.

"I guess I'll go first, Potter. I thought Gryffindors charged straight at problems and that Slytherins were the ones to find a way to slip out of bad situations, but it wouldn't be the first time I was wrong."

Before Harry could come up with anything to fire back, or to realize that Draco had just admitted to ever being wrong, the door was open and McGonagall was waiting for him to follow Draco through the door.

"Tonight you boys will be helping me with some research in the library. Don't look too happy, this will most likely take all night and will be repeated until you have found what you are assigned. This is a very important matter, and is a special request from Professor Dumbledore himself."

Harry's mind instantly began working on the many possible reasons something could be so important, but in the end he was sure it had to be connected with one person, Voldemort.

"Professor, what if it takes a couple of nights? How can we do anything without sleep, and it does seem a bit much for being late on the first day." The lips on her face instantly grew white as she pressed them together so tightly, Harry grew afraid for his life. He forgot that the best way to make anything worse with Professor McGonagall was to talk back and then to question her decision when you did.

"There are charms that will temporarily work, but eventually your bodies will shut down until they've rested. We can arrange for you to rest during Quidditch practices and games if you'd prefer."

Harry just shook his head and apologized, then seeing an ease in her lips, dared ask another question, "What are we looking for?"

"I will tell you that when we reach the library. Follow me."

As they walked through the numerous hallways behind the professor, Harry kept trying to get Draco's attention with looks at him. 'I wish he would just look up, I wonder what he thinks about all of this. Could it be something his father's bragged about to him? I wonder if he'd say so when we find out?' Harry let his mind drift into scenes of Draco confiding in him and together, the two of them telling Dumbledore what he wanted to know. Most of these involved much celebrating and holding. 'I'm losing my mind, it's him. Damn sexy walk, I mean who walks like that really? It's not right that someone could look that sexy just by walking.'

Knowing that Harry was watching him Draco was doing his best sexy walk, not that it was not always amazingly sexy anyway, but he was holding nothing back now. 'I wish he'd stop trying to get my attention. I can't look up or I might lose this stride,' Draco thought as he did his best to ignore Harry. Both boys nearly ran into the back of Professor McGonagall when she stopped in front of the library. Drawing themselves up, they followed her through the doors and into what they hoped would be a short, yet close detention.

Handing them both a scroll with symbols on it, McGonagall said, "These are different runes. We have not been able to find their meaning in a few months of searching through the archives out here in the main section. You will both be working in the restricted section, trying to find what these symbols stand for. Also note that these runes are older than anything you have ever looked at in any of your classes thus far. This is a punishment, but also something that Professor Dumbledore would only ask of those he trusted or thought highly enough of their capabilities."

As she said this last sentence she looked at Harry first then turned to Draco, making it clear which of them was trusted and which was there for his work ethic. "I shall return in a few hours to see what you've been able to turn up."

Without another word, Harry and Draco were left alone standing just outside the restricted section. Sharing a look, they both stepped into separate aisles. "I think we should see what we can find in each row then go through them together in the middle. Maybe we could find it easier if we worked together." Draco hoped that had not sounded too desperate, but he really had wanted to get to talk with Harry tonight and that would not happen if they split up.

Turning around and heading back towards Draco, Harry shrugged and said, "I'll get the left side of this aisle, you get the right. Then we'll dump everything in the middle and go from there." At least now he did not have to do this alone and in the quiet. Harry hated being in the restricted section as it was. He hoped that now he would get a chance to talk to Draco and get to know him more. Harry figured that he could not be all bad, at least not completely. "What do you think we should look for? These titles don't exactly say 'this book is about runes - very old ones.'" Harry asked as he began looking through his side of the aisle. He didn't see anything yet that sounded even remotely like what he thought they should be looking for.

"I'm not really sure either. I really wish they would separate this section into subject matter instead of just alphabetical. It's really such a pain to find anything here."

As the minutes drug on, Harry was finding it very easy to agree with Draco. But he carried a stack of books that he thought sounded interesting, if nothing else, back out to the middle aisle. Setting them down next to the pile that Draco had just dropped onto the floor, he sat down cross-legged and opened the book on top. 'A History of Every Forgotten Thing You Don't Remember.'

After skimming through the book for half an hour, and not even being near the middle, Harry stretched himself out on the floor to relieve his leg muscles. He also kicked off his shoes and set them on his already discarded robe. Draco was also making himself comfortable and was already down to his undershirt, preferring the freedom of his arms to the starched shirts he was rarely seen without.

Harry let out a sigh as let his head rest against the book, giving his eyes a break. "At this rate we'll

finish an aisle a week!”

Draco, glad for any excuse to stop reading through ‘A Book of What You Wish You Could Remember,’ watched Harry’s back rise and fall through a few breaths before agreeing. “We’ll be lucky to get through these two books tonight.” Draco watched Harry’s hand start rubbing the back of his neck and decided to make the first move towards making sure nothing happened that night. Sitting up he reached over and began massaging Harry’s shoulders and neck. He could feel tension being eased out of the muscles as Harry’s breath steadied and his body grew more and more relaxed.

Taking this as a good sign, he continued working the muscles in Harry’s shoulders slowly working his way down his back and up again. Harry sat up next to Draco, shrugging off his hands. “Thanks, but you don’t have to do that.”

“I know, but you looked like you could use it.”

“Well, thanks, it felt great. No one’s ever done that for me before.”

“Never?” Draco seemed really shocked at Harry’s revelation.

“Never. The Dursley’s would rather have left me locked in a closet than see me, let alone touch me when I was growing up and I’ve never had a girlfriend before.”

“Not even Weasley or Granger? Wow, but I guess I’ve never really had anyone massage me either, now that I think about it. Am I missing anything good?” Draco really hoped that had sounded less desperate and sad to Harry than how it was said and meant.

“Definitely. Here, let me show you.” Harry moved around behind Draco and began massaging the muscles in his neck and shoulders, preferring the neck where he could touch Draco’s bare skin. His skin was soft and smooth and definitely more tanned than it used to be. “Did you spend a lot of time outdoors or something this summer? Because I swear you always looked much paler before.” Draco’s shoulders tensed dramatically under Harry’s touch as he asked the question.

Draco did not say anything for a while and Harry figured he was not going to answer when he finally said, “Yeah. I couldn’t stand to hang around the manor this holiday. My father wasn’t the happiest at having been thrown into Azkaban.”

Harry could tell there was much more to it than that and that Draco wanted to tell him, but let the other boy’s silence hang without pushing. Draco turned around and sat facing Harry. “Can I tell you something that I really have to get out, but can’t let anyone else know what I need to say?”

Harry was slightly taken aback by Draco’s straightforward question, but could tell it was important for him to get it out and simply nodded yes. Harry waited patiently, sitting across from Draco, the last person in the world he would have ever thought he would be doing this with.

Finally Draco looked away from Harry’s eyes and began. “I’m not sure why I’m going to tell you this, but I know I can trust you somehow.” He took a deep breath and then continued, “This summer when I got home, I had expected my father to be in Azkaban and to not have to spend the months hearing about how much better we would all be with Voldemort in power. But he was waiting just

inside the door when I walked in. Cursing everything I could think of, I followed him when he told me to come to his study. When I got inside and he had closed his door, I was introduced to someone else in the room.”

Draco looked sadly into Harry’s eyes before continuing on. “Voldemort stood, or rather rose or slithered or whatever it is he does, and came over to me. He took my hand and shook it while touching my arm with the other. I wanted to scream, he was so vile and made me feel disgusting to have him near me, but I stood still and answered like a good little Malfoy when he asked me questions about my loyalties and following him.”

Draco took a few breaths and made a face as if he were about to throw up. “When he had finished talking to me, we just stood there, his hand grasping my arm and his eyes looking me over from top to bottom, lingering places I knew he didn’t need to be. Finally he let me go and I got out of the house as fast as possible, without being obvious.”

Draco took another deep, shaky breath and looked back up at Harry, scared of what he might see in those beautiful green eyes. He was relieved and shocked to find only a kind of understanding staring back at him. “You don’t have to go on if you don’t want to Draco, but I will listen if you do. He’s an ugly disgusting thing isn’t he?”

Draco smirked and nodded. “Well, anyway, I tried the rest of the summer to never be in the house, just to avoid ever getting caught alone with him. I was scared of what he might do, I wasn’t sure why really, but I was. I roamed around the forests my family owns and even ventured into a small town a few miles from our house. But eventually my luck ran out.”

“Voldemort cornered me one morning before I could slip out of the house. He asked where I’d been hiding all the time and what I was hiding from. I just said that I enjoyed being outside and that I had nothing to be afraid of. Then he got close to my ear and whispered ‘There’s always me, boy.’” Draco paused again and swallowed against the repulsion rising in his throat at the memory of those words and the disgusting creature that had uttered them so close to his face.

“I tried to move away from the wall against my back but there was no where to go but right into him. I was just hoping he would go away, just back off from me and move on, but that’s not what he had in mind.” Draco stopped, now finding it nearly impossible to say the next words, but looking into Harry’s eyes made it feel okay. That’s when he noticed that tears were fighting to form in those green eyes, the only refuge he had.

“That’s when he, he, kissed my cheek as he was pulling away from me. I shuddered and nearly cried out in disgust that I had let him do that to me, but I just closed my eyes and wished him away. I knew he wasn’t gone when I could still feel his breath against me and when his hands touched my arm again, this time caressing it gently. I’m not sure what else would have happened because thankfully, my mother came into the room where we were, looking for me.”

Draco let the words drift off into the air and let the silence encompass them. A few tears had escaped from Harry’s eyes, joining the ones that Draco realized had streamed down his face while he had been talking. Harry just slowly reached out his arms and took Draco into a hug, pulling him into his arms and his head against his shoulder. “I’m so sorry, Draco. You do know it’s not your fault right, please don’t think it was anything you did.”

Draco didn't answer, he just let himself be held and finally for the first time in his life he let himself cry. He had never let himself be this weak before with anyone, but somehow he knew it was okay to be vulnerable in Harry's arms. Somehow it did not feel wrong.

Harry pulled him away but did not let go, he just looked him in the eyes. Neither boy said anything as they lost themselves in each other's eyes. Both sets were still wet with tears both shed and unshed. Draco slowly raised his hand to Harry's face and touched his cheek where the tears had moved downward. He followed the trail until he was touching Harry's lips. He began to gently run his finger across the lips he had secretly wanted to kiss so many times. He slowly retraced his way back up to Harry's eyes, which were still staring right into Draco's. Running his hand gently back to Harry's ear, Draco stroked his cheek with his thumb. Harry leaned slightly forward at the same time as Draco. They continued until they were less than an inch from each other's lips, Harry's arms around Draco's shoulders and Draco still stroking Harry's cheek. Without ever looking away from each other, Draco leaned slowly into a gentle touch of the lips. He felt more tears fall from his eyes the moment he felt the slight roughness of Harry's lips touch his soft, tender lips.

Harry's tears soon joined in with the flow as the kiss deepened to more than just the smallest of contact. Soon both lips were locked together and eyes soon closed as they lost themselves in another world. One that they could share together, one that was only created between the two of them.

Draco's hand continued around Harry's head until his arms were both around Harry too. Draco uncrossed his legs and got to his knees, still leaning heavily against Harry for physical and emotional support. They both just stayed lost inside their world, finally finding that connection they had heard about. Draco was the first to pull away from the kiss, but did not move away from Harry at all. His head still resting against Harry's forehead, so he could watch as Harry reopened his eyes. When they locked eyes again, there was more than the sadness from a few minutes ago, there was also a fire slowly building. A fire set off by the spark of the kiss. Soon all other emotions were replaced with a content look of pure happiness, a look of two souls finding where they belonged.

Draco moved reluctantly away and sat back down opposite Harry. "I'm sorry," he said eventually, "I shouldn't have done that."

"No you shouldn't have." Harry responded evenly. For a moment Draco felt his heart stop, how could he ever not do that again now that his heart beat in Harry's chest. "But you did, and I did too. Now we'll have to do it again, and again, and again."

At Harry's last words Draco was set free to revel in the emotions that were flooding into his body, he allowed his soul to dance. Harry wanted it just like he had and now they could share it again. Both felt really light headed and silly, and could not wait to feel that way again.

Before either of them could say anything else, they heard the door to the library open and footsteps approaching them. "Have you boys had any luck where others have had none?" Albus Dumbledore stood in front of the restricted section, as if he were not allowed in himself. Both of them wanted to scream yes, but quickly realized that he was not talking about their kiss, their exchange of souls, he was referring to their supposed search for runes.

“Actually Headmaster, we were just taking a break from reading, but we haven’t found anything at all related to the runes.” Harry replied before an awkward silence had been allowed to settle.

“Well, it is nearly morning and as I have been up all night myself, I suggest we all try to get some rest before another day starts. We have about three and a half hours of sleep to still enjoy I believe. Goodnight boys, see yourselves to bed.” For the second time that night they were both left alone in the restricted section.

“There’s no chance I’m going to get any sleep tonight now.”

“Me either, besides I’ve been avoiding it for awhile lately to keep from dreaming.”

“Yeah, I noticed how tired and pathetic you’ve been looking. You are way under weight Draco, you need to eat and try to sleep at least.”

“You’re a fine one to talk about being under weight, especially the tired looking part. You actually look more sick than I do.”

“Well, I can pretty much guess why you haven’t eaten or slept right in a number of months now. I only have one reason for looking sick, and that is I was on a forced diet of grapefruit and any number of vegetable and fruit combinations all summer. As for the sleep, I’m not being kept up by anything that hasn’t been keeping me up for years.” Harry found he liked the ease with which they were talking.

“I say we work on this rune thing some more then, so we can both avoid finding Voldemort in our dreams.” Both seemed to think it a good idea and turned back to the books on the floor.

“So is all that happened this summer the reason for the new and improved Draco Malfoy, or did you just decide you were tired of being a git?”

Allowing a slight smirk to cross his face, Draco replied, “It has everything to do with why I finally admitted to myself that my Father and all his bullshit are nothing but lies, empty good for nothing lies. But what about you, any reason that the boy who lived would take the time to give Lucius Malfoy’s son another chance?”

Harry thought about it for a second, letting a silence settle between them, only it was a comfortable one. Finally he looked directly into Draco’s eyes and said, “It was something in your eyes and in your voice when we got back to school. I even noticed a little on the train that you seemed very different. Besides, I’m a Gryffindor and we always are trusting if you give us the slightest reason to.”

Draco nodded and they returned to a silent search for the runes, although neither was actually reading the words in front of him. Finally Draco sighed loudly to get Harry’s attention.

“Harry, I really want you to know that I’ve never broken down to anyone like that, and I’ve never felt comfortable enough with anyone to trust them with that kind of scene. I really have changed and I hope it’s for the better and I really feel that I can trust you with any and every thing. I’m still not sure why I let you know all that about my summer the first time we really ever talked, but it felt great to get it all out to someone.”

Harry slightly blushed then looked away, “You know, we both can relate to each other in a way that I don’t think other people could. I mean in more than just having to have dealt with Voldemort in our lives.”

“You mean that we both know what it’s like to be expected to be something we may not want to be?” Draco interjected, hoping he was understanding where Harry was going with this.

“Yeah, exactly. I’ve always been expected to save the world and rescue us all from Voldemort, and everyone really expects you to be some dark wizard, Death Eater leader or something.” ‘Now that sounded intelligent Potter, what exactly is it that everyone expects him to be again?’

Draco creased his forehead as if thinking the same thing as Harry in his mind and then just moved past it. “It’s kind of like we both have our own identifying marks to the world that define to everyone else who we are. You have your scar and I have my last name.”

“You put that way better than I did, mind if I write that down for future reference?” Draco simply laughed and nodded. “I guess we should really get to this Runes thing now that we got that figured out.”

“I guess, and Harry?”

Harry looked once again into the swirling gray eyes, tempted to dive straight into the mist that was threatening to engulf him yet again. “Huh?” was all that he could breath.

“Thank you.”

Both boys stretched out, belly down on the floor and returned to their books. Only now, lying side by side they found it easy to feel safe, even in their dreams. In a matter of minutes they had both fallen asleep. And not long after that, they had both taken each other in their arms as they slept.

‘Good thing nothing happened at all tonight.’ They both thought to themselves before slipping into sleep and lost consciousness.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Five - The Morning After

The sun had barely risen when Hermione walked down into the common room on her way out the door. She was walking past the fire when she noticed the top of a red head sticking just above the back of a chair. Walking over to it, she found Ron asleep, facing the fireplace, still dressed in his robes from the day before. Gently shaking Ron's shoulder, Hermione whispered, "Ron, get up. It's morning." As Ron blinked his way out of dreams and into the world, Hermione asked, "Why didn't you go to bed last night when Harry got back."

"That's easy, Harry never came back." Ron said as if it seemed so obvious that he should not have had to bother with such a question. Then as the mists cleared from his mind and he woke up more, his mind jumped awake with the thought. "Harry didn't come back last night!"

Jumping out of the chair and nearly knocking Hermione in the chin with his shoulder, he ran to the room he shared with Harry as if to make sure he believed himself. Then came bounding back down the stairs three and four at a time heading straight for the picture.

"Ron wait up, goodness you can over react sometimes. It's not as if anything could have happened to him at Hogwarts, he was with McGonagall for detention with Malf. . ."

Hermione got a sinking sensation in her stomach over who Harry may be with, and why he had not come back yet. Deciding that it was nothing her boyfriend would benefit from seeing so early in the morning, or ever for that matter, she quickly dashed after him into the halls.

Ron stopped running and let Hermione catch up with him. "Should we find McGonagall or Dumbledore first and tell them Draco's done something to Harry to keep him from getting in last night." Before Hermione could start to calm him down and try to explain that they didn't have to set off all the alarms unnecessarily, Sirius came drifting around the corner.

"Sirius, oh thank heavens. Do you know where Harry spent his detention last night?" Hermione asked before Ron could dash off to save the world.

Looking at them, wondering what could have two students awake and worked up about so early, simply said, "Not for sure. Dumbledore thought it may take all night though and left our conversation early this morning to see what they'd been able to do. Can you believe that he's as tight-lipped with me now, as he was when I was in the Order? It is not like I can dash off and get myself caught now."

"You see Ron, Dumbledore has them doing something very important that was going to take all night. Gods, you can be so dramatic sometimes."

"Well, you think we could be warned about these things for Merlin's sake." Now that the adrenaline was wearing down, Ron realized he was up way too early for a weekday, or any day for that matter. "What time is it? I don't have to be in any classes until this afternoon, why am I up? Stupid Harry, always getting me worried and worked up. Bother." Ron turned and seemed to slowly fall asleep as he walked back toward the picture to go back to bed.

“Thank-you Sirius, I swear he’s going get himself hurt someday dashing off like that to rescue Harry without even thinking twice.”

“Yeah, Harry’s lost enough people he loves that way.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry, I wasn’t even thinking.” Hermione turned to look directly into the slightly shimmering face, which was carrying a weak smile.

“It’s okay, Hermione. Just an old dead fool wishing he had listened more to his wise elders like Dumbledore more often.” He looked to the ground, sadness portrayed across his features. “Anyway, hadn’t you better be getting more sleep, breakfast isn’t for a little while more.”

“I was actually heading to the library to get some studying in before breakfast, when I found Ron sleeping in the common room.”

“It’s only the third day of the term! What could you be studying for already?”

“It never hurts to study in advance.”

“Well, I always thought studying hurts whenever it’s tried, early or last minute. But, anyway, would you mind some company at all? I’ve been trying to figure out how to turn pages in a book, but could use an extra solid hand if you don’t mind.”

“Not at all, please.” Hermione walked on towards the library, all the way making small talk with Sirius and wondering herself, how a ghost would turn the page of anything.

Finding the library doors closed was a good sign to Hermione. This meant that chances were good no one else was up yet to bother her. One person was enough, though she would never complain about helping Sirius out. After all, he had always been so nice at the headquarters last summer about putting up with her and Ron.

Sirius drifted straight through the doors, still talking to Hermione as if they were not there at all and she was right beside him on the other side. She could hear his muffled voice, now talking to no one, cut off when he realized she was still on the other side. “Sorry, I forget about that.” She heard as she opened the doors and stepped inside.

“Don’t worry about it. Now, what were you sa. . .” Hermione froze in the middle aisle between shelves, looking at the floor just inside the restricted section. Sirius too was floating right where he was when he noticed the two boys wrapped together lying on the floor asleep. One in an undershirt and slacks, the other in slacks and a t-shirt, both using their robes and other discarded clothing for pillows and covers.

Hermione took a cautious step forward, as if afraid to wake up some horrible monster. She went into the restricted section and stood over the two sleepers. Finding the scene slightly romantic, she seemed hesitant to wake them.

“They both seem to be sleeping like they haven’t in a while. I know Harry always has trouble looking

this peaceful asleep. Sirius, do you think we should wake them or slam the door so they'll wake up themselves, and avoid an awkward situation?"

Sirius still had not moved, his mouth was open nearly three times its normal gape and he was staring at the two, waiting for someone to pop out and scream "Gotchya". Finally coming back to his senses, he moved beside Hermione. "I guess we should just go ahead and wake them up, we'd have to get this first awkward moment out of the way eventually I suppose, might as well make it a good story too."

He leaned down over Harry and touched his face. Letting the icy chill that was a ghost's touch jolt him awake like a splash of water. Harry's eyes shot open and he looked directly into Draco's face. His face beamed with a smile and happiness as he let his hand stroke Draco's cheek gently. He slowly started to disentangle himself from Draco and sit up when he heard shuffling behind him. Whipping around he saw Hermione and Sirius standing and floating just above him. Both looked about as red as he felt his face getting. "Um, good morning?"

"Looks that way anyhow." Sirius said with a smile as the shock of finding the two boys together curled up on the floor was wearing off.

"Yeah, you guys should get up now, I figure you'll both want to get a shower and stuff. Separately I mean, you know. . . I wasn't thinking about you two in a shower together, not that it would be gross or anything, but you know, I was just meaning that its a little while till breakfast, and well. . . I was just. . ." Hermione trailed off, realizing she was blubbing on.

"Well put Granger, and I thank you for waking us before someone else had the opportunity to find us um, compromising ourselves shall we say." Draco said as he sat up, trying his best to put off his cool exterior, even though he looked much more rested and a lot redder than usual.

"Yeah, thanks, can you imagine the look on McGonagall's face if she'd found us?"

"Yes actually, I can. And now I rather wish I could." Sirius said as he started laughing. "She'd fuse her lips together, she'd be so upset."

"Why, is it wrong? Oh God, we broke more rules while in detention." Harry let his still newly awakened mind jump to all kinds of conclusions, remembering what Uncle Vernon had always said about the great rules that schools had in place to keep sickos from gaying up the dormitories.

"Would you just relax, honestly Harry, you can be more dramatic than even Ron sometimes. You weren't breaking any school rule that I know of." Hermione found herself exasperated for the second time that day by her friends and their tendencies to fly out to left field with every chance to come up with some crazy notion about something or another.

"Yeah, relax Harry. I know I haven't slept that well in a long time and I'd rather you didn't ruin this morning for me so quickly. You're not supposed to just run off and fly to hysterics the morning after, I believe correct protocol is to cuddle and hate the idea of separating." Draco said all this from between his hands that were massaging his face awake.

"The morning after what exactly?" Sirius and Hermione echoed along with Harry.

“Okay, I guess it was too early for a joke. Sorry.” Draco stood up but didn’t move away from Harry, not wanting to be any further from him than he was at this moment. He placed his hand on Harry’s shoulder, giving it a slight squeeze. “Would you two mind if Harry and I went on our way to face the day?”

Harry stood up next to Draco, wanting desperately to take his hand and feel his warmth against his own. “Yeah, we’ll be going now. Thanks again, even though this wasn’t how I had planned on letting you guys know, it works I suppose.”

“What exactly were you going to ‘let them know’?”

“Bloody hell, Draco. Not now.” Harry turned and walked towards the door with Draco right on his heels. When they’d made it out into the hall Harry kept walking at a fast pace until he was sure they were out of earshot of anyone up this early. “I’m not sure exactly what I would tell them, cause I’m not sure exactly what we are now.” Harry said as soon as Draco had caught up to him.

“Oh, well I know we’re not enemies anymore, that’s for damn sure.” Draco said with a slight grin.

“Yeah, but are we anything more, or are we still trying to figure that out.”

“Depends.”

“Depends on what, Draco?”

“What do we have to be for us to sleep like that and have nights of peace every night?” Draco didn’t care at the moment how weak or desperate he sounded, he knew he had to be able to sleep like that again, and doubted seriously if he could ever sleep again without being beside Harry.

“Well, I guess we’d be boyfriends who were completely, madly, and deeply in need of each other.”

“So I guess one could say that what we are is in love?”

“Sounds about right, though I always figured it took awhile for someone to realize that they were in love, but if this isn’t then I’m scared of what love could be.”

“Harry, I love you. I know it as sure as I know I hate Voldemort. I know it as sure as I know that if I don’t stay with you at night, I will never find rest and will never escape my dreams. I know that I need you, Harry Potter. I need you more than I’ve ever needed anyone or anything in my life.”

“Well, that settles it then, we are officially in love.”

“Of course, we could never tell anyone other than our closest friends, which means that since I have none, only Weasley is still in the dark.”

“What about your Father, are you worried about him finding out through the Death Eater gossip trails? How do you think he’ll react?” Harry watched the stone wall that had separated him and Draco for years starting to go back up. “Don’t.”

“Don’t what?”

“Don’t even think about trying to shut me out now or keep something from me, no matter what it is you can tell me and I won’t hold it against you.”

Draco was being filled with fear. ‘What does he know? Could he have figured out that this all was some ploy to get him closer to me so that Voldemort could have one more weapon against him?’

‘But, that’s not what you’d intended, not ever. Remember you never wanted to hurt Harry, and telling him about this now would only hurt him and make him regret ever trusting you at all.’

‘But lying to him would also hurt, probably even more because then I would make him think I don’t trust him to believe my side of the story.’ Draco realized that he had not responded out loud to Harry yet, and willed himself to stop arguing with his inner voice.

“It’s nothing, really. I just was thinking about what my father would say, and probably do to us if he ever walked in on us in my room or something. Just wasn’t the most pleasant of all the fantasies of me getting you into my bed.” Draco hated himself for the words that came out so easily, the lie that had crafted itself automatically.

“I can see where that would really be a bad thing, although, to see the look on your father’s face right before I died would be worth it.” Harry laughed to himself.

“Yeah, well I would rather miss that entire life situation completely, thanks. But I bet his look would be nothing compared to Weasley’s when he finds out or finds us.” Draco smiled at the thought of what they could be doing to get caught by Weasley. ‘It would serve the stupid git right, not wanting Harry to fall for me, anyone else but me.’

Realizing that they were in a deserted hallway, Draco moved toward Harry with a hungry look in his eyes. “You know Harry, I’m beginning to forget how good you taste on my lips.” Harry was now between Draco and the wall, facing Draco.

“Then why don’t you remind yourself.”

Draco descended hungrily onto Harry’s mouth. The timid romantics of last night were completely forgotten by both of them as they gave in to desires and needs, rather than filling any emotional void. As Draco moved down to Harry’s neck, touching any bare skin with his lips and tongue, Harry tried to stay aware enough to keep from being seen by someone walking down the hall. Looking across the hall he noticed a statue he had not seen in years, Boris the Bewildered and four doors down from there, the prefects bathroom. Harry suddenly found himself developing a plan to get Draco somewhere a little more private. Moving out from under Draco’s mouth, Harry said in barely a whisper, “follow me”. Cocking an eyebrow at Harry, Draco followed, wondering what on earth Potter had in mind. When they reached the door, Harry suddenly remembered that there was a password. Hoping that somehow it had never been changed in two years, he said, “pine fresh.” He was rewarded with the door opening and Draco gasping as he looked inside.

“Does that bathtub actually have a diving board?”

Harry smiled and quickly closed the door behind them, and then it occurred to him that this wasn't the best of all places in the morning. Soon prefects from all the houses other than Slytherin, who had never been told about this room, would be here getting ready for school.

"Damn, I forgot that Prefects would be in here in a few minutes. We've got to go back out."

Looking like someone had just stolen his favorite candy right out of his hand, Draco whined, "You have got to be kidding! Look at that bathtub, I bet each of those faucets have something different in them. Come on, just a quick bath?"

"No way, I'm not getting caught in here with you sharing a bath by any prefects, especially Ron, he uses this bathroom every morning. I'd really rather not deal with an irate Ron this early in the morning, he would probably kill us both rather than just you. But, I guess that we could take a break during detention tonight and sneak back down here."

Surprised that Harry would suggest doing anything that involved sneaking out of detention, even though he knew that Harry was pretty well known for his ability to sneak off a lot, Draco relented. "Only if you promise."

"I do, now let's go before anyone comes in."

Sneaking back out into the hall, Harry suddenly realized that he would have to get ready for the day, which would mean leaving Draco and going back to Gryffindor alone. "You know, I just realized that we need to split up right now."

"What do you mean? We haven't even been together but ten minutes!" Draco face seemed to grow even paler, which intrigued Harry.

'Could Draco really need me this bad? I've never seen him dependent at all on anyone other than himself.' "Draco, calm down. Merlin, I only meant that we'd have to go to our own rooms now and then to breakfast and then to class. And for us to do that, we have to leave each other now but see each other later."

"Oh, right." Draco wanted to kick himself for being so obviously desperate and needy. He never allowed himself to appear so clingy to anyone, and even if Harry was his knight in shining armor, he refused to be reduced to nothing more than a madden in need of saving. "I guess we'll have to keep up the whole 'bitter enemies' thing for the rest of the school."

"Yeah, I guess so, but try and lay off on me for once. Just don't make it too obvious, or people will make up a lot worse things in their minds about us, if you don't at least insult me some during the day." Harry smiled at the other boy. "So I guess I'll see you in class, but I'll be waiting for tonight."

"I'll have to get someone to place a good sized bet on the two of us getting together before anyone else finds out. Our odds were pretty good when I checked the boards on the Hogwarts Express."

"Am I the only person in the school who had no idea about this betting thing?"

Draco shrugged his shoulders and watched Harry walk back the other direction towards Gryffindor tower before turning towards the dungeons where Slytherin house was located. Not for the first time, Draco wished he had been sorted into Gryffindor instead of Slytherin.

Harry was sharing a similar thought, though he was wondering for the hundredth time what it would have been like if he had let the sorting hat put him into Slytherin like it had wanted to.

Reaching the portrait, he said good morning to the lady and then said the new password, "Slytherin sucks". Walking to his room to get his stuff for a shower, Harry let his mind stick on the password and work out all kinds of situations where a Slytherin sucking would not be a bad thing. Stepping into the water, Harry decided that Draco's fingers did a much better job at massaging his shoulders than the spray from the showerhead.

Neville woke up with a sore face and tried to figure out why. He was immediately reminded of everything when he looked around and realized he was in the hospital wing. A smile spread across his face and he stood up and stretched a body that felt more alive than it had in a long time. His heart was racing about a million beats a second and his head was going light again, but this time it wasn't from blood rushing out of his nose.

"I can't believe she walked me all the way here and stayed with me until she was shoed away!" Neville proclaimed happily to the empty beds around him.

"Well, she obviously thinks very fondly of you, Mr. Longbottom." Madame Pomfrey walked into the room, smiling brightly. She had grown very fond of Neville herself over the years, seeing that the boy was always running into something or hurting himself in some way so she had seen a lot of him over the past five years. "But I don't see any reason why she should not feel any other way towards you. You really are a dear. It's like I tell your Gran all the time. . ."

Neville let the words fade into his day dreaming, he'd heard this little speech a lot. He really did appreciate the nurse though, she always tried her best to help him feel better, and not just physically. She had gotten into the habit of letting him stay in the hospital wing for the night after he would hurt himself to avoid being embarrassed, but now Neville was happier than ever that he had not been allowed to sulk alone.

"Neville?" Both Madame Pomfrey and Neville turned toward the soft voice. Neville felt his lips reach for his ears as they grew into an even bigger smile and felt his face grow hotter by the second.

"Hey" It was a weak greeting, but it was all that would come out, and all he felt safe with saying and not blundering over.

"Good Morning Ms. Weasley." Madame Pomfrey said with a warm smile before turning back to Neville. "Mr. Longbottom, you are free to go and get breakfast. Have a good day dear, and please try to avoid as many solid objects as possible."

Neville nodded his thanks and goodbyes, then walked with Ginny out into the hall. "Thanks again for yesterday."

Ginny turned to Neville with a smile and said, "Anytime, just try not to make it a habit of running into doors that I open. Hey Neville, what's that sticking out of your pocket?"

Neville reached down and felt the flower starting to work its way out of his pocket where he had stuffed it and could feel it re-blooming as it came fully into his hand. He held it up and out to Ginny. "Uh, actually, it's the reason I got hit with the door yesterday." Ginny looked at Neville confused, but took the flower from his outstretched hand anyway.

"What do you mean?"

Giving his stomach a calming breath, Neville figured it was now or never. "I was trying to work up the courage to come and give it to you, but had decided to chicken out and just go in and eat when I reached for the door and well, you know the rest."

"You were going to give this to me? That's so sweet Neville." Ginny stopped walking and put the flower to her nose. "It smells like perfume. Like the really expensive kind I smell at the stores in Diagon Alley when I'm there with my mum."

Neville looked confused and wondered how it could smell like anything good after a night in his pocket and how it had come out looking fresh picked in his hand, but decided he could figure that out later. "Well, I was worried you wouldn't like it, sorry I didn't give it to you earlier."

"That's okay, don't worry about it." Ginny walked up to Neville and kissed him on the cheek before walking on towards the great hall. "Are you coming to breakfast or not?"

Neville just skipped into a slight run until he caught up with Ginny and walked beside her all the way to the Great Hall, feeling more like he was floating.

Draco watched the two until they turned a corner and smiled, finding he was genuinely happy at performing a good deed for someone else. He stood up and walked toward the dungeons to get ready for another day, experiencing elation and trepidation over the new Draco Malfoy that was becoming his dominate self.

"I actually wished I had been stuck in Gryffindor there for a moment." Draco shook his head at himself, letting a smile slip onto his face, in spite of it all.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Six - And So It Begins

Lucius Malfoy stood outside of his own study, wondering what he would say to the Dark Lord awaiting him on the other side of the door. Not for the first time of the day, he cursed his son and his lack of letters. It had been three days back as of this morning, and while he was expecting no miracles from Draco, he was expecting a note saying that at least all was going to plan.

Of course, whose plan it was going according to was something Voldemort knew nothing about. ‘I have come to despise that thing sitting in my chair, at my desk. He must think me a fool not to have seen the way he carried on about Draco all summer. Thank heavens the boy had the brains to stay hidden most of the time. If only everything was in place already, we could run our ruse and let the wonderful Dark Lord meet his end. Then I could take up the fight of the Death Eaters. But for now, it is best to be a loyal servant. But soon I will do what Harry Potter has failed to do for me all these years. Kill Voldemort.’

With as big a smile as he could plaster onto his face, Lucius opened the door and went in with his head bowed, pretending to show respect and fear. But in his heart there was but one emotion, a hateful resolve to see his master dead.

Harry walked beside Hermione and Ron towards their first class of the day. “I wonder if they found someone to teach the class again yet.” Harry said out loud, more to himself than anyone around. He was still embarrassed over the morning events and had sworn Hermione to secrecy with Ron until he had been able to tell him about the new changes himself.

“Well, I hope they get someone soon, if they haven’t yet. We can’t very well go the entire term just sitting there reading the book in silence like we did the last class.”

“Yeah, Hermione, Heaven forbid we never had to do anything in a class.”

“Lay off Ron, it’s still too early for me to deal with a wound up Hermione.”

They all stopped talking as they reached the door to the Defense Against the Dark Arts room and finding the door open already, walked inside and assumed their seats in the back. No sooner had they sat down than a familiar voice greeted them as its owner strode into the classroom from the adjoining office.

“Well, still sitting in the back I see, hope that doesn’t mean you plan on slacking this year in defense class.”

“Remus!” All three yelled in greeting as they rushed to the front of the room. “Are you really our teacher again?” Harry squeezed in before giving a friendly hug to the older man.

“Actually, after what happened last year at the Ministry, Fudge has been anxious to get me back because of the high scores all my students got on their OWLS and NEWTS the one-year I taught. I

guess they finally decided that the best way to beat the enemy is to know how to defend yourselves and how to disable them.” Lupin's face looked full of color, not at all as it had been the times Harry had seen him before at Hogwarts. “Gets even better, Snape gets to spend some of his free time trying to develop a more permanent solution to my problem. He wouldn't usually mind messing with potions, but anything that will help me and is being designed with me in mind, has got to be killing him.”

“I still can't believe you're here though, now with you and Sirius around I know Voldemort doesn't stand a chance of doing anything here. I ju. . .” Harry was cut short by Lupin, who grabbed his shoulders and looked intently into his eyes.

“Sirius is here? He came back?” Lupin seemed to be a mixture of happy and upset. Harry could tell that the grief he had fought over the summer had been near nothing compared to the look on Remus' face now. “Well, I'll have to hunt him down and kill him for this summer. You'd think he'd let people know he'd come back. Not that it still means I won't mourn his death, just makes it easier to lose a friend when he sticks around afterwards.” With a brave smile, Professor Lupin turned to the now nearly full classroom.

“I suppose we should take or seats now.” The trio moved back to their seats across the room.

“It's great to have you back, Rem. . . I mean Professor Lupin.” Harry said with a smile spread across his face.

“It's great to be back.”

Professor Lupin remained standing where he'd been when Harry had hugged him. ‘I really wish there hadn't been so many years of missing that. I haven't felt those arms wrap around me since he was a baby holding onto my neck. I still can't believe he's grown up so well, without Lily around.’ Remus realized he was staring off into space in front of the students. Turning his attention to the present and the job at hand, he let the thoughts of the past and it's regrets fade with the sad emotions it always brought with it.

Draco Malfoy sat alone at lunch, as he had been doing so far in the term, trying to eat something from the plate in front of him. His stomach had actually been hungry at breakfast, letting Draco eat more than he had in months. He was still feeling full though and regretted such a big breakfast since there was now such a great looking lunch laid before him.

Finally giving in to his stomachs refusal to be gorged again, he began scanning the Great Hall, watching people interact with each other. Looking up to the table at the head of the room he saw that the rumor was true. Somehow the werewolf had returned as the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher.

‘Well, he was the best we've had to be honest. I never learned more in that class than I did with him teaching. I'm sure Harry's tickled pink to have him back. I wonder why he's always been so fond of Harry? Guess it has to do with the fact that Harry looks so much like his father that any friends of his father would unconsciously make a connection between the two. Makes sense enough, I suppose.’

Draco rolled his eyes at his own random thoughts and let them drift until they fell upon the subject of nearly every thought he'd had since morning.

Harry was soon looking back at him, but this time they did not get lost in each other, they met each other half way and simply let the other know he had been the center of thought for most of the day. Draco was a little relieved to find he was not the only one acting so sickeningly needy. Draco's line of sight was interrupted by a hazy figure gliding between Harry and him.

Sirius was moving towards the front of the Great Hall towards Remus. He moved right up in front of the newest arrival to Hogwarts, waiting for Remus to say something.

Pretending not to notice his good friend, Remus kept talking to Dumbledore as if no one were standing in front of him. "Hey, old friend." Remus turned when Sirius spoke finally.

"Don't you 'hey' me. Do you have any idea what I've gone through this summer? I thought I'd lost you forever. I've already lost three of my good friends, and really hated the idea of not having at least you around to talk to."

"Oh, shut up. You never were a great actor, Moony." Sirius let his smile spread across his face. "I'd give you a hug, but well, you know how that would turn out."

"You are a complete git though, you could have let some of us know you'd returned."

"Yeah, well I already had this chat with Harry, so if you don't mind could we just move on past the stupid things that Sirius Black has done in his life and afterlife."

"A list that would take far too long a conversation for one lunch." Dumbledore interjected with a slight chuckle.

"Everyone's a comic."

Snape walked along the corridor in an extremely bad mood. After the display of friendship at lunch, he had been unable to get anything down and was now hungry and annoyed. 'It's not enough that Lupin is back, but now I have to deal with Sirius as a ghost!'

He was so enraged and walking so quickly he nearly collided fully with a fast moving mass of black robes and green striped tie. Avoiding Crabbe at the last instant with pure reflex, Snape grabbed him by the collar and pulled him to a none too gentle stop. "What are you doing?! You nearly knocked me down. What is so important that you are running around like a crazed animal?"

Crabbe slowly found his voice despite being scared senseless by the head of Slytherin house. "I was looking for uh. . ."

"Well out with it foolish boy, I'm in no mood for stupidity today."

"Draco. I was looking for Draco. . .to tell him he has an owl with a letter stamped from the manor."

At this, Snape forgot the bad mood he was supposed to be in and let Crabbe lose. “When did it arrive, how long have you kept it waiting?”

“It’s only just arrived, Sir. That’s why I was running though, so it wouldn’t have to wait long for a reply if it’s from someone other than his father.”

“Crabbe, shut your mouth now, you idiot. How in the world can you have come from your parents I’ll never be able to guess.” Snape’s mood was back, but for different reasons entirely. “You have to watch what you say in the corridors. Now go find him, but say nothing about what is waiting for him.”

Crabbe hustled on down the dungeon corridors, heading up toward the Great Hall to get Draco. ‘I wonder what they could already be asking on the third day of school. Knowing that fool and his lackey, they have some desperate, overly complicated plan devised to get to Harry and then return to power.’

It was always in that order for the Dark Lord these days. He had become obsessed with the idea that Harry would stop any plan he developed, so he had to be dealt with first. ‘Paranoid fool. It gets easier and easier to remember why I turned spy on him years ago. He is completely pathetic. If only Harry were a Slytherin and not bound by any Gryffindor ethics, he could have killed Voldemort by now. But knowing the Gryffindors, he probably thinks there is some way to save Voldemort from his evil self.’

Snape began his long, forceful stride back to the common room, where he would wait for Draco and see what was planned next for Harry Potter.

When Draco walked into the Slytherin common room, he found Snape sitting where he’d expected him to be; holding what he figured this was all about. Noticing that the room was empty except for them, he spoke freely to Snape. “Is it from my father or from that disgusting thing that calls himself a great lord?”

“I do not know, I have not opened your mail. I would however appreciate your quick attention to this matter.” Snape stood up, moving towards Draco with the letter stretched out to him. Draco recognized the Malfoy Manor seal imprinted on the front of the parchment. Well, it wasn’t from his mother; she never used imprinted stationary, preferring to write on plain, unmarked parchment.

“Well, let’s get this over with.” Draco broke the seal on the edge and read the letter it contained. After several minutes, Draco looked up at Snape with the slightest of grins on his face. “Father sends his regards to you along with the permission to read what he knows you do anyway.” Snape just raised his nose stiffly into the air with a nasty sounding snort.

“There’s also an encoded outline of the basic plans Voldemort is developing to somehow attack the school. He also sends in more encryption, his encouragement for me to appear to follow Voldemort, but still follow the plan he came up with this summer.”

“What are you going to do? Follow your father’s plan or Voldemort’s?” Snape hid his surprise at learning of the mutiny by the elder Malfoy well, but Draco easily saw his reaction, since he’d been

watching for it to see how much he already knew.

“Actually, I’ve got my own plans set into motion to see that after the Death Eaters either get killed or kill Voldemort, there will be no power vacuum since-”

“Since your father would then be in charge.”

‘Stupid fool, listen and I’ll let you in on the part you need to play.’ “Since there would be nothing to take power of. I’ve grown very tired of having to hear my father and Voldemort going on and on about how they’re going to kill Potter and take over the world. If you ask me, everything’s going along fine enough without someone like Voldemort forcing everyone to obey his ridiculous whims.”

“Draco, what are you planning to do?” Snape asked severely, staring down his beak of a nose. “I hope it’s nothing as grandiose and easily stopped as your father’s and Voldemort’s.”

“Don’t worry Professor, you have trained me much better than that in the last six years. I can not tell you the entire plan, but just know that it is very simple, very flexible, and very effective.”

“Just be careful Mr. Malfoy. It takes more than seeing the weakness in your enemy’s plans to defeat him. You also have to find a way to use those weaknesses when you stand against and fight him.”

‘I know full well what it takes to defeat your enemies at their own games. I think I’m beginning to see why the other three houses seem to detest Snape, he really can be annoying when he feels off guard.’ Draco kept those last thoughts hidden deep in his mind.

Harry watched the last seconds of class slowly tick by on his wrist. He had been anxious all day for his detention with Draco to begin. As the class headed for the doors and freedom until tomorrow, Harry was consumed with only one thought. All he had to do was make it through dinner, an hour or so of homework and then he would be able to be with Draco again, alone. The day had passed as slowly as any Harry could remember, with the exception of the few classes he had with Draco, of course. It seemed that even just being in the same room with him, pretending not to be able to stand each other, was enough joy in Harry’s life for father time to speed up and get Harry back to being apart from Draco, at least physically. Harry had considered it his own personal stand against every outside force keeping him and Draco apart to keep Draco on his mind as much as possible. Not that he could have not thought about him all day long anyway, but you have to start somewhere and Harry could think of more than a few places he wanted to start.

Harry was still taken aback slightly by the way his brain seemed intent on turning every thought about Draco, and even most of the few that weren’t, into something with overtly sexual meaning.

“Harry, you ready to go? We’ve got Quidditch trials today; we’d better get down to the pitch before the people trying out. Have to make a good impression and everything.”

Snapping out of making his mental list of ‘the many ways to make Draco scream tonight’, Harry jumped to his feet, hoping his robes would conceal any evidence of what his mind was running through as possibilities. “Right, I almost forgot. Let’s go.”

Walking with Ron out to the field lockers, Harry wondered again, when would be a good time to tell his friend about Draco and him. The answer was always simple, never. But Harry knew it would not stay quiet for long in Hogwarts as soon as someone saw or figured it out, and knew he did not want Ron finding out about it from someone else passing on a bit of gossip. Deciding that right before meeting with a large group of people would not be good, except for all the witnesses, Harry planned on telling Ron after dinner. Possibly.

Harry doubted he would find the courage tonight, but he swore to himself that it would be soon.

Harry realized it had been way too long since he'd played Quidditch. The better part of two years if you did not count the first game of last season where he got banned from Quidditch.

Grabbing his broom, he flew instantly thirty feet above the goalposts and swooped back down, a streak against the sky, to stop right in front of his fellow Gryffindors, both old and new.

“All right, everyone who played last term come by me and then we'll see what positions we need to fill.”

When only Ron and Ginny came up beside him, he groaned to himself. “Did everyone else finish from Hogwarts last year?”

“Um, actually, most of them did.” Ginny whispered in Harry's ear.

Sighing, Harry looked out at all the mostly first years waiting for their chance to show what they had. “Neville? Are you trying out for the team?”

“And why shouldn't he try if he wants to? Honestly Harry, I thought better of you than this.” Harry and Ron were taken aback by the quick defense that Ginny had jumped to for Neville.

“It's not like that at all, really. I was just a little surprised, I didn't know he was interested. Sorry Neville, I didn't mean anything by it.”

“It's okay, Harry.” Neville was nearly as scarlet as Harry's Quidditch robes, but had a huge smile on his face after seeing Ginny jump all over Harry just over his feelings, though he personally felt about the same as Harry. ‘I can't believe I let her talk me into this, doesn't she know me enough to not trust me on a broomstick around other people?’

Ron was still looking back and forth from Ginny to Neville trying to figure out what in the world was going on, first he and Hermione, and now Ginny was standing up for Neville and the two were sharing a definite look now that was more than a simple thanks between friends.

Harry looked out again at the students and sighed heavily, not caring if anyone heard the exasperation in it. This is going to take awhile. This is going to be a long year. Suddenly feeling that he could empathize with Oliver Wood, Harry frowned. Anytime he could see things from that point of view, he knew it was going to be bad.

Draco sat staring at the parchment in front of him. 'What do I say? I don't want them to know I'm close to Harry yet but I don't want to make it look too hard to do.'

Father,
I hope this finds you well.
I got your letter and read everything it contained.
Everything here goes well and as planned, I have found things a little more difficult than I had figured yet I am still making headway. I hope to soon make you proud of me.

Your son, Draco

"Short and to the point, doesn't give either of them more info than I want them to know."

Deciding it was good enough, Draco rolled up the letter and tied it to the leg of his father's favorite owl. "Take this directly to my father, no one else."

Looking at his watch he saw that it was just shy of seven thirty. He was really wanting to scream, the day had taken so long already. He found himself really missing Harry. He needed to have the other boy tell him it would be okay, he needed to be held. "Now that's a new feeling."

Draco wondered briefly how long he had been talking to himself out loud and if that was mentally healthy or not.

Harry sat across from Ron in the Gryffindor common room waiting for what he thought was the right time. 'I have to tell him before I go tonight.' Swallowing his fear, Harry spoke to his friend. "Hey Ron, can I talk to you for a sec."

Ron looked up from his Transfiguration homework, grateful for a distraction. "Sure thing Harry, what is it?"

"Actually, can we go up to the room, I need to tell you in private." Looking apprehensive, Ron rose from his chair and headed for the stairs. Once they were both in the room, Harry looked squarely at his friend. "I thought that you deserved a fair warning before it started circulating around school somehow." Harry watched Ron's face for a reaction, but saw his friend only looking uncomfortable. "She told you, didn't she?"

"Only cause I made her Harry. I could tell something was wrong and bothered her till she gave in to shut me up."

"Oh, well. . .look, I wanted to tell you incase you wanted to talk about it, or talk me out of it."

With a look of hope spreading across his face, Ron asked, "Do you want me to talk you out of it?"

“Not really. But you’re welcome to try. Thing is, I really am falling for him and I think he’s falling for me.”

“Harry, I know you never listen to anything I ever say anyway, but how do you know he can be trusted like this? How do you know that it’s not all a part of some scheme to get you fucking killed? How?”

“I...I don’t, okay. All I do know is that last night was the first time in years, years Ron, that I felt happy and peaceful and safe. Can you believe that? Draco Malfoy made me feel the safest I ever have. I don’t know how, but I just know I can trust him. If there was some secret plan involving him and me, he would tell me.” Harry knew his voice sounded as pleading as Ginny’s when she was trying to convince her parents about something.

“I just don’t like it. And I just don’t like him. And I just don’t understand why it had to be Malfoy. Merlin, Harry, he calls Hermione a mud blood every chance he gets, he’s a bastard and I don’t see how I could ever not hate him for who he is!”

“And just exactly who is he Ron? He doesn’t even know anymore.” Harry paced around the room for a few moments, trying to gather his thoughts. There was a good way to put what he wanted to say, and there was a way that was sure to piss Ron off even more. Harry was hoping for the first option. “I know he’s been a complete bastard to you and Hermione...”

“And you.”

“...but a lot changed for him this Summer, and he really seems like he is trying to be a better person. Please Ron, just give him a chance, please? I know you two are bitter enemies and all, but could you please try to ignore him if he hangs around us some?”

Sighing heavily, Ron gave in to his friends wish. “Only because you look so pathetic. And if Malfoy does the same.”

“I’m planning on talking to him tonight during detention.”

“You have to spend another night doing detention just for being late to one class?”

“Yeah, but it’s really just an excuse for us to research something for Dumbledore. We’re trying to find these runes that have basically been forgotten.” Harry told Ron how futile the search had been the night before, and how they were stuck in there until they found it, thankful for the distraction from the real topic of their discussion.

“You should probably let me and Hermione help in our spare time. Do you have the runes with you?”

“Yeah.” Reaching into his bag on his bed, Harry pulled out the scroll they were written on. “That would be great of you guys. Thanks.”

“That’s why we’re friends. Besides, Hermione’s been dying for some extra work to do.” Ron was smiling, enjoying the time with Harry. He had worried that the gay thing would make it weird

between them, especially the fact that he was falling for Draco, but it seemed it would be alright. “Maybe Malfoy will turn out all right. Well, I won’t count on it, but there’s always hope, right? I guess I can try to at least be cordial to him. Unless he hurts you, Harry, and then I’ll kill him. But he gives me one reason to hit him and I will, or curse him. One and I get free reign.”

“You know he’ll retaliate if you do.”

“Maybe once.” Ron grinned confidently at his best friend. “Seriously though, Harry. I’ll give this a try if Malfoy promises to never use mud blood again, or call me Weaselby, or any of the things that makes him such an annoying git.”

“I told you I’d talk to him tonight, didn’t I? Please Ron, I promise you, just give him a chance and you might find you can stand him more than you think.” Harry glanced at his wrist and realized he had to run or he’d be late. “I have to go, but I’ll see you in the morning. Don’t wait up for me though, cause I’ll probably be in there all night.”

“Okay Harry, good luck! And be careful.”

Smiling at his friend, Harry rushed down the stairs to get to the library. Ron sat down on his bed and wondered how he was going to be able to do this for Harry.

“Well, if Harry found something worth caring at all for, I can at least try to be in the same room as the git.” Ron doubted his own ability to forgive and forget all the things Malfoy had done over the years to him and the two people that meant the world to him. He doubted it was possible, but he knew he would always do anything Harry asked.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Seven - Giving In

Disclaimer - I neither own nor make any money off of the Harry Potter Juggernaut.

A/N - This chapter contains possibly one of the worst warnings: Het. I'm sorry. So very sorry. Well, maybe not that sorry...

Draco was waiting for Harry by the library door with barely concealed anxiety. "My God, I was thinking you'd forgotten about me. Where have you been?" He burst out as soon as he saw Harry at the top of the stairs next to the library.

"Thinking about you." Harry said with a smile, walking towards Draco in with what he hoped was a sexy way, thinking he would either turn him on or make him laugh, hoping it would be the first. The last thing on Draco's mind was laughing as Harry walked right up to him, stopping a inch away from the other boy. "I had the hardest. . ." Harry pretended to think for the right word as he brought his face even closer to Draco's, "time getting you off of my mind."

Draco could feel the heat of Harry's breath on his own lips, wishing he would kiss him, needing to taste him on his mouth again. As Harry drew as close to Draco as possible without actually touching, he suddenly felt the slightest hesitation. Sensing Harry withdrawing from the contact the he desperately needed, Draco felt two emotions rise powerfully in him at once, the first was an intense despair wondering what Harry had seen to make him pull away. The next was a desperate hunger. He pushed Harry away from him and turned in to the library. "We have things to be doing, Potter. Don't get carried away."

Staring after Draco, Harry stood silent for a few moments, wonder what the hell that had been about? Shaking his head, Harry followed Draco's lead. When they got to the restricted section they found Professor McGonagall waiting for them, looking very impatient. "I was about to come and fetch you both! Please be prompt from now on, I do have other priorities demanding my time."

"Sorry, Professor." Both boys said together.

"Well, get to it then. Please try to look through more than one book tonight. I have a charm to help you search through the books for certain words without opening them, so you can see if they have any possible information before you take them off the shelf."

"Well that could have come in handy last night." Draco let the sarcastic remark hang in the air, wishing he had kept it to himself. The sooner McGonagall left, the happier he would be, and smarting off to her was only going to spur more lectures.

"Mr. Malfoy! In all my ye. . ."

"I'm sorry Professor, I'm just tired from last night and anxious to get started so we can be done with this." Draco interrupted what he was sure was going to be a long lecture on the history of students

that had never smarted off in such a way.

Looking a little shocked that Malfoy would say anything that was not meant to steam her up, Professor McGonagall simply let it go. "Well, I guess you two are having a positive influence on each other. You boys had better start working. I wrote the charm down on the list of runes that was left in here last night."

Draco waited until he heard the door shut before he walked over to stand next to Harry. "I don't suppose you could go for a break already, could you?"

Harry, still being a little miffed about being blown off in the hallway, responded in as harsh a tone as his aroused body could muster, "We need to get this done, Malfoy. Can't you control yourself? Try not to get 'carried away'."

"Fine, Potter. Let's just get this over with as soon as possible." Draco wondered when they had gone back to using surnames. He liked calling Harry by his first name and he loved the way Harry said his.

"The less time I spend in here getting influenced by you, the better." Draco stormed into the first aisle of books and started thumbing through the first book he could grab a hold of.

Harry just started laughing. In a matter of seconds Harry was doubled over, holding his stomach and turning bright red from uncontrollable laughter.

"I fail to see what's so funny!" Draco huffed coming out of the aisle to once again stand in front of Harry. This only made Harry laugh harder when he caught a glimpse of Draco's face.

With arms crossed and face in a serious scowl, Draco stared Harry down out of his laughing fit. "I'm sorry Draco, it's just. . ." Harry paused for breath, gasping slightly and trying to recover. "It's just that I've never noticed how adorable you are when you get so upset."

"I am not adorable!" Draco pouted, stomping his foot down in anger. This was the end for Harry, who had been trying not to laugh again. Seeing Draco pout and stomp his foot sent him straight over the edge and he just started laughing even harder.

Deciding he'd had quite enough of it, Draco walked over to Harry, took his head in his hands and kissed him full on the mouth. The kiss was at first awkward, but as Harry's laughter died down he relaxed into Draco's lips, opening his mouth a little to let Draco's tongue slide against the front of his teeth. He could feel the soft tongue brushing its way across his mouth and then slip from the teeth to his own tongue. Allowing himself to probe back, Harry pushed Draco's tongue back into his mouth and then began running his tongue along Draco's perfectly straight teeth. Harry brought his hand up to either side of Draco and rested them on his hips while the hands that had held his head started to fall to his shoulders.

Running out of air, because he had forgotten to breathe, Harry pulled away finally from Draco. He looked into the other boy's eyes and searched for the haven he had found in them over the past few days. Draco, too, was exploring the world he had found in Harry. His heart was beating like it had never before and his mind was racing with a thousand happily ever after tales. Then as Harry caught movement out of the corner of his eye, he looked past Draco and nearly screamed. He jumped a

foot away from Draco, who looked slightly put out until he noticed they were not alone.

All three of the people standing in the middle aisle were stunned beyond words. They just kept staring at each other, looking from one person to the other. Deciding that the situation couldn't get any worse, unless they all froze in place, Draco spoke up.

"Professor, we didn't. . .hear. . .I thought that. . .oh God."

"I'm sorry boys, I should have knocked or something, I just didn't think that, well. . .I mean that, uh." Finding that putting his thoughts together was as hard as it had been for Draco, Remus just gave into his shock.

They all went back to just staring at each other until another voice spoke up from around the corner. "Well, I know this is the library, but you don't have to be so quiet when no one else is around." Sirius came drifting from behind his friend, but stopped when he saw the looks on Harry and Draco's faces.

"I guess you figured some stuff out on your own then, Harry?" Sirius knew there could be only one reason for such an awkward scene. Remus had walked in on the boys doing who knows what.

"Sirius! That was between you and me."

"Well, I think it's obvious that there are now four of us who are aware you have feelings for young Mr. Malfoy here." At these words Harry turned even redder and Draco actually flushed with color.

'So Harry's been getting love advice from his God-father, and he's been getting it in regards to me. I wonder what Sirius thinks about Harry being with me?' Draco thought to himself.

"Hey, Remus! Snap out of it. Jeez you'd think you'd never seen two people kiss before." Sirius was standing in front of his friend who's color was returning to the healthy flesh color it had been earlier in the day. "We were at school once too you know, not like we never saw two kids fall for each other."

'Well, I guess that answers that question.' Draco laughed quietly under his breath. Figuring it would be easier to just be a spectator at this point, he did not say another word for a few minutes.

Harry finally found his voice, although it was noticeably very shaky. "Professor Lupin, I'm sorry, I. . ."

Sirius seemed the only one in the room who could actually say what he was thinking instead of getting jumbled up somewhere between his brain and his mouth.

"No, Harry. Don't apologize for anything. It was just a bit of a shock seeing the two of you, um, together, and in the Library. And how many times do I have to tell you to drop the Professor Lupin stuff outside of class, which by the way, Draco, I would prefer that if you hang around a lot with Harry that you not call me by anything other than Remus outside of class."

"Okay, Remus." Draco looked extremely uncomfortable with the thought of calling a professor by his first name.

“Look, guys. It’s none of my business, but if you are going to keep doing that with each other than you might want to start using a little precaution about where you are.”

Harry felt his face going hot again. He could not believe he was facing this all in one day. First Hermione finds he and Draco tangled together on the floor asleep and now Remus finds them mauling each other in the restricted section. “Sounds like a good idea, I’m not big on the idea of the whole school knowing that The Harry Potter and his arch rival have kissed and made up.”

“It would complicate things slightly, as far as Hogwarts goes; but I don’t even want to think about what would happen once they all told their parents and the entire Wizarding World was soon aflame with rumor and innuendo about the possible corrupting of The-Boy-Who-Lived by that nasty son of Lucius Malfoy.” Draco said dryly, all too aware of how people would revel in such news.

“Something along those lines, yes. Anyway, just be careful okay?”

“Yeah, no problem. I can only feel Harry up when I’m sure no one will find us.”

“Damn it Draco, stop talking so casually about it. All of you are a little too open to talking about my sex life like it’s no big deal.” Harry was getting tired of everyone being open about what he found a private thing. Deciding it was time for a huge change of subject, Harry finally heard the question his mind had been wondering since he had seen Remus behind Draco. “Hold on, what were you doing in here anyway?”

“We came in to see if we could help you boys out before Moony here went to bed.”

“We really did not mean to interrupt or upset you Harry, I’m sorry. We’ll just go now, but please boys, be careful. I just don’t want you to have to deal with something so trivial on top of fighting a war. Good night and good luck.” Professor and ghost both left without another word, but giving encouraging smiles.

When the door shut, Draco walked around the entire library checking every aisle and every inch before returning to Harry with a devious glint in his eyes. “I think we’re alone now.”

Harry returned the smile. “You have something in mind behind those evil eyes?”

“As a matter of fact, I was planning on calling your promise from this morning. I believe you owe me one amazing bathing experience.”

“I don’t remember the whole amazing part, are you sure that’s what I promised?”

“Of course. Well it may be a slight assumption, but I have high hopes for your abilities.” Harry blushed even further under Draco’s gaze and compliments. “Shall we head to that prefect bathroom then?”

“I’ve been waiting all day to hear you say that.”

“You don’t think they’d do anything in the library do you?”

“Oh, really Ron. Why are you so obsessed with what Harry and Draco may or may not be doing in the library. You haven’t even paid the slightest bit of attention to the girl laying beside you. On. Your. Bed.” Hermione allowed a small amount of the frustration she was feeling seep into her voice. “One would think it strange that a guy would be more concerned with what his friend and his friend’s boyfriend were doing, rather than trying to figure out what he could be doing to his own girlfriend!”

Ron looked down and seemed to notice Hermione for the first, resting her body fully against his side. “Oh. What do you mean by figuring out what I could be doing to you?”

“Why don’t you just try something and I’ll tell you if that’s what I meant.”

Ron leaned his head down and kissed Hermione’s forehead gently. Rolling to his side he kissed his way down her cheeks to her mouth. “How’s this for a start?” Without waiting for an answer Ron kissed Hermione deeply. They had been doing this quite often in the last few days, and Ron knew his way around her mouth. Deciding to take a step he hadn’t been brave enough for yet, Ron ran his fingers along her back till he reached the end of the fabric of the shirt Hermione was wearing. Then slipping his hand underneath it, continued to stroke her back with his finger tips.

A soft moan from Hermione’s mouth that was still locked with his was all the answer Ron needed.

Grabbing hold of the shirt, Ron pulled it up and over Hermione’s head. Taking a moment to look at her exposed skin, Ron decided there were many things he could figure out to do with her. Not wasting another second Ron started licking down Hermione’s neck until he reached fabric again just above her right nipple. Clumsily finding the back of her bra, Ron kept kissing and licking her exposed chest until Hermione reached around herself and undid the clasp.

“Thanks.” Ron muttered into her skin. Slipping the bra down her arms and discarding it alongside her shirt Ron rolled himself fully on top of Hermione. Pressing his erection into her through his pants and her skirt, Ron settled against her to continue his assault on her chest, allowing his fingers and hands to explore on their own freewill and concentrating on sucking gently on first one and then the other breast.

Hermione pulled of Ron’s shirt and ran her arms on his back, feeling the muscles that robes were good at hiding from her view. She opened her legs more and wrapped them around Ron’s middle allowing him to grind into her with more ease. Moving her hands between them she felt for the buckle of his pants and released them. Putting them on either side of Ron’s hips she pushed down on both his pants and his boxers, now anxious to see what else she’d been unable to fully appreciate underneath robes.

Before she could get them down though, they heard the door open and two voices arguing over the advantages of soccer and Quidditch. They both laid absolutely quiet, thankful they had somehow thought to close the bed curtains around the four poster bed.

“Do you figure Ron’s asleep, I bet he could see the reason behind why soccer has it’s better qualities than some of the faults in Quidditch.”

“You know mate, it’s been six years and Ron has never, ever taken your side against Quidditch, and you know he never will.”

“Yeah, you’re probably right. Are you tired, cause I really could fall asleep where I stand.”

“Me too.”

Ron moaned softly in defeat. They couldn’t very well do anything with Seamus and Dean in the room. Looking down at the desperation reflected in Hermione’s eyes, he really wanted to have nothing more than his own room or at least ten more minutes alone. “I guess that’s it for tonight then.” Ron whispered into Hermione’s neck.

“Ron, don’t you ever read? There are silencing charms we could easily cast and other ways of keeping your roommates from hearing or seeing us.” Hermione was talking in her most condescending voice, but even Ron caught on to the playfulness in her tone and eyes.

“Really? I could kiss you!” Ron looked about as excited as a five year old at Christmas who has just come downstairs to find Santa loading the room with everything he had asked for.

Pulling out her wand and pointing them at the curtains, she rattled off a few charms and gave them a test. “I had rather hoped you’d do more than that.” She spoke in a voice loud enough to be heard by everyone in the room, but no one said anything in response.

“Hey Seamus and Dean!” When no one answered Ron’s call, they both looked satisfied with the results.

Returning to where they had left off, Hermione had Ron out of his clothes in under a minute. The rest of Hermione’s clothes followed soon and found Ron and her laying together naked. “So I guess I’ve come up with a few good things so far?”

“I’d say so.” Hermione smiled, feeling almost as giddy as she did nervous. As much as she had hoped for this moment to come, she now felt a small bit of fear rising inside her gut. She did not doubt that she wanted to share this part of her with Ron, there was no one else in the world she could imagine more worthy. For a brief moment she just wondered if she was ready to go so far at that exact moment.

Moving one hand down to his erection, Ron positioned it against Hermione’s opening. “Are you sure about us doing this? We’re not moving too fast, are we?”

The concern she saw in Ron’s eyes, that was mixing with the same fears and excitement she was feeling, removed any doubts and she slowly nodded. “Probably, but I’ve never wanted something so bad in my life.”

Without another word and staring into each other’s eyes, Ron and Hermione joined together in the act of making love.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Eight - More Giving In

Disclaimer - I neither own, nor make any money off of the Harry Potter Juggernaut.

The two boys snuck down the halls and back to the Prefect's bathroom. Once inside, Draco walked to the bathtub and turned every knob he could find to watch a variety of contents spill into the massive tub. "I wonder if this is all magic or if it has to be filled all the time," Draco thought aloud, "I can't believe no one's ever told us Slytherin prefects about this room."

"It's not that surprising if you think about it. You are in the house that everyone loves to hate." Harry smiled at his obvious reasoning, wondering if Draco had not really already guessed as much.

"Yeah, I'd pretty much assumed that was why."

"Well, I say that we make up for your lost time." Harry was slipping out of his robe, revealing his t-shirt clad torso and jean clad legs. Before the robe had fallen completely, Harry had kicked his shoes under it. "Can you think of anything that could possibly help you get over missing out on this place for over a year?"

Shedding his robe and shoes Draco replied, "I'm sure I could really try hard."

Once his robe lay on the floor, Harry took in the sight of the other boy wearing a tight white undershirt and fitted slacks. Both just stood and stared at each other for a few minutes before Harry walked towards Draco.

"You realize that you can't ever enjoy that bath with your clothes on, right?" Draco just watched Harry draw closer, and did not respond other than to nod his head once. He could feel pressure building against his pants and knew that whatever Harry was trying, it was working. "I'll have to make sure nothing happens to those pants, I've never seen pants fit someone like that."

Harry now stood directly in front of Draco. "Happy to see me?"

Harry brushed his hand against Draco's growing erection before unbuttoning and unzipping his pants. When the pants hit the floor, Draco stepped out of them and watched Harry pick them up and fold them neatly, placing them on top of his robe. Then Harry began raising the undershirt till he had lifted it off Draco's shoulders then head. Taking a moment to admire his work, Harry looked Draco over as he stood in nothing but socks and a pair of Spongebob Squarepants boxers. Harry started laughing, at first leaving Draco to think it was something with his body, then before he could really get upset about anything, Harry calmed down enough to gasp out, "Spongebob?"

Realizing what was so funny all of a sudden, Draco was first relieved and then embarrassed. "Well, I happen to have found the goodness that is Nickelodeon Cartoons this summer when I would hide in the nearby town. Some of the Muggle kids watched it."

"I understand, I've only caught a little bit of it before, Uncle Vernon doesn't think it proper to watch anything silly and American in the house. Still, though, I never expected to find that on your boxers."

Both stood smiling for a moment, then Draco decided he was tired of looking and not touching. "Harry, you don't suppose you could pick up where you left off?"

"Right, sorry." Harry moved closer to Draco and placed his mouth on Draco's shoulder just below his neck; kissing his way across till he reached his forearm. Slowly moving his hands down Draco's stomach to the elastic band of his boxers, Harry drew a few small moans out of his mouth. He placed his fingers inside of the boxers and began pulling down and away from the boy in front of him.

When he got to Draco's erection, he teased it through the fabric. Looking up to see a reaction on Draco's face, Harry decided it was time to stop playing and give in to the feelings and desires he had denied for too long. Pushing the boxers to the floor, then pulling off the socks Harry looked up at the naked boy in front of him.

"You are over dressed for the occasion." Draco said, looking down at Harry's very clothed body. "If you don't mind, I'd really like to not be the only one standing here naked, it's just not fair. I can't see yours, but you can definitely see mine."

Laughing a little, Harry asked, "What are you, ten?" Making an innocent face and raising his voice Harry mocked, "I'll show you mine if you show me yours."

"Funny."

"I thought so at least."

"Damn it Harry, you can really be annoying sometimes."

Remembering that game time had passed, Harry pulled his shirt off. 'Thank-you Quidditch practice!' Draco wanted to touch every bit of the muscular body Harry was now displaying, trying to figure out how robes could hide that much sexy body. He was about to reach out and touch Harry but was stopped by Harry undoing his pants and pulling them down with his boxers. "Oh no you don't." Draco bent down and pulled Harry's boxers from the pile on the floor. "You are going to laugh at my boxers, while the whole time yours have tiger print on them? Feeling frisky there, Harry?"

Turning red, Harry grabbed them out of Draco's hands and threw on top of his jeans. "Just shut up. I had assumed that what you wanted to see was not on my boxers, but in them."

Stepping away from their clothes both boys stood naked admiring the other. "I'm getting a little cold. You mind if we get in now?"

"Sure."

The warmth of the water engulfed them each as they lowered themselves into it. Draco let himself go completely under before surfacing and slicking his hair back. Harry let the warmth seep into his body, relaxing all the stiff muscles, except one. After a few seconds of enjoying the water, the boys moved closer to each other. Neither stopped moving when they're erections brushed each other and then pushed into the others leg. They kept drawing closer until they were pressing as much of

themselves together as possible. Draco bent in for a kiss, moving his tongue across Harry's top lip. Now it was Harry's turn to moan as the tongue moved into his mouth, exploring everywhere it could maneuver.

When they had both run out of breath they broke apart. Harry began slowly moving down Draco's body, rubbing against him as he kissed his way down to his neck, then his chest. When Harry reached the water he looked up at Draco and smiled his best mischievous grin, before mumbling something under his breath and going underwater.

He continued kissing his way down the stomach and to the waist. Then when Draco figured he'd come up for breath, Harry ran his tongue along the bottom of his erection. Shuddering slightly from the sensation, Draco was unprepared for Harry taking him into his mouth. Halfway down Draco's erection Harry stopped then pulled away. He kept working a little more in at a time until he felt Draco start to buck against him a little.

Moving only slightly up and down, Harry began sucking on the erection in his mouth like it was his favorite sweet in the world. Draco grabbed the ledge of the tub behind him, and let Harry drive him towards an orgasm. He could feel it getting near, but Harry stopped. Coming out of the water, Harry smiled at Draco.

"How's that for a start?"

"It would have been better if it'd had a finish." Draco breathed deeply, shaking a little from the unreleased tension he felt in his body now.

"I stopped because I wanted you to really get a good orgasm tonight."

Suddenly realizing that Harry had stayed under for far too long, Draco looked at him. "How in the world did you stay down there so long?"

"Actually, just a little trick I learned after the last time I was in here."

Not wanting to push any further for the story, because he was worried they would just start talking, Draco let it go at that. Harry was right up against Draco again, breathing in the different soaps from the water. Draco reached under the water until he found Harry's erection. Wrapping his hand around it he began pumping it slowly, watching Harry's eyes close slightly and hearing another soft groan from those beautiful lips. Reaching with his other hand Draco began stroking Harry's scrotum, eliciting more moans and causing Harry to begin thrusting into Draco's hand. When Draco felt the balls in his hand began to tense he stopped and just held the other boy in his hands. He leaned in and kissed Harry on the chin and then deeply on the mouth. While he kissed him he began working the erection in his hands very gently, making sure to drag out the sensation as long as possible.

Pressing himself against Harry, Draco applied a little more pressure to his grip and felt Harry moan into his mouth. Pulling away from him just before Harry could release his load, Draco took a deep breath and went under water. He took Harry into his mouth and began sucking hard and desperately. It took nearly nothing and Harry was pushed over the edge, shooting his cum into the back of Draco's throat and filling his mouth up quickly.

Draco kept sucking until Harry quit shooting, then burst to the surface gasping for air.

Resting his entire body against the side of the tub, Harry watched Draco move back towards him. "Damn." It was all Harry could think or find the strength to say. Draco smirked a little, but soon just rested beside Harry. It had been tough to stay under water so long, but he had been rewarded for his efforts, Harry looked like he'd just had the weight of the world lifted off of him. After a few minutes of them both just relaxing in the water beside each other, Harry looked over and saw that Draco was still very much turned on.

'I did that.' Harry laughed to himself over the idea of someone pointing at a hard cock and congratulating themselves for a job well done.

"You need me to finish what I started, Drac?"

"Did you just call me Drac?"

"Did I?"

"Yeah."

"Oh, well is that okay?"

"I guess, but not in front of anyone, ever."

Smiling, Harry reached over and began stroking on the erection that had not even gone down at all after a few minutes of no attention. "Let me help you with this."

Harry turned in toward Draco and began jacking his hand up and down the shaft, occasionally squeezing the head to get a desperate moan from Draco.

"Wait, Harry." Draco pulled himself out of the water and sat on the side with Harry between his legs getting a great view of his erection. "Can I watch you this time?"

"If that's how you get off, then don't let me get in the way." Harry moved in between his legs and placed his mouth against the head, giving it a small kiss. Then licking his way down and up a few times, he got Draco to get a little harder and more turned on. Taking the other boy fully into his mouth, Harry began to move his head over Draco's penis. When Draco began pushing into Harry, his erection was slipping down Harry's throat. Refusing to let himself gag, Harry kept sucking and allowing Draco to fuck his mouth. Harry felt a wave of movement coursing through Draco's body a second before he was choking on the wave after wave of cum that Draco was unleashing into his mouth.

"Damn." Draco echoed Harry's sentiment from minutes before.

Both boys collapsed with the pleasure of release. Harry pulled himself out next to Draco and lay beside him long enough to not be sure how long they'd been there.

"I guess we should probably get back to the library before someone comes to check on us and finds

us gone.”

“Yeah, I guess so. Hey, Harry.”

“What, Drac?”

“You are amazing, thank you.”

“Well, I do try my best. After all, being a legend means you have to be able to keep it up in all areas.”

“Shut up.” Draco chuckled.

Getting up, both boys jumped back into the water and rinsed off before climbing back out to dry off.

“Um, Harry?”

“Yeah.”

“You don’t happen to have brought any towels with you would you?”

“Crap! I knew I would forget something. Sorry.”

Looking around the room Draco suddenly realized that not only were there no towels, but there were no pieces of cloth in the room. “Damn it Harry, where did you put my clothes at, I need my robe to dry off with.”

Spinning around from the sink Harry asked, “What do you mean where did I put your clothes? I didn’t touch them, I was a little preoccupied for the last little while. Everything’s right where. . .we. . .laid. . .oh, shit! Where are our clothes?”

Tearing around the room lead neither boy to their clothes. Finding them nowhere, Draco began to think of what could have happened, then it dawned on him. “Harry, you don’t happen to know if the house elves provide laundry service to the prefects do you?”

“Why would that matter?”

“Because, they come and take away any dirty clothes they find.”

“They didn’t last time I was in here.”

A chuckle came from the picture on the far wall. The mermaid in it was laughing to herself. “I saw them come and take your things, they asked and I said you were done with them. Last time you were in here Harry Potter you had been invited, but not this time.”

“You’ve got to be kidding me!”

“That’s a really brilliant way of catching someone who’s been in here when they’re not supposed to be. Hard to miss a naked student walking around.” Draco said with a slight laugh, and a little awe in his voice. “I am impressed.”

Harry looked at Draco with the least bit of interest in the brilliance of the idea. “Draco, we’re the naked students now. How on earth will we be able to go back to our dorms and back to the library without being noticed by someone?”

“I’m not sure. At least you don’t have far to go though, I have to go all the way back to the dungeons. Lucky it’s so late in the night. Filch should really be all we have to worry about.”

Harry thought this over for a second and then said, “Well, you look about my size, so I suppose you could come with me and wear some of my clothes, and Filch is more than enough to worry about on his own. I just hope Dumbledore doesn’t come strolling along to see how we’re doing.”

“Well, we could always say we’re doing fine. I know I feel better than I have in a very long time. Thanks for the offer of your clothes too, I’ll do anything to avoid those drafts in the dungeon while I’m in the buff.”

After emptying the tub, they walked to the door and carefully peered down both sides of the hall before stepping out into the corridor. Darting from one statue or doorway to another, they eventually got to the stairs leading to Gryffindor Tower. There was no cover at all on the stairs and they would be easily seen by anyone on either floor, but both were willing to risk it to get to where there were clothes. Darting up the stairs as fast as they could in bare feet and still being able to look around the floor above, they nearly tripped over Mrs. Norris sitting quietly on the next to top stair. With a screech and a hiss she dashed off to find Filch. “Oh, shit. We’d better run or he’ll catch us.”

“Harry wait, what if we run right into someone?”

“We have to chance it, unless you want to explain the that old mean fool what we’re doing together in the halls naked and not in the library serving detention.”

With a slight nod Draco saw the logic in Harry’s reasoning, “Good point, run!”

They did not look back or say another word, just charged at full sprint until they reached the fat lady in the picture. “Password pl. . .oh my, well aren’t you two just adorable. Streaking around school I suppose.”

“Something like that, look we really need to get in before we get caught. Abracadabra.” Harry spoke the password, Draco snorted at the word, and the picture swung open letting Draco and Harry cautiously step into the Gryffindor Common room.

“Everyone’s asleep, thank Merlin.” Harry walked straight for his room with Draco on his heels. When they got inside and closed the door they both sighed their relief and had to cover their mouth to not start laughing when they looked at each other.

“Well, that was close. I can’t believe we made it back without getting caught.”

“Shh. Keep it down I don’t want anyone waking up and asking why the two students who hate each other the most are standing naked in a room laughing at each other.”

“What’s with that amazing password.” Draco asked with a new wave of barely contained laughter. “Do you let the first year mudbloods pick it out or something.”

Harry looked at Draco with a hurt look and said very stiffly, “First off, never use that word around me again, especially when talking about someone, and second, Neville made us change it from Slytherin sucks yesterday, for some reason. You should have seen him carrying on about how we all should be as willing to help people in the other houses as we are to help our own. I’ve never seen him so set on something. It was weird.”

“Really? Well I guess my advice has been paying off then.”

“You’ve been giving Neville advice? When?” Harry looked skeptically at Draco with one eyebrow raised.

“Harry, I like you and all but please leave the facial expressions to me, you look ridiculous.” Draco laughed quietly. “I’ve been giving Neville little bits here and there when I see him in the third floor bathroom everyday when I check my hair.” Draco tried to make it sound as vain a coincidence as he could, though he knew he really only stopped there everyday because he had taken on the challenge of getting Neville and the Weasel’s sister together. He’d even started mentioning things under his breath so she could hear about how much Neville was standing up to him and how it was much harder to intimidate him lately.

Shaking his head, Harry turned back to getting clothes and getting dressed. “Well that certainly explains why he’s been acting so strange lately. Just don’t use his trust for something amusing, and I mean it, you’ve done enough to him over the last few years.

“Okay, okay. Harry, do you think we have to grab clothes and rush right back to the library? Your bed looks pretty comfortable, and you look pretty sexy standing naked in the dark.”

“Yes we do, now here, put these on and let’s go before McGonagall finds us missing.”

“Okay, fine. You can’t blame me for trying to get off with you twice in one night,”

“Shh. I don’t want anyone to hear you, now let’s go.”

After fully getting dressed they headed down the stairs and back out the door. After safely getting back to the library and finding it still empty, they relaxed and resumed their search for the runes twisted together on the floor.

Neither seemed willing to move out of the embrace they were sharing. Neither had moved since collapsing together after sharing their first intimate night with each other, their first night with anyone. Ron looked down at the frizzy ball of hair on his chest that was Hermione, wondering how it was that he got here. Not only had he and Hermione finally admit they loved each other and had given into it, they had shared everything of themselves now. They were bonded like he had never been with anyone ever in his life.

Sure, he would die for Harry to save his friend's life, but he would do that for Hermione and do anything she asked without question. A smile was spreading widely across Ron's face and he was just about to tell Hermione again how much he loved her and how much he'd dreamt of this moment when they could just lay together and hold each other, when the door to their room opened and he heard two voices talking. He couldn't make out the words, but he knew who they were without a problem. Harry and Malfoy.

Hermione looked up at Ron with a question on her face. "I don't know what he's doing in here, or why he brought Malfoy along in to Gryffindor Tower." Ron answered as if he had read her question on her forehead.

"I'll just remove the silencing charms from around the bed and then we can hear better, course then they'll be able to hear us too."

"We'll just be quiet then, but I can hear them kind of, do you think the guys heard us at all tonight?"

"No, it only really keeps out sound one way, but muffles it the other way pretty well, that's why we can still slightly hear Harry and Draco."

"Call him Malfoy, Hermione."

Rolling her eyes at Ron, Hermione whispered the charms away and the whispers became clear.

"Harry, do you think we have to grab clothes and rush right back to the library? Your bed looks pretty comfortable, and you look pretty sexy standing naked in the dark."

"Yes we do, now here, put these on and let's go before McGonagall finds us missing."

"Okay, fine. You can't blame me for trying to get off with you twice in one night,"

"Shh. I don't want anyone to hear you, now let's go."

They waited in silence until they were sure no one was coming back. "I told you they were going to do something. What did he mean by Harry looking sexy naked in the dark? Were they naked?"

"Ron, calm down. We don't know anything except they snuck here from detention for some reason."

"Hey, Ron, you and Hermione awake?" Ron froze when he heard Neville's voice. "I just saw something that was much more traumatizing than anything you guys did earlier."

"Oh, Merlin! You heard everything?" Ron called back, sounding as if he were going to cry.

"Well, yeah. I can hear through most silencing charms, sorry. I should have told you, but you were both having such a good time it sounded like, so I just tried to ignore what you were screaming, Ron."

"Neville Longbottom! Why didn't you ever tell us you can hear through silencing charms, we could have figured out something else!" Hermione sounded about ready to give Neville a verbal and

physical beating.

Ron, who was too embarrassed that Neville heard what he was screaming, wanted to change the subject fast. "What was it that you saw though Neville, that was worse?"

"Well, just a few minutes ago, Harry and Draco come in here and they're both naked." Neville jumped right in thankful for a way out of a lecture from Hermione. "And then they start talking about getting off with each other in Harry's bed for the second time tonight and well. . .it was Malfoy and he was naked in my room, and he shagged my roommate. I didn't know Harry was even gay, but now this thing with Malfoy." A shuddering sigh came out from Neville's bunk.

"Yeah, me and Dean were nowhere at all ready for the two of them to come in buck naked and talk about getting off. Why is he going for Malfoy?"

"You guys saw them too?"

"It's rather hard to miss too good looking naked guys when they walk into your room. Ouch! Get over yourself Seamus, I didn't say I wanted to get it on with them, God you're stupid sometimes."

"Thankfully, though, we didn't have to share every experience with Neville tonight. Hello, Hermione." Seamus called out from his bunk, where he was hanging halfway off after smacking Dean in the back of the head. "It's about time you two got it together and got together."

Ron could feel his face burning red with embarrassment. "Well, thanks Seamus, I guess. Hey, how is it that you can hear through silencing charms Neville?"

"It was something both my parents were good at, it's what made them so good at tracking Death Eaters, I guess it just passed on to me. Gran calls it a gift, but so far it's always been a curse if you ask me. You guys aren't the first that I've had to hear."

"Really, who else have you heard doing the nasty?"

"Shut up Seamus." Four voices said at once.

The room stayed silent for a few minutes before someone spoke again.

"So how long have Harry and Malfoy been going at it?"

"Seamus!"

"I'm just wondering if I should up my bet on them, is all..."

"Look, everyone of us has to swear never to say anything about what we saw or heard tonight in this room." Hermione said, standing up from behind Ron's curtains. Ron was not sure when she had gotten dressed again, but cursed the fates that had allowed it. "I need everyone of you to promise you won't say anything to anyone about Harry and Draco, about Harry being gay, and about Neville hearing things through silencing charms."

“What about what he heard?”

“Really, Seamus you are an annoying little git.”

“All of you promise, now.” After hearing everyone, even Ron, say they promised, Hermione left the room.

“So, Ron, you and Hermione, huh? How long you been tappin’ that?”

“Seamus!” Neville and Dean cried at once.

“Oh, you both know you wanted to ask, though I guess Neville knows, seeing as how he’d have heard them every time.”

“Hey, Neville?” Dean asked after a few moments of silence. “Was Draco telling the truth about giving you advice to get with Gin. . .”

“Yes, but shut up will you.” Neville stopped Dean before he could say out loud who he was trying to win over.

“You’ve been taking advice from Malfoy? Well that explains a lot about how weird you’ve been acting lately.” Ron said. “But who are you trying to get with bad enough to listen to that git, you’d better be going for more than just a date, you know what I mean?”

“Uh, well I haven’t really thought of her in that. . .”

“I mean come on, you’d better get something out of her for having to talk to Malfoy just to get her attention, hope she gives you something in bed that’s worth that.” Ron blabbed on ignoring Neville.

Neville couldn’t speak, this was definitely turning into the worst case scenario for asking Ron to not kill him for having asked Ginny out.

“Ron, you might want to just stuff it for a second before you know what you’re blabbing about.” Dean interjected, knowing that now Ron would probably kill Neville because of what he had said himself.

“Oh this is going to be real good.”

Ron looked at Seamus weird, asking the question what will be good with his face, when Neville chimed in quickly as he jumped from his bed and stood by the door. “Ron, I asked Ginny out and she said yes and so now we’re dating and please don’t kill me and I would never think those things about your sister and you were. . .” The rest of the words were lost as Neville ran full speed down the stairs and through the common room.

Ron bolted to his feet. “Did he say Ginny?! I’ll kill him, she’s younger than him, she’s. . .and he’s...” Before Ron could say what exactly Ginny and Neville were he just tore after Neville.

“By Merlin, he can be so dumb sometimes! Come on Seamus, we’d better keep him from killing

Neville and breaking Ginny's heart."

Both boys ran after the other two, having no problems following Neville's terrified squeals down the halls.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Nine - Assumptions

The next few weeks passed by without Harry, Ron, Hermione, and even Draco taking much notice. The four were wrapped up in a world of being together with one of the other teens in the quartet and spending every bit of free time searching for the runes. Harry and Draco had been released from detention after serving a week and promising to keep looking.

Draco was finding it hard to be able to be in a bad mood with anyone when he knew he would see Harry eventually and then everything would be okay. He and Hermione had started a ritual of meeting at the fat lady and then sneaking up to stay the night with Harry and Ron in the boy's dorm. The only thing out of place for Draco was the constant dread of having to tell Harry about the plans Voldemort and his father were both working that involved him getting close to Harry so he could betray him.

He had been writing his father every few days feeding him information about his progress that would line up with everything the other Death Eater children would be reporting to their parents, everything he'd written was of course a lie. It was true that he was getting closer to Harry, but he never let them know just how close he really was and that he was not having any problems at all.

Draco knew that he would have to tell him soon, before Harry found out somehow from someone else. If he did not tell Harry himself, he was sure the other boy would never believe it to be untrue, and he would never trust Draco again.

It was this fear that Draco clung to when he needed to act like his regular, bitter self around the rest of the school. Well, except Seamus, Dean and Longbottom. The three roommates of Ron and Harry seemed to have adjusted to the idea of Draco being around and Draco found himself really being sorry for everything he'd put them through at Hogwarts, especially Neville. It was still amazing to him that they had all seemed to have looked past everything he had been and done to allow him a new start. Even if Ron was still apprehensive, it made Draco feel comforted knowing that at least some of those closest to Harry required more merit than simple appearances to receive trust.

The window to tell Harry everything was closing and Draco still was not sure if he would have the courage to tell him anything.

"Hey, Drac? You awake?"

"Yeah, do you need anything, or just curious?"

"Well, actually, I was wondering something, but it's kind of personal to ask."

Draco turned on his side to face Harry, slipping an arm over the waiting chest. "I want you to know everything about me, Harry. It might not be easy to tell you, but I want you to ask me everything you want to know."

Draco watched the smile pull itself reassuringly over Harry's lips. "Are you sure?" Draco nodded. "Well, what do you think your dad will do about the two of us?" Draco sighed, knowing the time had

come. Fear welled up inside of Draco and he nearly gave into the anxiety that seemed to grip his heart and close his lungs.

“Harry, I have to tell you something that will sound really bad, but I want you to promise to let me finish before you react.” Harry looked seriously at Draco, worry flooding his calm green eyes. “Do you promise?”

“Yes, just trust me to trust you.”

With a sigh, Draco began, “Once this summer, when I hadn’t been able to get away from Voldemort, he did some kind of charm and was able to see my deepest feelings for everyone. He found out two important things: one, that I hated him - which he loved, and two, that I had very real feelings for you that I’d been hiding for a few years.”

Draco looked at Harry to gauge his reaction, but seeing nothing but a blank returning stare, he continued, “That disgusting thing decided to use those emotions and have me get close to you, hoping you shared them and that you would fall for me and then be unable to do anything to him with me by his side, or something like that. Anyway, he never told me his plans, but my father did, deciding I deserved to know that I was being manipulated. When my father came to me, he had another plan that was similar, only it involved me convincing you to stop at nothing to kill Voldemort, after we’d gotten close. I was so angry with my father that I wrote him off in my heart completely, but pretended to enjoy the idea. I’ve developed a plan of my own that will end all of this forever, but it will be more dangerous than anything I’ve ever done.”

Harry’s face remained blank, staring at the cover over the bed, unblinking. Draco was wondering if he should say anything else, he knew it had all come out a lot more choppy and quickly than he had planned, but he’d been barely able to get through saying what he had.

The silence went on for what seemed an eternity, before Harry finally spoke, “Why didn’t you tell me this before?” His voice was soft, and had the sound of threatening tears in it.

“I was scared you wouldn’t believe me and tell me to get away.”

“You didn’t trust me.” It was not a question, it had been stated and this time there was no mistaking the sound of hurt in his voice. Draco noticed the shine of tears on Harry’s cheeks soon after.

‘This is not what I had expected.’ “Harry, I’m sorry. Please, I’ve never done this trusting someone bit and I’m honestly terrified of how it goes. I’ve also never admitted being scared or any of my emotions to anyone. I do trust you, I just don’t trust myself right now.”

Harry now turned to face him and they laid looking at each other in the face. The room was nearly completely dark, but there was enough light to see the outline of Harry’s face. “I believe you Draco, fully. I’m not sure why, but I do. I’m not really good at this stuff either though, so we’ll just have to get used to being able to trust each other completely. Just know that the only thing that makes me mad about this whole thing is that your father would want to use you to get what he wants. Voldemort’s nothing new, I mean after someone tries to kill you four times you start to expect it, really. I’m sorry that you have to carry the scar of your father on your heart now though.”

“Thank-you Harry.” Draco felt tears lining his eyelids, but blinked them away before anything could happen. ‘He’s sorry for me, not mad. How can someone be so trusting and willing to love? I’ve never know whatever this thing is that we share.’ An emotion rose from somewhere inside Draco that he’d never really felt, or expressed and he heard the words jump out of his mouth before he’d really been able to know what he was saying. “I love you, Harry. I mean completely and totally. I love you in a way that will never change no matter how many wars, or how many trials, or how many years come and go. I love you in a way that I want to spend the rest of my life with you.”

The tears returned to Harry’s cheeks, “Do you know what you just said?”

Draco started to regret not being able to control himself, when he decided that there was nothing to do now but give in to the flood that had finally broken free. “Yeah, is that okay?”

“Do you really mean it?” Draco just nodded, not trusting his voice to respond without cracking. “Then it’s great.” Harry’s hand came up to Draco’s cheek and stroked gently. “I love you too, Draco. In all the same wonderful, unexplainable ways and probably a million others. Do you really want to spend the rest of your life with me?”

Draco gave in to the tears that he’d never allowed to fall throughout his life. Every fear, doubt, hurt, and joy came out in waves, overcoming him quickly. He buried his head into Harry and just let everything flow out, unable to stop it anyway. Harry just wrapped his arms around him and held him as he wept, not saying anything until the other boy had gone silent and still after a long while. “Draco, you okay?”

The only answer was a shaky sigh and an even breathing coming from his chest. Looking down Harry realized Draco had cried himself to sleep. He just stroked the sleeping boy’s back and let everything that had been said sink in, “I want to spend mine with you, my love.” Harry said before giving in to sleep himself and the happiest dreams he’d had in years.

The first day of October dawned with a raging storm, darkening the entire castle so that night and day seemed the same. The inhabitants of the sixth year dorm in Gryffindor Tower woke up to a dreary Saturday. Seamus was the first to brave the world outside of his blankets, but with a yelp, quickly got back into bed. “There’s no breakfast I can think of worth getting that cold for.”

“You’re such an idiot Seamus, really you are.”

“I don’t want to hear anything from you Ron, at least you have someone to keep you warm over there with you. All I’ve got is a stack of nudies left behind by your brothers in their hasty exit last year.”

“Seamus!”

“What? I’m just sharing a piece of my life with my friends, excuse me for assuming you care.”

“You know what they say happens when you assume, don’t you Seamus?” Draco’s voice said, slightly muffled by Harry’s chest that he was still laying against.

“No, but I bet you’re more than willing to let me know, right?”

“You know me, can’t pass up a chance to teach a lesson on manners to a Gryffindor.”

“Just tell us so you can shut it, Malfoy.” Dean decided it was too early in the morning for Seamus and Malfoy to keep this up.

“Fine,” Draco’s voice took on the pretentious tone they had all grown used to over the years, but had thankfully not heard in some time. “When you assume, you make an ass out of u and me.”

The entire room just made a collective groan except Neville who started laughing, saying, “That’s just what my Gran says!. Wonder how she’d feel about a Malfoy and her saying the same thing.”

The entire room burst with laughter. Only Draco seemed to not be amused by the idea. “What’s so funny about that?”

“It’s really only funny if you know my Gran, sorry Draco.”

Now all fully awake, they gave in to the growling sounds their stomachs were making demanding food and all got up. “You ready to slip into that handy cloak of Harry’s again Hermione?”

“Just a minute, Draco. I haven’t gotten to look at her long enough this morning.”

“Ron! Seriously, you can be so embarrassing.”

Harry watched Hermione grow red, and Ron look confused as to what he’d done. Shaking his head he turned to Malfoy, “Yeah, just a minute, I could deal with another few looks myself, lover.”

“Damn it, Harry. I really never had to hear you say those words to Draco, or anyone for that matter. Thanks.”

“Oh, stuff it Seamus, we have to hear far worse from you all the time.” The rest of the room looked like they disagreed, but weren’t going to say anything, it was still too early for getting into something.

“Harry, as a favor, please only call me that behind closed curtains if you really feel the need for it.”

“You guys are all pathetic.”

Draco and Hermione slipped under the cloak and everyone followed them out into the common room. It seemed no one else had braved the morning glum since the common room was empty, of course, being a Saturday, it wasn’t very likely anyone else had gotten up yet. “I don’t think you two really need to bother carrying that thing around all day if you don’t want to, just leave it here. I bet no one’s even down in the Great Hall.”

Hermione and Draco exchanged a look under the cloak and then shrugged it off. “No complaints here, that thing gets smaller every year, it’s hard to believe the three of us used to sneak around under there.”

The five Gryffindors and the lone Slytherin made their way down to the Great Hall, just enjoying each other's company. No one thought twice about the friendly way they and Draco were relating, not until they turned a corner and saw three people dashing towards them down the hall. "Move out of the way, Gryffindors." Snape brushed past them without looking twice. "I swear, your house would be chipper in a torture chamber."

"Good Morning, students." Professor McGonagall mumbled through her lips as she rushed by on Snape's heels.

"A'ight Harry, Hermione, Ron, Dean, Seamus, and Mr. Malfoy?" Hagrid nodded as he too rushed by. About a second after his greeting all three had turned back around after nearly colliding together trying to stop.

"Mr. Malfoy?" Both Snape and McGonagall said as they collected themselves. "Well, it's nice to know that you are fine. Where have you been, Crabbe's got all of Slytherin House in an uproar cause you apparently never came to bed last night."

"Well, what it is Professor..." Harry and Ron began at the same time. The two of them shared a look and smiled, remembering the last time they'd tried to think on their feet and started in together with the same line.

"It's my fault Professor, I asked Draco to help me with my potions work, since I'm no good and it took all night for me to get it right." The other four stared at Neville wondering where in the world that had come from and were joined by the three others standing in the hall.

"What potion, Mr. Longbottom." Snape asked before anyone else had been able to recover.

"What? Oh. . .well it was the uh"

"We were working on a few different memory potions for him." Draco answered with a shrug before Neville could flounder his lie completely. "He said he'd pay me if I could help him do it."

"Well, in the future boys, please be more aware of those around you who might get worried by your not being in bed. We were just about to alert the Headmaster and begin searching the school." McGonagall said looking through the glasses on the tip of her nose.

Snape looked completely unconvinced, "Mr. Malfoy, if I may speak to you in private." Draco followed him off a few feet until he stopped and whispered loud enough to be heard, but not by the others. "You want to blow the whole plan? You do realize that Longbottom's pathetic lie will never convince anyone else. You'd better come up with a better reason for having been out all night, other than with Potter, unless you want them to know just how close you really are to him."

Draco nodded, he already knew this. It was one of the scenarios he'd run through when he'd started spending the nights with Harry. He'd been waiting for this to happen, though he'd hoped it would have been later. "I've got it all worked out, Professor. Don't worry about me, I know what I'm doing."

"I hope so, for yours and Potters sakes."

Draco walked back to the group and asked, "Is anyone else really hungry? Let's go before we all waste away to nothing."

The five followed Draco in silence to the Great Hall. No one said a word until they were standing just outside the massive doors. "Thanks Neville, but no one else say anything about last night, I've got a back up plan already incase something like this happened." Draco walked through the doors leaving the others standing in the hall.

"I don't think I'll ever get used to him thanking me, let alone being such a great guy."

"Wow, Harry. You must have knocked something into place when you guys were shagging." Everyone just glared at Seamus until the smile left his face. "Like no one else was thinking the same thing!"

"Honestly, Seamus. I don't how your brain comes up with half the stuff you say."

Hermione walked into the Great Hall, followed by the rest of the Gryffindors.

Lord Voldemort looked up from the parchment that had arrived less than an hour ago. He stared over it at Lucius Malfoy, who had been sitting in the chair across from him since Voldemort had read through what was written on the parchment the first time and had called him into the study. "It appears that what your son has told us in his letters has been misleading. If he were really having trouble getting nearer to Potter, why do I have something telling me he was with Potter in Gryffindor Tower and that it was no rare occurrence."

Lucius had been prepared for this, Goyle had been bragging about it all day Sunday when he and Lucius had met together in private. It had been a test to see where his loyalties actually did lie and how strong they were laid. Of course, after hearing the fool blab on about how what his son had seen in the hallway the previous morning would give him something good for the Dark Lord and look very bad on Lucius himself, the decision was easy. But thanks to his bragging, Lucius had been able to easily come up with a good reason. "My, Lord, I thought that my son had already told us of what happened in his last letter. I saw no reason then nor now to believe otherwise, especially in light of one single report from a desperate, power jealous idiot like Goyle."

"I never said this was from Goyle, you would do well to not assume everything you hear from pathetic braggarts to be true. He did have some ridiculous tale of your son helping the Longbottom boy with potions and staying the night in Gryffindor Tower, but that I dismissed out of hand in light of what Draco had already written and told me when it coincided with the other reports I got. This letter gives a very different tale, though. This is not from some Death Eater's child, but from a letter intercepted from one of the boys in Harry's dorm." He handed the letter across the desk to Lucius, who took it with a sinking sensation in his stomach.

Hey mum,

You wouldn't believe everything that has happened in the last few nights in the dorm. You already know all about Draco and Hermione staying with Harry and Ron every night for weeks, but it's been

wild seeing how close we are all getting to Malfoy. Even Neville stuck up for him and came up with some lie when Malfoy was caught not having been in bed one night. Neville lied to not only McGonagall but Snape too, without getting paralyzed with fear just from seeing that old beak nosed grease ball. That's about it though, don't really have any good gossip for ya other than to say that they still haven't found a silencing charm that works on Neville yet, he still hears everything Harry and Draco or Ron and Hermione do at night when they draw the curtains. He says that it wouldn't be so bad if Harry would stop making Draco scream so much, or if Draco would stop describing how much he likes what Harry's doing by panting helpful directions on how to do things better. He says that after the first night, Ron hasn't yelled a single word and barely makes a noise cause he's scared Neville will hear him. I guess Malfoy doesn't care what Neville hears, though I bet he's just being a little perv and screaming what he does just to make Neville cringe. Unfortunately, I can never get him to tell me what he hears screamed, but I'll let you know the minute he does. Anyway. .

The letter went on and talked about gossip from the rest of the school along with a few personal stories from the author. Lucius scanned through the rest looking for mention of Draco, but only found Harry mentioned again though it wasn't anything other than some Hufflepuff Prefect caught wind that Harry had used the secret Prefect bathroom late one night and had thrown a fit about people using it when they weren't supposed to. Lucius reached the end where it was signed, 'As always, love. Seamus.'

There were no words that came to mind as he looked up into the eyes of the creature in front of him. There was only one thought, 'Who does he think he is staring at me like that from my chair, behind my desk.'

"Well, Lucius, what do you think about what our young Gryffindor had to say to his mother?"

There was only a slight pause while the words and thoughts gathered themselves in the quick brain of the elder Malfoy. "It seems to me that this boy and his mother are a little too eager to see certain rumors be more than just that. I have trouble believing what this says at all, when none of the other reports coming from Hogwarts say anything at all about this or anything remotely similar."

"I figured you would say as much, but I am beginning to think I severely underestimated the abilities of your son. Do you know what I think Lucius? I think your son has a lot of fools believing anything he says or pretends to let slip and is using them to collaborate their stories with his lies. I think your son figured out my plans, or at least what he thinks they are and decided to give in to his feelings for Potter and betray us, rather than ever harm the boy he loves."

"My Lord, there's no way my son would . . ."

"Silence, fool!" Voldemort silenced the other before he could finish his defense of his son. "Do you so blindly believe everything your son says, as do the idiots he has strung along in that school, and in turn their pathetic power grubbing parents?"

"But what do we do about it, My lord?" Lucius hid the hatred he felt from his eyes and fell into his role as a loyal servant.

"Nothing just yet. We will need to deal with our prized potions master though, it seems he has also

been feeding me lies. He will learn that weakness under Lord Voldemort is a much worse fate than anything that fool Dumbledore could ever scare him with. Call a meeting for him to come report to you what he knows and kill him. I'm tired of these games he and your son think they can play on me. However, I think we shall teach your son the cost of playing games by playing along with his for awhile, and then using him to kill the only thing standing between him and total allegiance to me, I can forgive him his lust as long as I get what I want in the end. Harry Potter will soon never get in my way again." The cold evil that was Voldemort's laughter echoed down the halls of Malfoy Manor, and rang for long minutes after he had finished.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter 10 - Taking A Stand

Draco woke to air being blown in his face. Opening his eyes he saw Harry, mouth open and snoring, resting no more than a few inches from his face. “Merlin Harry, I think something crawled into your opened mouth and died last night.”

A slight snicker came from behind him where Hermione was laying half way on top of Ron, watching the room of sixth year boys sleep. “They’re both pretty bad in the morning, but Harry’s still got nothing on Ron here. Just wait till you get close to Harry when he’s recovering in the hospital wing from beating Voldemort again.”

With a grin Draco said, “I’ll keep that in mind.” Then, as if dictating notes to himself, “Don’t kiss Harry after he’s saved your life, unless he has brushed his teeth first.”

Both had started talking about small things, classes and assignments, just enjoying being friends, when their attention was pulled across the room by movement in Neville’s bed. Neither were prepared to see anyone but Neville climbing quietly out of the drawn curtains, especially not Ginny Weasley. Seeing the two shocked looks, Ginny turned as bright red as her long red hair before smiling big and saying to the two, “Shh, I didn’t hear Ron so I figured I’d get out of here before he woke up. Tell Neville I’ll see his cute little ass later, okay?”

“I will never say anything of the sort to Neville, only Harry has the cute ass in this dorm.”

Both girls looked at Draco and asked at the same time, “With what ass?”

All three started laughing and seemed unwilling or unable to quit until Ron and Harry both stirred in their beds. At the first sign of movement from Ron’s bed, Ginny was out the door, still laughing lightly. Draco looked over to Hermione once their boyfriends had stopped moving and returned to the deep sleeps they always had, “Now even Neville and Ginny have gone further than Harry and I, or at least I assume as much since her shirt was inside out and backwards, and since Neville wasn’t woke up by our laughter. You know we woke him up the other morning by whispering ‘I love you’ to each other?”

Hermione was looking shocked at Draco, but found her voice somewhere and asked, “You and Harry have never done anything sleeping in his bed every night? But poor Neville has had to hear all sorts of things from you two.”

“Actually, I just say that stuff to have a bit of fun with him. The only thing Harry does in this bed to make me scream is to tickle me to death. After the night in the prefect’s bathroom we haven’t gone too far past some heavy snogging.”

“So you two actually did use the prefect’s bathroom to get off, well can’t say I blame you, isn’t it such a great bath tub for sharing time with your boyfriend?”

“Wait, you and weasel have done stuff in there too?”

Turning slightly red, Hermione just nodded. Before they could continue and share any details of each other's experiences, Neville stuck his head out from his curtains and looked around the room anxiously. "Uh. . .good morning guys, you haven't seen anyone here this morning did you?"

Throwing Hermione a silencing, mischievous look, Draco turned back to Neville and sweetly asked, "Who would have been in here?" Noting both a look of relief and disappointment flash across Neville's face, Draco realized he just didn't have the heart to play with Neville right at the moment, a brief thought passed through his mind that maybe it was due to the fact that he actually had a heart now. "Sorry, Neville, I meant to say, don't worry cause Ron didn't see her leave with the biggest smile I've ever seen plastered on a Weasley's face."

A smile that was equally as big, spread across Neville's. "Could you guys not mention that to Ron, ever?"

"Mention what?"

Hermione let out a small scream and even Draco joined Neville in a jump at hearing the unexpected voice of the very person they were talking about. "Well, since you ask, Neville found out he has a cute ass and was trying to save you the pain of realizing you don't have the cutest one in the dorm."

"Are you playing nice, Drac?"

Now it was Draco's turn to let a small scream escape from his surprised lips. Hermione and Neville only laughed a little harder, as they were already laughing over Draco's remark to Ron. "Harry James Potter! Never do anything like that again, you twit. And never call me Drac."

At hearing what he thought was a great impersonation of his mother, Ron burst into laughter along with his other friends who were awake. Soon no one that was awake in the dorm was not laughing, and in turn it was not long before no one was left asleep. As the room grew silent, all seven students lay in bed thankful it was a Sunday and they had no reason to move from their beds until lunch.

"Hey we got our first snow it looks like." Everyone followed Seamus' gaze out the windows and as a group, wrapped themselves more tightly in their blankets and those who were with someone else snuggled a little closer. A small knock at the door interrupted the quiet they had all settled into, enjoying watching the new snow blow slightly in the wind around the window ledge.

"Come in, five voices called once Hermione and Draco had slipped out of direct view from the door and under their boyfriend's covers.

"Um, hi guys, I was just wondering if you all had seen the snow and if you were up, Neville, I was going to ask if you wanted to go walk around for awhile outside and enjoy it."

"Yeah, give me five minutes and I'll be down stairs, Ginny."

"You got it." Ginny began turning around to go back out but asked quickly, "Where did Draco and Hermione get to, they were here earlier and I was going to ask you all if you wanted. . ."

"How the hell did you know they were in here, you already been in to bother us all with having to see

Neville and you gushing over each other.” Ron let his best exasperated voice ring loudly in the room. “Or were you sneaking back out from your night with Neville.”

Hermione and Draco both came to the surface from where they had been stealing kisses from their boyfriends’ bodies and looked with everyone else to Neville, then back to Ron and finally to Ginny.

“Ron, don’t do anything rash.” The tension in the room was mounting by the second as everyone else figured it out and then began fearing what Ron might do to Neville.

Everyone was surprised when Neville stood up out of bed, in only his boxers and walked right over to Ginny, put his arms around her and kissed her deeply and passionately before looking straight at Ron and saying with more certainty than anyone in the room knew he could possess, “Ron, just shut it, now. I’m tired of you telling me and Ginny what we can and can’t do. I love her and she me, and if we want to spend the night holding each other than we will. If we want to kiss all day long and you happen to see us, then that’s life. If we want to share another night like last night and give in to our passions and share something beautiful and amazing, then we are fucking going to do what the hell we want.”

No one in the room dared to move, much less breathe. Neville stood, slightly shaking with both fear and rage, waiting to defend himself from a pouncing, enraged Ron. The shocked looks on everyone’s faces were deepened when Ron stood up laughing from his bed. His laugh held no mockery or meanness, just a true respect for what he’d just seen his friend do for his sister.

“Great, Ron’s finally gone and cracked, everybody duck before the pieces start flying when he blows his top.” Seamus said from his bed, throwing a pillow over his head in an overly dramatic display.

“Merlin, Neville, I never knew you had it in you. Look, I think you and Ginny are just brilliant together, I just have trouble getting over the whole big brother protection thing and I think Draco here has started to rub off on me, I just couldn’t resist having a little fun.” Ron walked over and took Ginny in a hug, then turned to Neville and squeezed his shoulder. “But don’t ever let it slip about you and Ginny sharing any kind of passion in a night around my mum, or for that matter, about you two spending the night together period, she will kill you.”

A collective breath was let loose by everyone in the room. Even Draco found he’d been holding his, a sure sign to him that these Gryffindors were rubbing off on him in spite of what Ron had said. “Not that this isn’t a very touching and feel good moment, but I’m starting to really need something to eat other than Harry here. He does great at saving us all from certain doom, but he does very little for satisfying my hunger pains.” Shaking their heads in amusement, everyone in the room started getting around for the day.

VvVv

Severus Snape stared at the copy of the Daily Prophet in his hand that had arrived just moments before. Taking out his wand and saying the incantation, the words that were there were replaced with completely new words. Words he always dreaded reading. ‘What could they possibly need me to report on already? I’d better see what Albus thinks.’ The mean, greasy looking professor, headed to Dumbledore’s office, with more than a little worry beginning to wedge its way into his stomach. Something definitely was out of place, and that never meant anything good in the life of the potion’s

master.

VvVv

Harry and Draco were lying together in the now otherwise empty room, having opted for a few moments alone before truly starting their day off. “Drac, I was thinking.”

“Do I need to get Madame Pomfrey for you, then?” Harry playfully smacked his chest which he was laying on and looked daggers at him for a brief second then let a smile break his lips and laughter fill his eyes.

“I stopped before I hurt myself, don’t worry I know my limitations.” Draco peered down at his boyfriend’s head and let out a snort.

“Harry, I love you, but you wouldn’t know your limitations if they flew up, spread your cheeks and fucked you with a Popsicle.” Harry did his best repulsive look, then just shook his head.

“God, Draco. I mean you really can say the most jack-assed things sometimes, you know that?” Despite the scolding tone in his voice, Harry kissed a trail along the other boy’s chest to his chin and gave him a kiss after pulling himself up slightly to look him in the face. “I’m really trying to be serious here, you git.”

“You can be as serious as often as you want, if you’ll do that every time you get this way.”

“Shut it. Now listen, I think you should tell Dumbledore what you know about Voldemort’s and your dad’s plans.” Before Draco was able to voice his objection, Harry placed a finger on his lips. “And you should let him in on yours, see if he can help or if he has something better. Please don’t argue with me on this either, or I’ll have to take you out, lover. I’ve spent too much time thinking about this and wasting even more brain power on you than you deserve, so just do it for me, cause I’m sexy and you love me and you want to spend the rest of you life with me.” With a slight smile, and before he removed his finger from the soft lips it was gently caressing, Harry added, “I want to spend the rest of our lives together too and I would prefer to make those lives as long as possible, if you don’t mind.”

“Whatever you say, if it means this much to you, and because I would prefer a long life together also, I’ll tell Dumbledore what I know.” Harry was shocked it had been so easy. He had been fully prepared for a fight over this, but Draco had given in so easily.

“Wait, that’s it? You aren’t going to fight me over this until I eventually give in?”

“Nope, I’m not.”

“But why?” Harry was truly confused. Draco just laughed before taking Harry’s face in his hands and pulling him into a long breathless kiss.

“I thought you covered that already. It’s cause your sexy and I love you and I want to spend the rest of my life with you, did you already forget what you said?” The teasing tone was layered thick and Harry just shook his head before resting his forehead on Draco’s shoulder.

“I love you.”

“I know Harry, and that’s what makes this worth doing. If I can get rid of Voldemort and my father, then you can have more time to fuss over me.” Draco said it all with a smile, but his heart was behind every word, every thought and every prayer he’d mumbled since falling in love with Harry. What had started out as a game, then turned into vengeance, had now turned into something he wanted to give Harry more than anything in the world. A life free of Voldemort.

VvVvV

The boys stood outside of the entrance to Dumbledore’s office, both feeling slightly apprehensive and a little frightened about what was about to happen. Both were sure that they couldn’t be here without the other. Harry wasn’t sure why he felt so worried, he’d told the Headmaster many things over the years and had always felt relieved to be standing here, waiting to go in to speak with Dumbledore.

‘There’s something not right, something is out of place. I can feel something is about to go really wrong, but we’re safe in Hogwarts.’ Harry shook the feelings from his head and then spoke the password so they could get it over with and return to his bed for the night.

As they entered the room, Harry felt the spiteful stare of Snape immediately and looked to his right to find the potion’s master standing near a window watching his and Draco’s every move. “Professor Dumbledore, we have something to talk to you about, if we may.”

“Please feel free, boys. I am always open for my students.” The fatherly twinkle was returning to his eyes, after having gone during his talk with Snape. “How has the search for the runes been going, having much luck?” Harry felt a mental kick, none of them had even thought about the runes for weeks, let alone actually gotten any work done on them.

“Well, actually sir, we’ve been kind of stumped for a while. We haven’t been able to find anything in the library.” Harry knew he’d hate himself for this later, but he could never let Dumbledore think he had failed to do what he’d promised.

“Ah, well perhaps if the four of you actually had been able to find time it would have worked out better.” Harry looked to the ground unable to meet the eyes he’d just lied to. “Harry, it’s quite alright. I understand you have all been quite preoccupied with...other ventures, shall we say?”

“Perhaps it would help for Mr. Malfoy to stay in his room at night, after all he is a house prefect and I’ve seen nothing but a dereliction of duties so far this year.” Harry stared coldly at the man by the window.

“I’m sorry, Professor Snape, you are right. I have been very neglectful of my duties to the house. I will strive to be better and to make sure to meet all expectations, but I will not sleep apart from Harry.” Draco stated it all evenly, but the last part had been lit up by the fire in his eyes.

“You and Potter have become much too dependant upon each other to be healthy. You see Headmaster, this is why I have been so vocal about my opposition to this relationship from the

beginning. Did I not tell you he would bring my prized student down.”

Draco jumped to his feet and was within inches of Snape’s face in seconds yelling at him fully in the face, holding back no emotion, but rather allowing it to become an onslaught, emphasizing his words. “How dare you talk of Harry like that you mean, selfish, bitter old man! Never call anything that Harry has changed in me anything but for the better. I am a much better person than anything crawling around in that dungeon with you, thanks to Harry and the influence he has had on me! Why don’t you just crawl back there with all that Voldemort loving filth and leave me and Harry alone, you bastard!”

Snape looked about ready to explode, but before he could unleash the anger that had built up during Draco’s tirade, Dumbledore spoke up very softly, but firm. “You will please sit down Mr. Malfoy and apologize to Professor Snape for your outburst. While I do not agree with his words, he is still a professor and you are a student, he does not deserve to be spoken to in such a manner. I am sure however, he regrets his ill timed and placed words also and would like to also apologize for talking before thinking.”

The room remained silent, no one moving at all. Draco finally pulled himself back to his chair next to Harry and mumbled what sounded like “I’m sorry” under his breath. Professor Snape also mumbled something, but no one was able to even guess what it was meant to be. After everyone was somewhat calmed down, Dumbledore continued.

“Now what was it that you two needed to tell me when you came in here?”

“Voldemort is planning to get to Harry through me and kill him and attack the school later this year, after I’ve had a chance to get close to him.” Draco’s eyes never left the worn carpet in front of the chairs he and Harry were sitting in. “Also, my father is planning on allowing Voldemort to get killed by what looks like a botched attack and take control over the Death Eaters himself, using my relationship with Harry to get him to kill Voldemort.” Draco glanced to Harry and found an urging and powerful gaze that gave him the strength the finish. “I also have developed a plan to kill both Voldemort and my father, along with most of the Death Eaters.”

Dumbledore stared blankly back at both boys for many long minutes before sighing heavily and speaking. “First, and I want you to both understand me fully, you will neither do anything or set any plans into motion to bring about the death of anyone. I do not make it a habit of encouraging my students, or my friends, to take part in any kind of antagonizing activities, no matter what the outcome. Secondly, I fear that what ever you believed the situation to be, it has changed dramatically. Your father has asked to meet with professor Snape to get information on you. Professor Snape and myself believe it to be a trap to capture and perhaps kill him, believing that his cover has been blown.”

“What are we going to do?”

“We are going to do nothing, Potter. I will go and see what this is all about and see if I can get any useful information, before the trap is sprung.”

“Along with a few allies and precautions being taken.” Dumbledore added.

“But you haven’t even heard my plan sir, we could easily kill them both and end all this trouble for Harry for good.”

“For Harry? There’s a lot more at stake than the worried little mind of Potter! Merlin, you are pathetic thanks to him.”

Dumbledore stood to his full height and stared down the other man in the room, before saying, “There will be no more of this nonsense from any of you.” Remaining standing where he was, Dumbledore continued where he’d been before being interrupted. “As I was saying, we will all wait to act until after Severus has been able to provide us with any information he may be able to ascertain. Then, I would ask you both to allow the Order to take care of this and allow yourselves to be teenagers.” Ending with a wide smile and bright twinkling eyes, Dumbledore bid them a good day and said they would know anything he found out as soon as he himself, found it out.

The two returned to Gryffindor Tower. slightly put out over being told to stay out of grown up things and stick with the kiddy issues.

VvVv

Hermione was watching Ginny and Neville being very openly affectionate in the Gryffindor common room, and found herself amazed at the difference Ginny brought out in Neville. ‘Even when he stood up to us in first year, it hadn’t been anything like this morning. Of course, look how much Draco has changed since falling in love with Harry.’ She was pulled from her thoughts by the soft touch on her hand that she recognized as Ron getting her attention. “Yes, dear?”

“I was just wondering what you were wondering.” Ron smiled at her. She felt the same response inside to that smile that she had the first time she’d seen it spread across his face all those years ago in first year, of course she’d never known what or why that was till a few years later.

“Just thinking about how everyone’s grown up over the years, hard to think that our first year at Hogwarts as being only five years ago. So much has happened and so much has changed, both for good and bad.”

“Tell me about it.” Ron leaned into Hermione’s shoulder and rested his head on her. Harry walked over to them from the portrait hole and smiled at them. He really felt so happy for them and it never seemed to fade no matter how many times he’d seen them being affectionate together over the past few months.

"Is it safe?"

Turning their attention to Harry, they both nodded their heads. "No one is in the Tower at all, and Hermione's got the hall in front of the Fat Lady warded to warn her if anyone's coming in."

"Speaking of which, You can take the cloak off, Draco."

Draco appeared next to Harry, his face giving away how upset he still was from their meeting with Dumbledore “I can’t believe the way they both just shrugged us off like kids. I mean honestly, like we were going to charge into the Manor and start hexing our way to Voldemort and kill him

ourselves. Merlin, this is frustrating.”

"Welcome to my world," Harry said, with a frustrated sigh.

“What are you two on about?” Ron asked lifting his head to look at his two friends, the old and the new. “Why would you march into your house to kill Voldemort, aren’t he and your dad on the run since he broke your dad out of Azkaban?”

Harry and Draco both looked immediately pale as they asked in shocked voices, “What do you mean escaped?”

“You both didn’t know, Merlin, I figured you of all people would have known.” Ron was looking directly at Draco, as if he had missed out on the biggest news since Voldemort’s return. “Your father got out nearly as soon as he had been put in. No one’s really sure how, just that he’s gone and no one knows where he went. It was all over the Daily Prophet for ages.”

“But he was at the Manor all summer, and as far as I know, he’s still there.”

“You’ve got to be kidding, you spent the summer with your father and you never once thought that he’d escaped? I mean, I can see Harry maybe not thinking of the technicalities, but you Draco?” Both boys just stared blankly at Hermione, trying to figure out if she had insulted them or was truly surprised enough to not realize what she’d said.

“Dad’s been livid for months over it, and says that they searched the Manor over and over again and haven’t found a thing. Even Moody found nothing after a room by room search.”

“But how can that be? I never saw anyone at the manor over the summer. There was never anyone that asked me questions, or searched the house, or anything.”

“Something’s very wrong here, very wrong. We should talk to my dad and see what he thinks, he’d know what to do.” All four raced from Gryffindor Tower, through the halls, and out the door headed for Hogsmeade to use the floo at the three broomsticks, once again thankful it was a weekend and that three of them were prefects and could write any passes they would need to get out of this punishment free.

VvVv

Once they had arrived at the Burrow, the trio had been welcome with open arms, and Draco had been welcomed after a little explaining, though only out of politeness. It was obvious that the elder Weasleys were having a hard time seeing a Malfoy in any light other than evil.

“Are you sure they were at the Manor all summer?” Draco nodded, having told everything he’d said in the common room again to the man sitting across from him in the cramped living room. “And you were never questioned or ever saw anyone searching around for them.”

This last statement had gone unanswered, since it seemed he had been talking to himself anyway. “I can’t believe it, I just can’t believe it. Either some strong magic has been used on our people in the Ministry, or they are not as much our people as we thought. Merlin, they filled out report after

report on what they asked the servants and the family, there's even an entire file just over interrogations with the boy. I just can't believe it!" Rubbing his chin, Arthur Weasley fell into thought.

"Have you three told Dumbledore about this?" Draco tried to ignore the hurt he felt at not being counted in with the three friends, but he was not nearly as good at masking his face as he had once been. "Oh, please forgive me, you four now, I just am a little scatter brained at the moment." Mrs. Weasley added quickly upon seeing the transparent pain on Draco's face.

"Well, I suppose we should call the Order together right quick like and see what they think. I can say for sure that he is not there anymore though. Me and Moody searched that place with a few of the best in the Order, who work for the ministry, just last week and there was not a living creature anywhere, or evidence that there had been for months." Harry noticed the look of concern on Draco's face and immediately understood, if no one was there at all, then where was his mother, where had they all gone and why hadn't they let him know. Harry recognized the painful look that was dawning on Draco's features and immediately hugged the boy to his chest, taking Mr. and Mrs. Weasley off guard.

"Draco, it's okay. I'm here, you're not alone. You haven't been abandoned. Drac?" But Harry never got an answer other than the sobs that began to rip through the body he was holding to him. The other four in the room were completely unprepared for such a show of emotion, let alone from Draco.

"Harry, I expect this is quite a lot to take in at once, Merlin knows it's never easy when you don't know where your loved ones have disappeared to, and even worse when you fear the worst for them." Molly Weasley was kneeling beside the two boys. She looked into Harry's slightly helpless eyes and placed a hand on Draco's back, rubbing it gently and in a motherly way. "Why don't you take him up to Ron's bedroom so he can have a moment to think without all of us around. Your bed should still be set up from this summer, dear. We'll take care of the rest, now just go."

Without a word, Harry left the four people he loved downstairs, comforted by their worried, and somewhat confused, looks for the boy he held and nearly carried up the stairs. Once they were inside the room he shared with Ron whenever fates smiled upon him and let him come to the Burrow, he laid Draco down on his bed and sat beside him brushing the hair from his eyes that had come down from rubbing against Harry's chest.

"Drac, you okay?" Draco's eyes slowly made their way to Harry's face before he slowly shook his head from side to side.

"She left me, she never leaves the Manor without letting me know how to contact her, never Harry." The words all had choked out, barely able to find their way out around the lump in his throat that was growing into most of his chest. "I can't breath, help, Harry." Harry cradled the boy into his arms as he began to gasp for air and choke on his tears.

"Draco, calm down, it'll be okay, I'm here, you're not alone." Harry repeated, saying comforting things as he slowly rocked the shaking body in his arms. Harry wasn't sure how long they stayed like that, but he knew it had been a long time. His arms were both asleep and he was pretty sure both of his legs were too. Even the pain in his back from sitting in the odd angle he was in didn't allow him

to move though. He kept rocking and whispering to Draco, even though the other's breathing had begun to slow down and level off for a long while.

Finally giving into his bodies cries, Harry shifted under Draco and moved the boy back down to the bed where he discovered he had cried himself to sleep in Harry's arms. As Harry stood up next to the bed, he felt and heard a number of pops from numerous joints and could feel the tingle of his limbs starting to receive blood flow again. He didn't move from his spot, watching Draco sleep until he was sure he was fully mobile again. Pulling the brightly colored Quidditch blanket off of Ron's bed, he covered Draco with it before walking back downstairs to see what had happened in his absence.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter 11 - The Mourning Son

A/N - In this story, and especially this chapter, Draco is most definitely OOC. It's in the warnings, but that never stops at least one person from feeling the need to tell me how horrid my Draco in this story is...sigh.

When Harry was half way down the stairs, he could tell that a lot of the Order had arrived while he'd been with Draco. The number of voices drifting up to him from the lower floor told him that this was something really important to have gotten so many gathered so quickly. As Harry rounded the corner into the kitchen, his eyes fell to numerous familiar faces, most of them he had not seen since the night at the Dursley's when they had picked him up. He smiled at those who smiled first and merely waved at those who did not. He walked over to the far side of the kitchen where Hermione and Ron stood sipping at the cocoa in their mugs.

"How's Draco, mate?" Ron's worry and confusion were easily seen on his face. He'd started to really get used to the new Draco, and even considered him a friend. Though, it still shocked him, if he thought about it, that he and Draco were anything but bitter rivals.

Hermione's eyes mirrored the emotion in Ron's voice when she looked up at Harry. "He's asleep. I hope he gets a few hours at least of sleep, I've never seen anyone upset like that before. He has to have exhausted himself."

As the friends were discussing Draco and his need for sleep, Harry noticed a steady rise in the volume of the people around him and began to worry that the noise would wake Draco from his much needed peace. Standing up on a chair at the head of the worn, pieced together table that had just been vacated by Lupin, Harry called for everyone's attention.

"Look, I know that you all have a lot of important things to work out, but try to keep it down. Draco needs all the sleep he can get and I'll have none of you waking him up cause you let your arguments get carried away. Thank you."

Every single eye in the room was locked onto Harry, along with many confused and perplexed faces. Moody was just staring through Harry with his real eye squinting in questions, while his magical eye was spinning towards Draco, sleeping upstairs in Ron's room. "Sorry Harry, you know how we all get carried away, especially when we get to arguing." A few more perplexed looks turned towards Moody, surprised to hear such a thing from his lips.

Harry nodded his thanks and turned again to his friends. The rest of the room returned to their conversations, though they all remained as heated as before, the volume was kept to a minimum.

The door next to Ron flew open to admit Dumbledore and Snape as they arrived to the house. Snape and Harry exchanged death glares as the two professors walked deeper into the room where everyone was turning to hear what Dumbledore was going to say. "I have spoken with Minister Fudge and he has approved an immediate search of Malfoy Manor by those members here that work in the Ministry. I would suggest caution, as we do not know what you may find there and since we do not know if magic is being used to keep those in the Manor from reporting what they have

actually discovered, I suggest that only half of you go in and the others wait.”

The group nodded their understanding and agreement, then since most of those present worked for the ministry in some area, the house was soon nearly empty. Snape excused himself to return to the school, loosing one last snarling gaze at Harry as he left. Within half an hour the only people in the Burrow were Mrs. Weasley, Ron, Hermione, Harry, Draco, and Dumbledore.

“Albus?” The three youths and the Headmaster turned from their conversation at the kitchen table to look at the woman standing in the door way, looking lovingly at all those present. “I’m sorry to interrupt, but the poor dear has woken up and has asked for Harry.”

Harry as at the stairs before he could see the questions on Mrs. Weasley’s face. Once he was upstairs, she turned to the three left sitting in the kitchen. “What exactly is going on between Harry and Lucius’ son?”

Hermione and Ron looked nervously to Dumbledore, hoping he would tell her what was going on, neither really wanting to be the one to tell of Harry and Draco’s relationship. Smiling at the young couple before him, Dumbledore said, “To tell the truth Molly, I’m not entirely sure, myself. I know that they have become fast friends and that the rest of the sixth years in Gryffindor seem to have also taken quite easily to friendship with Draco. I know that neither youth seems very willing to be apart from the other for an extended amount of time and that Draco has taken to spending his nights in your son’s dorm with the other sixth year Gryffindors.”

“Look you two, is Harry gay?” She was looking directly at the two who had hoped to get through this without ever actually talking. “Don’t look so frightened, Merlin, it’s not like I really care one way or the other, it’s just that I would like to know what is going on rather than being in the dark.”

“Well, mum. . .”

“Yes, I am and yes me and Draco are in a relationship, and yes I am deeply in love with him and he with me.” The older woman turned around with a jolt to look at the green eyes behind her and then to the gray swirls next to him, both of which were looking at her, waiting for a reaction. Rather than hearing anything in response, the two boys found themselves wrapped up into a patented Mother Weasley hug.

“Well, I guess I should welcome you into the family, Draco. Harry is a son to me and Arthur and we want you to feel as welcome as him in this house.” The two sets of eyes seemed to sigh with relief before Draco’s began to grow wet again.

“Thank you, I. . .I don’t know what to say, but honestly, thank you.” A tear escaped to Draco’s cheek as the shorter woman took him into another hug and just patted his back, encouraging him with whispered words to just get everything out. Draco, never having had anyone other than Harry treat him this way, with such love and affection, actually did give in and began to truly cry in the arms of Ron’s mother. Everyone in the room watched the display and could not believe a single thing they were seeing. In just the span of a few months, circumstances had changed in their lives to allow their worst enemy to not only be their friend, but to also be in a kitchen, being held by and crying into the shoulder of a woman hated by his father. There was no look of surprise on Molly Weasley’s face, just a look of sorrow and caring as she held the sobbing son of her husband’s nemesis.

After a few minutes, Draco pulled away with a trembling lower lip and seemed a little surprised at himself, but didn't react in any way to put up any defenses at all, he didn't let the Malfoy training take over automatically, he just smiled at the faces of all the people sitting in the kitchen, staring in shock at him. Then for no good reason, he began to laugh.

"I can't imagine what in the world could be so funny." Hermione spoke up watching as the boy who was always a constant pale began turning red from laughing harder and harder. Everyone looked bewildered as to what could have caused such a reaction, a few began to worry that he'd finally just completely cracked and in a way, they were right.

"I'm sorry, really. I'm not laughing at you or anything." Draco took a few big breathes then stood up straight. "I just can't believe how different I am and how much everything has completely turned upside down. I mean, look at me, I was just crying into the arms of Weasley's mom and I would do it again, if she'd let me." At this Molly blushed and smiled lovingly at the young man. "I'm also in complete and total love with the boy I was taught to hate from the time I was able to talk, and I have his friends now as my own, who I truly am thankful for. Merlin, I can't wait to see what will happen next, who knows, maybe I'll ask Creevey to follow us all around to take pictures." Harry and Ron looked very unhappy about this idea, but just shook their heads and started laughing themselves.

"Well, when you put it like that, I can see what would be so funny." The kitchen was soon brightened with the laughter of the six people standing and sitting. They were soon all at the table talking and just enjoying the moment, trying their best to forget the seriousness of what was happening elsewhere and the possible danger that their friends and loved ones were in.

VvVV

A few hours later, it was this scene that a bleak looking Arthur and Remus returned to. Upon entering the kitchen their sad looks immediately brought everyone out of their happy denial and back to the reality of war. Dumbledore and Mrs. Weasley got to their feet and walked to the two men standing just in the door way. Mr. Weasley was taken into a firm embrace by his wife that lasted long enough for Remus to have taken Dumbledore aside and whispered something in his ear that brought a hand to his bearded mouth and removed all twinkle from his eyes, except for the reflection of light on the tears that brimmed his lashes. They both looked to Draco who was leaning into Harry with his head on the boy's shoulder watching them both and hoping that the worst was not about to happen.

"Draco, I think we need to go into the living room and talk about some events tonight." The pain in the older man's voice was easily heard. Mrs. Weasley was also fighting tears, since her husband had just whispered to her the same news Dumbledore had received seconds before.

"No, I want my friends to be here. I have a bad feeling that I'm really going to need them in a minute or so." Molly ran from the room with a loud sob, followed by Mr. Weasley who threw a sad look to Draco before going to hold his wife. Dumbledore nodded to the youth and sat down at the head of the table, facing the four friends who were bracing for the worst and preparing to hold the young man sitting between them.

"Draco, when the members of the Order arrived at the Manor tonight they caught your father and

Voldemort very much off guard, but not unprepared or defenseless. Upon entering into the study where they were both planning some sort of attack, four overly anxious and inexperienced Aurors were immediately killed by your father. Before anything else could be done, he and Voldemort Apparated away, leaving behind a rather sizeable group of Death Eaters to defend their exit and destroy their written plans."

"There was a lot of fighting and a number of traps in the Manor were set off that caught a number of people unaware, wounding some and killing others." The Headmaster took a shaky breath here, as if preparing himself for some difficult task that he really didn't want to have to do. "I'm very sad to have to inform you that your mother was being lead out of the house by Nymphadora Tonks when such a trap was unleashed on the young woman."

"Your mother nearly pushed Tonks right out a window and took the brunt of the powerful magic all herself, saving her." Lupin interjected, with a tint of wonder in his voice.

"Yes, thank you, Professor Lupin. However, having taken all the magic herself, your mother was not so lucky." He took another breath and reached out to Draco, placing a hand on the boy's fore arm and looking him directly in the eye before continuing.

"Draco, your mother was killed almost instantly, but not before she told Ms. Tonks to deliver this to you for saving her life." The three friends around Draco felt his body go ridged and felt their own hearts breaking for him as he reached out and took the sealed envelope from Dumbledore's other hand, as he was still gripping Draco's arm. He stared at it for a long while, before handing it to Harry.

"I can't read it, could you please?" Draco's voice had barely been above a whisper, but the emotion in it screamed at everyone in the room. Harry took the envelope from his hands without saying a word. As he opened it he noticed the small drops of red staining the back, and the red finger print smeared underneath the wax seal. He felt himself choke slightly on some held back tears.

Opening the letter proved one of the most difficult things Harry had been asked to do in his life, but only because of the heavy sadness that was gripping his every move, making simple actions a struggle. Harry finally got the letter out of the envelope and stared at the top line for what he was sure had to have been at least ten minutes, before Draco placed a hand on his cheek and whispered, "Harry, you don't have to. I just couldn't read it myself."

Harry looked back into the deep gray oceans of pain that had so recently been full of laughter. He smiled at Draco, then drawing all the strength he could from the hand on his cheek and the hands on his shoulders letting him know he was surrounded by those he loved the most, he read the letter in a monotone voice afraid any emotion would make it impossible to get through all of the last words Draco would ever receive from his mother.

"Dearest Draco,

I hope this letter finds you well, for I am anything but well as I write you these words. I fear that my life has become forfeit to the only other person in this world I ever loved other than you and have become content with the prospect of my own death. My dearest son, they know you are lying to them and plan to use you still in another twisted plan, but you are no longer safe from them. The truth has reached your father about you and Harry Potter. You are now as hated by him as Harry and you both are in mortal danger. If they ever get a hold of you, you are dead. Please never let either of

those bastards take away my only source of happiness.

I am planning to come visit you at school and ask for refuge once I am there. I hope to soon meet the young man that has stolen your heart and make sure that he is good enough for such a gift. I can only hope that I live long enough for that day to come. I can not write more, as I must quickly send this before any of them comes out of your father's study. Also tell Severus that his cover is blown and if he meets with your father he is as good as dead himself.

Take care my son, know that I am dreaming of being near you again. I love you, never forget or doubt that.

Until we meet again, may love find and treat you well,
Mother"

As Harry finished reading he looked up to find a kitchen full of wet eyes. The Weasleys had returned at some point unnoticed and had heard as well. When she was sure Harry was done reading, Mrs. Weasley rushed to Draco and wrapped him into another hug. "Oh Draco. I'm so sorry dear. She really was such a lovely woman. I can't even remember her ever saying a mean spirited thing in all our days at Hogwarts. I'm so sorry dear, so sorry."

Draco allowed his instincts to wrap his arms around the older woman clutching him and crying now. His eyes soon joined hers and soon a fresh wave of sadness swept through the kitchen as everyone either leaned into the hug that Draco and Mrs. Weasley were sharing, or sat back in a chair and let the fond memories of their late friends both former and recent, flood through their minds.

No one moved for at least an hour, they only cried and let the grief of another night of losses wash over them. As they all ran out of tears each made a vow in their hearts that there would be no more nights like this night, no more families destroyed, and no more mothers, fathers, or children lost to a bastard like Voldemort.

VvVv

They were all still in the kitchen, mostly still holding each other in a group hug when dawn began to brighten the sky. Not a single word was said as they watched the night being pushed away as the sun eventually broke the horizon and blinded them all through the window. They watched the sky be transformed from a black to a beautifully deep blue that held no clouds. Soon, breaking the silence was unavoidable and Dumbledore spoke softly to the room, though after the long hours of silence, his soft words seemed a scream and most of those present shared a jump at hearing someone's voice.

"I'm afraid Remus and myself must be returning to Hogwarts, as it is a Monday morning and there will be classes. However, you four have no reason to even think about classes, you have my personal suggestion to spend the week here at the Burrow and take time to mourn the loss of a great woman and mother. Draco will need you all. Losing our loved ones is never easy, especially under such sudden and horrible circumstances. Also, I can think of no safer place at the moment for you all." His sad eyes, which were lined in red from a night of mourning those that had given their lives in the last so many hours to make it safer for all, looked at each person in the room individually.

When he looked into Draco's eyes, he sent an encouraging smile to Draco, then turned to his side and said, "Professor Lupin, feel free to stay here until your classes are in session, I am sad to say that although more students lost loved ones last night, we must keep the pretense of a normal day until all have been notified by their families."

Arthur Weasley stood from his place on the floor next to his wife and walked Dumbledore out into the yard. Remus looked up at the others in their little group with Draco at the center and sent a weak smile to them before standing from the chair he'd been sitting in since arriving back to the Burrow. "I'd better go ahead now, Sirius and I have lost a few more old friends tonight and I would prefer to be the one to tell him. Draco, I want you to know that I had a lot of respect for your mother, she was always such a caring and loving person, even though we were a few years apart at Hogwarts, she left quite an impression on me. We really have lost a great person in the world, regardless of where her decisions took her in life."

Draco only nodded, unable to trust his voice after crying for so long. His eyes let the older man know that he was thankful for his words. Remus joined the other two outside on the yard and soon he and Dumbledore Apparated to Hogsmeade to return to the school.

Mr. Weasley came back in and looked sadly at the group of people gathered on the floor and in chairs. "I have to get into the Ministry, there's going to be a lot to get done today, and a lot of friends to contact with bad news." He turned after a sad smile and went upstairs. Mrs. Weasley choose to stand and get the day moving, even if it was going to be a long, sad day, they all still had to eat.

"Why don't you all go upstairs and rest for a while, then come back down in a few hours and we'll have a nice big brunch, before we all spend the day sleeping." She smiled lovingly at all four of the young adults on the floor in front of her and placed a kiss on Draco's cheek, then turned to busy herself with some chore or another.

Having no other better plan for what to do, all four stood and trudged up stairs to Ron's room. When they got there they made no pretense of being bashful about sharing a bed. Ron and Hermione laid together on his bed and Harry curled himself up with Draco on his. Not a single one of them cared that they were fully dressed in robes and all, they just held each other and stared blankly at nothing in particular.

Three hours later, when Mrs. Weasley came to fetch them for their promised brunch, she did not wake any of them or worry about seeing any of them together in bed, or care that Ron and Hermione were laying in what could have been a compromising position. She only removed their shoes and robes, with a little help from her wand, and covered them in blankets. She went down to the kitchen and charmed all the food into storage containers and went to bed herself, deciding that sleeping the day away would be easier on an empty stomach, if only just this once.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Twelve - Family

He was pulled from a fitful sleep by the pain that came from trying to make his dry, raw throat swallow. He tried to work up enough saliva in his mouth to send as relief to the fire of his sore throat, but after a few more vain attempts, he gave up and stumbled from his bed and stood, deciding that he was only going to be able to douse his throat with water. As he willed his eyes to open, he found that they too were every bit as dry and scratchy as his throat, and as the light poured into them, they caused a splitting ache to form in his head.

He moaned in the agony of waking, but regretted making any sound with his throat as it instantly burst into greater pain from use. The blur that was his vision slowly adjusted into objects and eventually a room, which Draco realized for the first time was not his, nor the room he had grown accustomed to waking in beside Harry. Slightly panicking and unable to place a single thing in the room from memory, he started to give in to the fast shallow breaths that were beginning to inflame his throat further, but that he couldn't help taking in at increasing speeds. His vision continued to clear, though the ache in his head continued growing quickly, and he actually recognized the form of the body laying in the bed he had just stood up from a few moments before.

Not knowing what else to do, he desperately lunged for the bed and toppled on to the boy lying there asleep. "Harry!" The scratching scream hurt much more than it actually helped, as it really wasn't audible at all. But, since colliding in to a sleeping person usually has the amazing effect of waking them quickly, Harry sat straight up in the bed and looked around for the source of the collision. Taking only a little longer than usual, seeing as how Harry in the mornings was rarely a fast moving one, Harry wrapped himself around the gasping boy beside him and cradled him in his arms, returning to the now familiar rocking position that had been required every morning for the last five days to bring Draco back to a place of safety, both in his mind and in his breathing.

"I'll go get him something to wet his throat, that always seems to help." Harry smiled his thanks to Ron as the other dashed out the door to retrieve a glass.

"Anything you need me to do, Harry?" Harry simply shook his head no at his friend, thankful that Ron and Hermione had taken so quickly to being there for he and Draco in what was becoming their regular morning routine and continued rocking the frail, trembling form in his arms until Ron returned with the water.

Harry pulled Draco away from him and into a more upright position so that Ron could put the glass to his lips and let a small amount of water wet the dry cracked lips, which then poured into the waiting mouth and throat, allowing Draco a chance to stop breathing and relieve the physical pain in his throat and nasal cavities. When the glass had been drained, he shakily pulled it from his lips, having replaced Ron's hands with his own as he drank, and slowly heard his breathing level out.

The room gave a collective sigh as they all relaxed from the tense wake up call. Draco collapsed back into Harry and Ron climbed back into his bed with Hermione. All four seemed relieved to have made it through another panic attack with what had turned into practiced, well, ease was the wrong word, but it was practiced.

After a long sit in silence, the four seemed willing to face the Friday morning that was greeting them through the windows. Draco slowly pulled himself from Harry's safe, warm, and comforting embrace to stand once again next to the bed, this time a little more shakily, but much more calm than before. "Thanks you guys. I really have no idea how in the world I would have survived this week without you." The three were still a little unused to Draco's even more grateful attitude that had been in place over the past week.

"Don't mention it mate, it's what friends are for."

The other two in the room just nodded their agreement with Ron's words as they all stood and stretched in the new day. "I really wish we had more than two days left before we have to return to Hogwarts. I've really gotten used to being around here." Draco yawned as he pulled his arm with his other as far back as it would go, feeling the muscles began waking fully to the exercise. "I know that it's time to move on, seeing as how I had more shock than grief to deal with. My mother had chosen to hold her emotion most of my life until she wrote that damned letter the night she died. I mean, I know she loved me and all, but she had gotten very good at masking her emotions long before I came along." Draco looked around at the three faces staring blankly at him. "I'll miss her, but I...I don't know, it's different. I think she tried to keep herself from getting too attached so that if something like this happened, it wouldn't crush the one left behind"

"But what about the panic attacks you've been having all week?" Hermione asked, ever the one to let her curiosity get the best of her.

"I really think those have more to do with him getting confused and unable to see Harry than anything else." The three blank faces were now shared by everyone staring at Ron, instead of Draco. "What? I can't be observant and deep every now and then?" The silence of the room clearly stated the answer for him.

"What exactly have you noticed?" Draco asked, really trying to figure out for himself where these panic attacks were coming from. He did feel the loss from the death of his mother, but it was not the life shattering experience he had always thought it would be. So, he was confused as to what else could have brought on his fragile mental state.

"Well, you only get these attacks when you first wake up and aren't familiar with your surroundings and can't get your bearings or when you've been somewhere and lost direct eye sight of Harry, like the few times this last week when we've gone to Diagon Alley and the two of you have gotten separated in the crowded streets." Ron was starting to get annoyed at the shocked looks of his friends, he really did have the ability to notice the blatantly obvious when it was thrown in his face for nearly a week.

"So basically, I've become so dependant upon Harry here that I break down like a little kid who's lost his mommy in a crowd and feels scared and lost. Oh no, I am that little kid who cries in the middle of the store, instead of just looking for her."

A sad look flashed across Ron's face before he nodded slowly saying, "Only, instead of looking for your mum, you look for the first place you ever felt true love and affection from. Harry."

"Wow, Ron. You have no idea how sexy this deep thinker in you is." Turning a deeper shade than

most would have thought possible, Hermione looked shocked at herself. “I am so, sorry. I didn’t mean to trivialize anything here, it’s just that I’ve never really seen this side of him before.” She looked worried that she had offended Draco, but only saw a smile play across his face as she looked at him pleadingly.

“You know, Harry’s right. You two are just too cute together.” The room full of friends shared a smile and looks of caring for one another. Draco was sure that he had never in his life shared looks like these with anyone, let alone just friends.

‘No, best friends and who would have ever thought Weasley would have given me something to think about.’

“Well, while Ron has given us all something deep to think about, I personally never think on an empty stomach. So, who’s up for breakfast?” Draco and Hermione shared a smile as their boyfriends raced down the stairs.

“Honestly, you two.” Shaking their heads, they followed the other two downstairs to make sure they at least chewed before swallowing. They had given up on the not eating with your hands issue, since neither Ron nor Harry seemed bothered by shoveling breakfast into their mouths with whatever utensil was handy, no pun intended.

Walking into the kitchen, they all were reminded of another reason for not wanting the week to end. The house elves had nothing on Mrs. Weasley’s breakfast, or her lunch, dinner, and snacks for that matter, and they knew they would miss her loving smiles and hugs every morning.

“Did you get through this morning’s attack okay, dear?” She asked Draco over her shoulder as she fried some bacon at the stove.

“Yes, thank you. I think it’s getting easier to slow myself down as soon as I realize Harry’s there.” He walked over to the shorter, red headed woman and placed a kiss on top of her head, causing her to blush and shoo him playfully away to his seat. He smiled back at her and sat down between Ron and Harry.

“You know, a guy could get worried you were trying to steal his mum, Draco.”

“Well, with a mum like her, I would be quite paranoid of just such a thing if I were you.” Draco smiled at Ron, enjoying the playful tone their bantering had so easily adjusted to over the past months.

“You two stop it, a lady could get used to this.” Mrs. Weasley was turning red from the kind words being lovingly thrown around about her. “But you know Draco, that me and Arthur have come to feel no less for you than one of our own sons this past week. You really are a dear and, I might add, the only man in this house besides my husband who has ever volunteered to help clean up anything.” She said this while casting a gaze at Ron and Harry, though there was nothing but love behind her squint.

Draco looked down at his hands, he was once again overwhelmed by the love that the Weasley’s were capable of. Truth was, he had wanted to help since it was the only way he could think of to

show his emotions too, rather than just saying them of course. He still felt uncomfortable with expressing himself to anyone other than Harry openly, but had come close a few times in the last two days to telling Mr. and Mrs. Weasley how much they had come to mean to him out right.

For about the hundredth time that week, Draco silently cursed his father for preventing any such relationship like the one he had with the Weasley's from forming between he and his mother. He knew from all the stories shared from people at the memorial service held by the Order for all those who died that night, that his mother had once been as giving of emotion as Molly, but that she had been broken by her husband's greed during Voldemort's first reign as Dark Lord.

He now knew that she had been so happy at the idea of having a child that she had walked around with a beaming smile for months, but that shortly before the event's that made Harry famous she had frozen up and had never again showed any emotion to anyone. Draco wasn't sure what had happened, but he knew that only two people in this world could do that to a person, and he hated and blamed them both for missing out on the great woman everyone else had known as his mother. 'I'll kill those bastards when I get the chance, I'll be sure father suffers though.'

Harry saw the hatred portrayed so clearly on Draco's face and felt afraid of him and what he was thinking. He knew Draco blamed his father for everything that had happened in the past week and everything that he'd missed out on for his entire life. He knew how consuming such a blind hatred could be, and just how far it could drive you to do something you'd regret your whole life. He had nearly given in to that hatred a few times himself, but was thankful other's had stopped him before he could develop any of the hatred into actual actions. He wondered sometimes what he would have done to Snape, had Dumbledore not helped Sirius escape before he had received the Kiss.

It had taken him most of the next year to get over the urge to cast an Unforgivable on the man for destroying the first real chance at a life away from the Dursley's. 'I'll just have to be there for him, like Ron and Hermione were there for me.' Draco looked up into Harry's eyes, all traces of hatred already pushed away, and smiled at him.

Draco knew that Harry would never let him face his father and Voldemort alone. He'd never let him kill them because of the guilt that would follow, but Draco knew that to feel guilt you had to feel something other than pure hatred and he held no other emotion for the man that would never be father in his heart again. Draco reserved his love for those he called family, and as of now, his family tree consisted of Harry, Hermione and the Weasleys, and no trace of Lucius Malfoy was present. He was a new person, he was Draco Malfoy, not Lucius' son or any heir to any legacy. He would make his own name, by ridding the world and Harry of the evil that was his father and hopefully Voldemort too. Even if it killed him.

VvVv

Lucius stood beside Voldemort in the dim lighting of their newest headquarters. 'Those damned fools. Draco must have told them everything. I had no idea he'd know about all the anti-detection wards. I have sincerely underestimated his abilities, of course now it is too late for that as he will die at my hand.'

In his hatred, Lucius had deemed it impossible that the Order had just figured out that the wards must have been in place for themselves and had cast every counter charm they could think of till

one worked. Draco really never had any idea about them, and still had never been told the full details of how they had not found his father all summer, or how he had never seen any evidence of a search while at the Manor. But to the elder Malfoy, it made little difference who was to actually blame, as long as his son would die for his betrayal.

He had tried to convince himself briefly that it had to do with losing his wife, but knew that was nothing more than a weak excuse for revenge. He'd never loved her, not in many years at least, not since a few months before Draco was born.

Letting the past lie for the time being, he turned back to the creature he called Lord, and feigned interest in what the other had been blabbing on with. The plans were getting more and more far fetched and desperate, but also very predictable in that they always started off with killing Harry Potter in some fashion, then proceeding with the attack once his greatest obstacle was out of the way.

Lucius found it more and more difficult to not hex the creature where he stood with each passing day, but knew his only chance was to get Potter to kill him. He would be patient though, because it would not be long before Potter had his chance and he would have his vengeance on his son and his son's lover once they had killed off Lord Git. It was just a matter of waiting, soon everything would fall into place and the three people Lucius hated the most in the world would be dead.

VvVv

Snape sat in his office staring blankly at the cold stone wall putting all the past week's events into perspective. He'd lost some colleagues in the Order that he had at least respected, Lucius and Voldemort had slipped away once more, six of the students in his house had lost their Death Eater fathers in the struggle, and worst of all he'd lost one of the few people he had ever shared a deep friendship with.

He put the blame for this on the long list of things that were Harry Potter's fault. If he could have controlled his hormones and left Draco alone, then she would not have been trying to send that warning to her son. But a voice in his head reminded him that he too had received a life saving warning in that letter, and that if Potter and his friends had not over reacted and run to the Burrow to tell Arthur about Voldemort's whereabouts, then he would have been at that very meeting, and would more than likely be dead now.

'That hardly makes up for getting her killed!' A slight knock on the door pulled him from his far off gazing. "Yes! What is it!"

"Professor?" A small voice asked through the door.

"Yes, Creevey, what on earth do you need?"

"Well, sir, it's uh. . .time for class, sir." Snape jumped to his feet and threw open the door to find the fifth year Gryffindors and Slytherins standing in the hall outside his classroom across the hall.

"Next time, Creevey, have more patience! I was busy with something that could not wait, but now I will have to start all over, you fool." Snape pushed past him and the other students and strode his

way to the front of the class, watching the students file in and take their seats. 'You really didn't have to bite the boys head in two, now did you. It was your fault after all.' "Shut up!" Snape's voice rang out in the quite dungeon much more loudly than he had intended bringing every eye in the room up to stare confusedly at him.

"But no one was saying anything at all, Professor."

"It was in anticipation of you opening your mouth prematurely again Mr. Creevey. Five points from Gryffindor for being such a predictable pain."

VvVvV

Following a morning of Wizard's Chess, which Ron and Draco had to call a stale mate for the fourth day in a row, the four had shared another delicious lunch with Mrs. Weasley. Draco stood beside her now drying off dishes as she handed them to him, while Ron and Harry were de-gnoming the garden, and Hermione was trying her best to get down the art of knitting at the kitchen table.

"You know Mrs. Weasley, I can not remember ever having such a wonderful and happy week. Thank you sincerely for opening your home to me." Draco wrapped an uncharacteristic arm around the woman's shoulder and gave a slight squeeze before returning to drying dishes, leaving a very red face on the one cleaning them.

"Draco, you are always welcome here anytime. I have meant every word I've said this week about you and Harry being a part of this family." She turned her head and added, "I just wish I could get a few more daughters added in."

Hermione smiled, knowing the comment had been directed at her, but wondered a little if she meant to imply that if most of her sons, blood and 'adopted', were not gay than they would bring more girls in.

"But, I guess it's harder for girls to take to letting a friends family be their own. Of course with my sons, and that includes you and Harry dear, I only get more guys brought into the home." She playfully bumped into Draco with a small laugh, "Not that I mind who they've been bringing home of course."

"Wait, who else is bringing guys home?" Draco seemed a little shocked at how lightly the woman was taking this, he knew she had approved of him and Harry, but not that they weren't the first and not that she held no reservations about her children being gay at all.

"Oh my, well it's easier to answer with who isn't, really. Ron and Fred are the only ones so far to not have brought home a guy, well of course Percy never has before either I suppose, but he never brought home anyone, so I just assume he feels ashamed of the poor guy."

"But that's quite unusual for so many brothers in one family to be gay, right?"

With a small laugh, Molly turned to the blonde towering beside her saying, "You know, that's what Arthur keeps asking, poor guy just wants to be a grandpa, of course we're holding out for Hermione here." Molly snorted slightly at her own teasing.

The girl knitting at the table didn't look up at all, but stared fiercely at her working hands, thankful for her long, bushy hair that would do its best not to show how red her face had become. Ron and Harry walked in the door at that moment laughing loudly with flushed faces from chasing the gnomes around the garden. "You guys should have seen those things run when Harry here transfigured an old jug in the garden into a large stomping foot. It was great!"

The other three in the room, smiled at the fun the boys obviously had been having. "Harry, did you know that most of Ron's brothers are gay too?" Draco asked, the amazement evident in his voice.

"Mum! You have got to stop counting Percy, Fred and George, just because he's always bringing Lee around doesn't mean that they have some kind of thing going on, Merlin. Draco, don't listen to her. The only gay brothers I have are Charlie and Harry here, of course. I guess that makes you my sort of Brother-in-law in some weird way, then."

Everyone looked at Ron, smiles spreading across their faces to be followed by laughter. It was good to have the good old Ron back, not that they minded his deep thoughts every now and then, but they much preferred the Ron standing there now with a dumbfounded look, trying to figure out how what he'd said could be so funny. "Never change, mate. Never change." Harry laughed, patting Ron on the shoulder.

"You are all impossible, honestly now!"

The rest of the day passed with all five of them spending time in Diagon Alley, to get Mrs. Weasley away from the house and treat her to an afternoon of rest and gifts. Harry and Draco had been responsible for the gift part, both having plenty to be free with, and both wanting to show just how much they appreciated everything the woman had done for them. After a few hours, and a large assortment of bags being carried by Ron for his mother, Harry took Draco aside. "Don't get upset with me, because I know how you hate talking about money, but aren't you worried your father will cut you off?"

Draco peered closely at Harry, then decided there was no point in getting angry, that was the old Malfoy, not him. In turn he just smiled. "Harry, my love, I have my own sources of wealth that he knows nothing about. I have had a number of relatives from my mother's side leave me money when they have died that they didn't want him to touch. I can't really get to most of it for another year, but I get an allotment from them all every so often."

"Really? Wow. Sorry to have asked though, just wanted to make sure you weren't hoping to sponge off the Potter fortune after you'd dried up your funds, seeing as how there is not that much of a fortune." Harry teasingly said, throwing a playful wink at Draco.

"All is forgiven, but Harry, if I were to sponge off of you, you'd never know it. Oh, and never wink again, that was just not appealing." With a playful kiss on his cheek, Draco turned back towards his new family. They all walked into their last shop for the day, and were greeted with big smiles from Fred and George.

"Hey everyone!"

“What brings you all into Weasleys’ Wizarding Wheezes today? Care to make a few return to school purchases, maybe?” George asked with a suggestive dance of his eye brows. They were both smiling at the four standing with their mother. They had already been introduced to the newest ‘addition’ to the family earlier in the week when they had dropped in for dinner, and weren’t shocked to see him or that they were seeing him draped tightly on Harry’s arm.

“Don’t you two dare give them any ideas, I will have none of my children getting kicked out of Hogwarts, I can still barely accept you two walking away from it as it is.” They just beamed at their mother, knowing she was only harassing them out of love and concern. “I just wanted to say hi to you both and see if you were coming to dinner Sunday night. I’m planning a big send off for these four to help make it a little easier to go back on Monday.”

“I really don’t see how feeding us an even bigger meal than you have all this week and making a bigger fuss over us will do anything but make us want to stay with you forever in the Burrow. I really could just hire us all tutors and we’d never have to leave again.” Draco said, smiling at the way Mrs. Weasley always blushed so easily at his kind words.

“Oh now, you stop that or I might just lock you away somewhere so you can’t go back.” Fred and George both went into coughing fits, that sounded amazingly like they were saying very unkind things about Draco’s behavior. “Oh dear, are you two all right, perhaps I should get you some water.” Mrs. Weasley was patting their backs in an instant, looking around for a glass to give them.

They both stood up straight and started laughing, before turning and sandwiching their mother in a hug. “That’s why we love you mum,” They both said. Then Fred added, “And you know that we never turn down a free meal, especially one that you’ve made.”

Now it was Draco and Ron’s turn to cough a few words at the twins. The two shared a smile after having both coughed the same phrase, as if they had practiced for such an occasion.

About a half hour later they were standing once again in the living room of the Burrow, sorting through all the new stuff they’d bought for Mrs. Weasley. There was an assortment of everything from the finest chocolates to some finely woven cloth, she had insisted upon them getting only if she were making shirts for them, but they had picked out patterns for dresses they figured would look great on her when she wasn’t looking.

There was even an impressive pile of things that they had gotten for Arthur in Muggle England. It had been Harry’s idea, knowing how much he adored anything Muggle. He had picked up quite a few battery operated things for the man, along with quite a supply of batteries, that he figured would be used up in a few weeks anyway.

“You boys really shouldn’t have done all this, it’s just so much more than enough of a thank you present, as you called them. There was really no reason.”

“No reason? You have taken me into your home and your family, but more importantly, you have always shown nothing but love and deep care for the guy I love more than anything in the world. I can never do enough to thank you. I hope this is a good start though.” Draco smiled and once again gave the woman a hug, something he was sorely going to miss once they were back at school. He had never been a hug type person, but she brought out the child in him, the child that had never

been given the luxury of affection and that had been taking advantage of every chance to make up for the lost years of contact with a mother that he loved.

“Would it be alright if. . .well would you mind if I were to well, you know. . .um.” He was talking into her ear as he pulled away from their hug, but stood up as he lost his words, still a little unnerved that he had actually started to voice the question that had formed in his mind over the last few days spent getting closer to the first true mother figure he’d ever had.

Looking into his troubled eyes, she reached up and placed a hand on his shoulder and asked, “What is it dear? You can ask me anything.”

“I was hoping that maybe I could call you mum, if you don’t mind of course, I mean I know that it could be weird or something and that I just lost my real mother, but she was always that, just my mother and I have never had a mum, not like you and I just, well oh, bother. I hate getting nervous, cause I always start rambling.”

He was pulled quickly into a tighter hug than any they had shared previously in the week. Before he could really find any more words, the red hair pulled away and Mrs. Weasley choked out through tears, “Of course you can call me mum, I just. . .well you really know how to get my tongue in knots.” She just held him and cried and soon she was joined by all the youths in the room that were soon also joining in the hug.

Arthur walked in to the living room searching for anyone home and looked quizzically at the group hug being shared. Figuring it was another attack of Draco's he went to get some water, since that seemed to help him calm his breathing. When he returned he found a room full of smiles and was just confused. “Oh thank you Arthur, you are always so thoughtful. Welcome home, dear.” His wife walked over and took the glass from his hand and gulped it down.

“Yes, well, you know me.” He looked from face to face of the others in the room hoping to catch a hint of what had just happened. “So, what’s all this about then.”

“Arthur, you won’t believe this, it’s just so sweet. Draco, the dear, has asked to call me mum, you know how I’ve always wanted to let Harry know he could, but thought it would just be bothersome of me. I just never expected that one of them would ask.” She began crying again and hugged her husband. “Isn’t it just so wonderful!” she cried loudly.

He looked up at the two boys standing together, and added his own bright smile to the rest of the group, “Yes, Molly, it is very wonderful.” His eyes drifted over to his son and his girlfriend and he felt his own tears swelling in his eyes. He probably would have cried to , if he hadn’t caught a glimpse of the pile sitting behind his son, and was instantly distracted. “Oh, my. Are those badtree operated?” Harry smiled even wider as the older man made a beeline for the pile on the couch. He looked like a kid at Christmas, especially when he started trying to get all the packaging opened and was having a hard time at it. “Blast this plaidstick stuff, it really is such a bother.”

Harry and Hermione began opening the packages, having had experience with the annoyance that it could truly be, while Mrs. Weasley showed her husband all the gifts that she had also received. It was quite late by the time they had all eaten and had experimented with all the new ‘toys for Arthur’, as his wife had lovingly said over dinner, as he was so excited, he hardly talked about anything else

during the meal. Draco, smiled at the joy he'd been able to bring the two adults that had allowed him so much joy over the last week. He could definitely get used to the idea of being a part of this family.

Something To Sleep To

Disclaimer-Yep, you guessed it, they aren't mine, I own none of the rights, and I am not making millions off of this story.

Chapter Thirteen - An End To Mourning

Saturday morning came and passed before any of the four even bothered to take notice. As one o'clock neared though, Mrs. Weasley felt it was her duty to ensure the youths did not miss out on what was a beautifully gorgeous day. The sun was beaming in a nearly cloudless, slate blue sky that was too bright to be a very deep blue. The few clouds were slim and bright white, offering some contrast from the backdrop of atmosphere, but not a dramatic one. The snow that covered the ground and all bushes, shrubs, trees, and walkways, had a natural magical glitter to it. The fresh, sparkling blanket that had fallen during the night was still undisturbed, as no visitors had come to the Burrow as of yet.

The lumpy, red headed woman strolled into the room that all four of her 'children' were sharing and smiled with a deep joy at the way the two couples were curled together in near identical fashions. She knew it was very uncharacteristic of her to let dating couples share a room, much less a bed, but with the last week they had all had, along with the years they had all lived through, she found herself growing soft against any love that dared to show it's face in such dark, loveless times.

She was about to will herself to let them sleep, when a sweat drenched Draco sat bolt up in bed screaming for Harry to run, that it was too late to save him. Mrs. Weasley frowned at herself for being so wrapped up in the romance of the sight to not have noticed a boy fighting a nightmare. The other three were instantly at his side, having grown accustomed to waking to Draco's cries. Harry cradled him while Hermione rubbed his back, both saying soothing whispers to the shaking and sobbing boy. Molly had gone unnoticed until Ron nearly ran smack into her on his way to fetch some water.

"It's okay, Ron. I'll go get him a glass of water, you just be here for him." Leaving the room, she let a few tears drip to her blouse for Draco.

On the bed, Draco was regaining a small amount of his composure, though it was nothing like the walls he had once built and hid behind, it was simply a return to the ability to think straight, to realize he was not living in the nightmare but safe in the arms of his lover and their friends.

Ron had sat down in front of him, holding the hand that Harry wasn't. Eventually the room was completely silent, each body sagging with relief and the need to really stretch from a good night's rest. Draco was the first to give in to his muscles and raised his arms in what may have looked like a gesture of victory, but was simply a cue for everyone else to follow suit and they all began calling blood flow to all parts of their bodies, all standing and returning to the ease of friendship that had grown between them over the past week.

The trio had excepted Draco's want to just move on past his morning routines as if they had all woken slowly, and not been jolted awake in alarm. He felt his affection for each of them grow with every morning attack they got him through and moved on like it was a natural process of everyone's mornings. He also felt comforted in knowing that while his waking attacks had lessened to a very

few and not nearly as impairing as the ones that followed his nightmares, they always seemed to not get tired of having his burden.

The drink bearer returned and offered not only something to Draco, but had taken the opportunity to bring them all a small lunch of sandwiches and something Draco had discovered during his ventures into the Muggle world over the summer, Doritos. "I figured you all had better eat lunch up here and get around in a while, your brothers are closing shop early and will be here in a few hours and everyone else should be here by five, which is only four hours away. Besides, it really is such a glorious day, you should take advantage of your last truly free afternoon before returning to school." She smiled to them all after placing a motherly kiss on Draco's forehead and after reassuring Ron that it really was okay to eat in his room, if just for this one time, she returned downstairs to continue preparing the meal for that evening, as it would need to feed quite a large group of her friends and family.

"Draco, what were you dreaming this time? I've never heard you actually saying coherent words before." Ron asked with his usual bluntness and tendency to get right to the point. But Draco didn't mind, in fact he had grown to where he expected and was comforted by Ron's brutal and open honesty.

"I can only remember feeling completely helpless, like I knew I was going to die and was only upset because that meant I couldn't do anything to help keep Harry safe. It's really the only thing that actually terrifies me anymore, that I will somehow not be able to keep my promise to Harry to keep him safe."

Ron and Hermione nodded an understanding that only the three of them could possibly have. They were the only ones that were best friends with the one person on earth who seemed to attract serious and life threatening danger like a giant magnet. It was like Harry were a black hole that was pulling every danger possible hurtling towards himself. They knew that he would place himself in front of that danger for each of them without question, and it was that very thought that gave them all a sense of looking out for Harry by avoiding as much trouble as they could. Of course, the only problem was that avoiding trouble while around the Boy-Who-Lived was like trying to stay dry by jumping into a pool, it just wasn't going to happen.

"You never made any promise like that Drac, besides I have a bad feeling that this time, someone will have to save me when I'm trying to save the world." Harry had ended softly, but no one missed a single word.

"I sure as hell did you twit! It was part of the small print that came along with all those I love yous. You can't back out of them now, you already made the same claim and we both accepted." Draco's tone held some of the biting sarcasm of old, but his face and his body language were screaming completely different messages to Harry, when as he had been speaking he had wrapped himself around the other boy in a fierce, rib cracking hug that lasted until Harry began gasping for air. "Oh, sorry, but never make me do that again. I need you here with me Harry, a life where you aren't around to protect and be protected by is not the kind I want to try to live again."

"I guess it's true then, once you've gone gay, there's no other way."

"Sweet God, Ron. It's like Seamus just dropped in for a visit!" Harry burst with laughter at his friends

loudly stated proclamation.

“Ronald Weasley!”

“Well, it’s not my fault, ‘Mione. I got it from Seamus during third year. You’re all pretty lucky that I kept it in this long really.”

“Wow, now he’s been deep and showed restraint. And all in the same week. I do think I’ll cry.” Draco frowned and blinked his eyes as if holding back tears, then ran at Ron and draped himself onto the boy. “My little Ronnie’s all grown up!” The mock hysterics in Draco’s voice made it too much once the other’s in the room caught sight of his face. As his friends laughed, Ron stood still and just turned his head until he was looking at Draco with his best disdainful face.

“And to think I allowed my deepness to be exposed to such lower minded creatures, that would mock an obviously superior intellect.” Having kept a straight face for far too long, Ron let his face be overcome with a smile and then gave into his laughter. They were all laughing at a near uncontrollable rate, but none seemed to care, it felt good to be lost in laughter, untouched by the weight of reality.

“Ron, the only thing deep I ever want to hear again from you are moans.” All three boys looked shocked at Hermione, having been yanked from their laughter at the most (and probably only) overly blatant sexual comment they’d ever heard her say. She blushed hard, along with Ron before all four returned to their laughter with a renewed zeal.

Mrs. Weasley smiled in the kitchen at the sound of laughter, true unhindered laughter. It had been far too long since she had been allowed to hear such pure happiness. Far too long.

VvVv

After eating the lunch Mrs. Weasley had brought for them and taking their showers, all individually of course, Harry, Draco, Ron and Hermione went outside in the garden to sit and bask in the sun. Enjoy the simplicity of the day, and just enjoy being friends. They ended up not sitting very much at all as they were soon wrapped up in a torrent of flying snowballs, the building of a snowman that was given movement by magic, and an impromptu game of hide and go seek. It was during the latter that Draco found an excuse to sneak off with Harry into the wooded areas, surrounding the Burrow. He let Harry, who was ‘it’, catch a glimpse of him moving through the trees and led him for a while deeper in to the woods.

When he reached a small clearing that was surrounded wonderfully by thick shrubbery all the way around, he gave into his impatience and waited for Harry to come and get him. While he waited for his love to walk out of the trees, he cast a warming spell around the clearing and a drying spell on the ground causing a nice thick bed of green grass to spring up magically. Harry stumbled over a tree root and fell into the small warmed and dried space head first, catching himself on his hands. “What the . . .”

“Language, my love.” Harry looked up at the person standing in front of him, as the other bent over and helped him back to his feet. “I really needed to be alone with you for a while, I haven’t even so much as touched your bare skin in a week.”

They were instantly against each other, intent on removing all empty space between themselves. Draco's hands roved over the body that had filled what dreams he'd had that woke him up for other reasons than his nightmares. His hands were soon joined by the hungry gropes of Harry's as they descended into devouring kisses, ravishing the lips that were pressing against their own. When Harry pulled away for air, he found his pants undone and at his ankles and his shirt hiked up to his shoulders.

"Now how the bloody hell did you do that?"

With a small smirk and a gleam in his eyes, Draco simply said, "There are a few advantages to growing up in Slytherin house, my dear innocent Gryffindor. Of course each of those 'advantages' remains a complete secret since we can not have just anyone learning our ways."

"Just shut it and kiss me, you insufferable git." That was all the invitation Draco needed in his desperate and needy state. They were again touching and kissing, removing all air from each other's lungs and between them. Draco pulled Harry's shirt over his head and dropped his boxers to join his pants, which Harry stepped out of before fumbling with Draco's pants and then shirt. Draco stepped out of his pants, after kicking his shoes off and collided again with Harry, their naked bodies crushing even closer, seeking for friction. "You're not wearing any knickers!"

With another smile, Draco kept kissing Harry while he responded, "Makes it easier to get naked."

They slowly made their way down to the ground where they resumed with the heavy snogging. Harry gasped as Draco reached between them and took his erection into his hands and began to play with it, giving it an occasional moan drawing pull. He wanted to have all of Harry, to make him his own, and to give everything of himself to the other. He began to increase the intensity of his hand's work while he moved his mouth to Harry's neck to make his way by kissing and licking to a nipple. He took it in his mouth, gently sucking and biting on it, feeling both the part of Harry in his mouth and his hand respond to the action. "Wait, Draco. Stop!"

Draco pulled away completely, afraid he had done something wrong or had hurt Harry. "I'm sorry, what did I do?"

"Merlin, nothing at all, well nothing wrong at least. I just couldn't take the pleasure anymore without letting go so soon, and I really want to do a little more with you before that happens." Sighing, with the breath he'd been holding, Draco moved back to Harry on his hands and knees, moving on top of the other again.

"Well, if that's all." He reached out again for Harry's aroused self, but was stopped by Harry taking hold of his first.

"It's my turn now, Drac." His throaty whisper was hot in Draco's ear. Draco felt, more than heard the moans that escaped from him as Harry stroked his erection and kissed his way down to Draco's stomach. "I need to taste you." Harry moved lower and let his hand be replaced with his mouth, but before taking Draco into his mouth, he looked up at the boy, to make sure it was okay. There was no doubt by the eyes that meet his that he was not to wait any longer.

Without hesitation, Harry began to kiss and run his tongue along Draco's shaft before taking a little into his mouth, then letting the entire length slip over and past his tongue. He moaned as Draco began to slightly thrust his hips into his mouth, causing ripples of pleasure to course through the body of the boy he had inside of him. He could taste the first drops of precum and eagerly began to rub his tongue with each thrust in and out of his mouth. He felt Draco's legs tense beneath his hands where they were holding him and knew the boy didn't have long left.

"Harry, if you even think about not following through this time, I swear I will kill you." Draco gasped out in a breathless moan. Harry pulled away and looked at the stricken face looking desperately back at him, apparently shocked at having spoken out loud. "I'm so sorry, Harry, I don't mean to push you or anything."

Harry just shrugged and said, "If you kill me, you'll never be able to release yourself into my mouth." Harry smiled his dismissal of anything Draco said in the throes of passion and lowered his head back to the only thing taking up much space in his attention at the moment.

"Holy sweet mother." Draco could feel the release working its way through his body to Harry's mouth. "Harry, I'm abou. . .Ahh!" Before he could get the warning out, he was shooting wave after wave of pent up desire, lust, and cum into his lovers mouth. After he'd been spent he collapsed to the ground, while Harry rested himself in Draco's crotch before dragging his way up to lay side by side with him. Draco could taste himself on Harry's lips when they kissed, and found that he was being overcome with an urge to make this beautiful person laying on him feel what he had just felt.

"Harry, would you make love to me?"

The question hung in silence for long enough for Draco to wonder if his lover had fallen asleep or if he'd pretended not to hear. "Are, are you su. . .sure?"

"Very."

"I have to tell you something first though." Draco braced himself for whatever in the world Harry would say to him. "I have no idea what the hell I'm doing here. At all." Draco let his relief out in a laugh. "I don't see how it is so funny, sorry I haven't got more experience."

"No Harry, it's not that, I just had been expecting the worst, and well, I have no fucking idea what we're doing either. I'm just going with what feels right."

"Will you tell me if it starts to not feel right?"

"I promise, love." With the reassurance, Harry moved on top of Draco, looking longingly into his eyes with a smile, before positioning himself between the legs of boy beneath him. "I think you'll need to use a lubricant charm on yourself before we try anything." His voice was soft, almost sounding frightened. Harry looked at him slightly concerned and confused.

"Oh, yeah. Of course." He caught on to what Draco had meant, but still looked concerned with the tone he was picking up with the words. "Are you really sure about, this? We don't have to do anything if you're as scared as I am."

“You’re scared too?” Draco let the worry melt into his desire at Harry’s words and decided that he had absolutely no doubts about this now. “Harry, I need you inside me, to complete me. I need to feel you in me, to feel our souls wrapping even closer to each other than they already have to become even more of a single entity.”

Their looks did all the rest of the talking, except Draco whispering the charm for a lubricant. As Harry lifted Draco’s leg over his shoulder to gain easier access, and lifted him slightly with his hands, he never moved his eyes away. As he slowly found entrance into Draco and moved his way in till he was completely inside the other boy, he never looked away. And as they slowly found a rhythm and began moving into each other, finding the moves that did the most for the other person, they never let their eyes break contact. They were lost in each other even through the orgasm that ripped through Harry and the second release of Draco’s between their rubbing, naked bodies. Only when neither had the strength to stay as they were did they break eye contact, Harry collapsing fully onto Draco. Both stayed where they had collapsed after the connection had been broken, until they heard the cries of their friends looking for them.

Both suddenly realized how much time must have passed as they had been wrapped up in their little warm bubble. “Shit, we’re covered in cum. What are we going to do?”

Standing calmly, Draco took his wand out of his discarded pants and used a cleaning spell on him and Harry, then began getting dressed. Harry shook his head at his own dramatics and threw his clothes on as quickly as he could. “It will be cold when I drop this warming shield, ready?”

“Yeah, and Draco, thanks.”

“Yes, well, don’t think you’re getting out of the after sex snuggling. You owe me at least a few nights for this interruption, seeing as how they are your friends.”

“Sounds fair to me, though I know they’re your friends now too, so it’s just as much your fault as mine.” Both shared a smile and then were plunged back into the crisp winter air. “We’d better find them before they get everyone searching the woods for our cursed remains.”

“That’s real nice Potter, you really need to work on your after sex chit chat.”

Rolling his eyes, Harry shouted, “Hey, guys we’re over here.” Both began walking back towards the Burrow, breaking into full sprints at the sound of the unmistakable scream of Mrs. Weasley.

Something To Sleep To

Disclaimer-Nope, still don't own them or get paid for writing this stuff.

Chapter Fourteen - The Scream of Greeting

The two boys threw all caution of tripping over or running into something behind at the sound of Mrs. Weasley's scream. They were running in full sprint back to what had become their home and the woman they now called mum. The trees that surrounded them did their best to let the boys know they were unhappy with the disturbance by scrapping every inch of bare skin and even tearing into clothes occasionally to draw more blood. Neither noticed the various scrapes and cuts as they tore through the wooded area. Just before emerging from the cover of the trees, Draco skid to a halt, nearly being bowled completely over by Harry who hadn't been slowing at all. "Damn it, Harry. You really fucking hurt when you run into someone."

"Sorry." It was all Harry had the breath for before taking a few pants. "Why did you stop, we have to make sure she's okay."

"I know that Harry, but we need to make sure we aren't running out into a trap, honestly, it's amazing that you Gryffindors have managed to not get yourselves all killed, running head first into every possible danger."

They were interrupted by crashing foot falls coming from behind them, both turned with wands at the ready, having already pulled them out as they had run. Ron and Hermione burst through some shrubbery and clumsily collided with Draco, who was getting tired of getting run over. "Holy fuck, you two!"

"Well get out of the damn way next time you hear someone charging through the woods."

"Ron! Sorry, Draco, we didn't see you until we were right on top of you." Hermione and Ron were both breathing hard from running and some how were still holding hands as they both bent over to hold their knees to catch their breath.

"Well at least now you all have had the pleasure of colliding and laying on the ground with me today. Harry here can't seem to help falling over me either." Harry mumbled something under his breath that sounded along the lines of 'stuff it you twit'. "I'm assuming you heard mum's screams too?"

"Yeah, so why are we standing around here, let's go make sure she's all right." The trio seemed to be thinking along the same lines, all nodding their heads and moving forward again.

"Wait, we have to make sure it's not a trap." Draco said, exasperated. All three looked at him like they hadn't ever thought of something like that, even Harry who had already been enlightened just a few minutes before. 'How in the world is he supposed to save us all from Voldemort when he tries to get himself killed at every chance?' Draco just shook his head, and then said, "We have to sneak up to the house and see if anything looks suspicious, then we can charge in with wands blazing as you three seem to prefer it."

They all walked to the edge of the trees and peered out at the house and the surrounding yard. They

saw absolutely nothing out of place, but then they didn't see a reason for a scream, nor the person screaming either. They crept around to get a look at the front of the house and felt their hearts skip a beat and jump into their throats. They saw frumpy, skirt clad legs being pulled inside of the house and the front door being shut. "Shit, what are we going to do now?"

Everyone looked assuredly to Ron, though none of them felt anything of the sort themselves and waited for someone to come up with a brilliant plan to save the day. As they sat there thinking, the door opened again and Percy Weasley strode out onto the walkway. "Oh, Merlin, Percy's finally gone and cracked." Ron groaned upon seeing his older brother. But before the shock of everything they had seen could allow the pieces to form into any kind of sense, the tall red headed figure of Arthur Weasley stepped out to where his son stood. This time no one spoke, or knew what in the world was going on.

Draco, who had been filled in on the whole story of everything that had happened between the Weasley's and their third oldest son, still was trying to understand why it seemed such a shock to see him at the Burrow and was going to point out that Percy may have come for a reconciliation visit, but had been stopped in his track at seeing the concerned scowl on Arthur's face. 'If that bastard does anything to mum or dad I'll kill him.' The thought was shared by all four teenagers. Ron finally was bested by his anxious curiosity and jumped from the trees, charging head on towards the two men standing in front of the house.

"Just what the hell do you think you're doing here, you asshole! I had become quite happy with the thought of never having to see your slimy, bootlicking face again. Ever!"

The other three dashed after him, trying to keep him from marching straight into Percy and beating the man he'd once called brother into the ground. "Ronald Weasley! I don't know where you learned such language, but I do know that I have taught you very clearly that it is not welcomed in this house or in my presence!" Everyone was brought up short at hearing the comforting, yet frightening scream of Mrs. Weasley as she came thrumping out the door and towards Ron with a finger waving madly in the air. "And to say such things to your brother no less, honestly! I would have hoped that my children would know a more proper way of greeting their guests, let alone their family."

Arthur looked relieved, but his face instantly took the look of surprise with everyone else's when Percy stopped his mother with his hand on her arm as she walked by and said, "No, mum. He has quite got the right to use such words. I deserve nothing better, and probably don't deserve anything short of a good beat down after the way I have treated you all. Even Harry there has every right to hold nothing but hate for me in his heart."

Draco watched as the people he'd come to know as family slowly welcomed the estranged son back into their love. It took Ron longer than his parents, for he still held a lot of resentment for him, but Harry and Hermione, along with mom and dad Weasley, seemed willing to let everything said and done in the past go at that.

Draco realized then that he had never had any reason to fear meeting these people, no reason to have anything but love and respect for a family who could see past any and all mistakes and look at the person underneath the life decisions.

He realized for the first time in his life why he had always been jealous of Harry and his friends, they

shared love with each other. They had all moved inside while he'd been observing and thinking, the family room was once again filled with bodies as they talked and got reacquainted with their son and brother. Before too long, Mrs. Weasley was up and about preparing things for the evening again, Draco slipped away from Harry's side and went to join her.

"Hey, mum." He said from behind her as he was walking up to her. With a slight turn of the head the woman smiled and nodded her hello to the boy. "Is there anything I can help you with?"

"Well actually dear, nothing other than keep me company, if you don't mind."

"I'd love too." They traded warm smiles as Draco leaned against the sink, next to the stove where she was working away at some sort of stew looking thing. "You know you gave us all quite the scare screaming like you did when Percy showed up at the door. We all came sprinting back thinking that somehow our peaceful escape had been cut short."

"Oh, I'm sorry, dear. I just was so surprised, and then to have screamed a second time and fainted when he spoke, I just can't believe myself sometimes." Her hands had moved on to cutting up some vegetable Draco didn't recognize, which she scooped up and deposited into the pot. Draco found himself growing desperately hungry from the intoxicating aromas wafting from the stove.

"You know, I have no idea how I will survive on Hogwarts food after feasting on your cooking all week. Now I know why Harry always seems so eager to stay here, instead of with his aunt and uncle, well besides the fact that they are horrible and abusive." The last of his words had been coated in the anger that his heart had grown for the only living blood family of Harry's.

"Thank you, dear." She was turning slightly crimson again under Draco's compliments. "They really are the worst sort of Muggles possible. Poor Arthur was heart broken when they turned out to be so hateful of all things magic, he had rather hoped to make some Muggle friends, of course now he has Hermione's parents to pester." Draco smiled at the thought of Mr. Weasley being all lit up with excitement, asking about the simplest of things that seemed so amazing to him, but were taken advantage of by the most common of Muggles.

They remained in a warm, embracing silence for a few minutes, Draco watching as Mrs. Weasley made the most ordinary of foods look amazingly delicious. "How are you doing with your attacks, dear. Are they getting easier to control when you are awake?"

"For the most part, but I still can't shake the nightmares very quickly when I wake up from them." Draco thought about the fact that he was sharing his deepest of troubles with a woman who just a year ago had been the source of jokes against Ron, who had been talked about as being the most despicable wife of the hated Arthur Weasley, by his father. He wrapped his arms around her shoulders and gave her a slight squeeze, resting his head on her shoulder. He didn't move even when he heard a knock on the door and Arthur invite his sons in. Fred and George smiled at the scene when their father walked over and patted Draco's shoulder comfortingly then gave a light kiss to his wife's head. The other two brothers, who had come in with the twins looked slightly confused and amused at seeing their parents taking in another lost child.

"Is that Lucius Malfoy's son?" Charlie whispered in amazement.

“Not anymore, mate. Looks like mom and dad have adopted another brother for us.” Bill smiled now at the scene before them. He really had two amazing parents and it was times like these that reminded him of that fact all the more.

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It wasn't much longer before the house was packed with people, all eagerly awaiting another meal of Molly's. She'd had her two oldest sons set up tables again outside and Draco had gotten Harry, Ron and Hermione to help him set the table. When everyone had arrived there were fifteen people (and one ghost) at the Burrow. After the twins had arrived with the last of the brothers, Dumbledore had arrived a short while later with a fuchsia haired woman who he introduced to Draco as Tonks. It had been a somber moment as she told him of how grateful she was to be alive, thanks to his mother. More than a few eyes grew watery, but the mood was instantly brightened when Draco told her that while he lost his mother, he would never have found his mum without everything happening the way it had. At that there were very few dry eyes. They were eventually joined by Remus Lupin who brought along Ginny and to the surprise of most, Sirius Black.

“You can leave the castle?!” Harry's face brightened into one of the biggest smile he'd had all week as he rushed to his Godfather's ghost. Remus was standing close to him, happy that his decision to bring Sirius had gotten the reaction he'd hoped it would.

“Well, of course I can. It's just so bloody annoying being out among people though, as they rarely take the time to notice you until they are cursing after they walk right through you.” Those around Sirius were laughing, though he himself had been very serious.

Room was made for a chair at the tables for Sirius, though there was no need for a plate as he couldn't eat. The group that was close as a family, was soon enjoying a meal as one. In minutes, they had all relaxed into a easy chatter as they passed food around and helped themselves. They talked about many things, from the latest of news at the Ministry to the latest gossip from Hogwarts, care of Ginny. Laughter and happy looks were exchanged freely, along with as many helpings as one could fit in one's stomach.

As the eating drew to a slow picking, and everyone felt beyond stuffed from the wonderful meal, a few of the older adults at the table pulled out their pipes and began slowly filling the outside air with the most wonderful of scents and magically enhanced smoke rings. Even with the warming charm around them, it had begun to get noticeable cold after the sun had gone down and everyone seemed ready to retire into the house, to continue their evening.

“All right everyone, to the house for coffee, tea, and cake!” There were moans of pleasure and tired bodies as everyone stood up watching all the plates, dishes, silverware, and remaining food load itself into a tub, after putting all leftovers into separate containers which Molly told the headmaster to take to Hagrid, who had been unable to attend. Once inside and arranged in the family room on couches, chairs and the floor, everyone returned to the mingled conversations from outside. When Mrs. Weasley brought in the coffee and tea, Arthur pulled out a few bottles of some very good, very old looking brandy and rum.

Sirius looked at them and broke into a smile, “Hey, are those the bottles you won off of me, James, and Remus during all those card games at the Order headquarters?”

Sharing a smile with the two other men, Arthur nodded. "I've never had a reason to open them before, since Molly's not a big fan of me and alcohol after the way I was at school with it."

"Ha, school indeed, Arthur Weasley. I seem to recall you still finding reasons to share a glass or ten with the boys there when you were all supposed to be on watch. I swear, all Voldemort had to do was wait till you all got good and pissed and absorbed in your games before attacking and it would have been over long ago." Arthur turned slightly red from his wife's words and his children's looks.

"Way to go dad!" The twins echoed with laughter, earning Arthur another glare from his wife as a smile dared to try to show on his face.

"Now boys, that was very wrong of me, very wrong indeed. I can't imagine what could have happened if we had been caught off guard."

"It is amazing what things don't go through your mind when you're young and cocky. I think the lot of us were sure we'd all live forever, as if we were invincible."

"You know I was really surprised when Lily and the boy were attacked, like we were under some secret charm that made us immortal. I remember telling Remus that there was no point in taking extra steps as you and he did, thinking nothing was going to happen to any of us." Everyone in the room froze trying to figure out if they had heard what they were being told by their ears that they had. With wide eyes the ghost seemed to realize he'd let something slip again, a habit he'd found hard to beat since returning. "What did I say?"

"Nothing really, old friend. You just implied that you were talking to James, and not me. Saying something about extra steps he and I took, but saying Remus and I instead of James and I." The man they all knew as Professor Lupin had said with a nervous chuckle, while looking nervously at the others in the room.

"Oh, silly me." Sirius said with an equally nervous laugh. "Sorry if I upset anyone, but I've been having trouble thinking straight, still getting used to having a transparent head and all." A somewhat forced laughter eased some of the tension, but when Arthur unscrewed the top off a bottle of brandy saying, "I need a drink, a stiff one." and then took a long swig straight from the bottle, everyone laughed returning to the ease they had been enjoying moments before.

Of course it had only been a simple slip of the mind, remembering old times and getting names mixed up. Everyone in the room seemed to expect it easily, except for two who were still watching the two friends. Dumbledore and Draco were the only ones to catch the look shared between Sirius and his friend, and they were the only ones that seemed to wonder just what extra precautions had been made, and just which 'friend' was giving Sirius a relieved, yet scolding look.

Draco filed the information away, along with his questions over the past months that had formed in his head from watching Harry and Professor Lupin interact. He decided to pour over the new possibilities and see if it helped make sense of some things, or merely just give him more questions.

The rest of the evening was spent talking over many cups of various drinks, most preferring coffee, though Arthur, Remus and even Dumbledore seemed to have a taste for the harder drinks and each

had numerous glasses of brandy and rum. Sirius, who had figured out how to hold solid objects, kept a half full glass of brandy himself, though only from the habit of having it in his hands when talking with his friends.

The night passed casually, games being broken out eventually. Ron and Draco were pulled into another game of Wizard's Chess, which of course ended in a draw, while the others played numerous games of Exploding Snap. Arthur broke out some Muggle playing cards and the older sons, along with their parents, Remus, Sirius, Tonks, and Dumbledore played through the many Muggle games Arthur enjoyed. After a second round of Euchre, Molly looked at the wall and immediately slipped into mother mode.

"My goodness, it's nearly two in the morning, and you all have school and work tomorrow. Everyone, it's time to wrap up our evening." She was on her feet getting everyone's coats and fetching the left over containers for Dumbledore to take. Making sure that all her children, old, young, and new alike were making their way to bed. After they had all said their goodbyes to Dumbledore, Remus and Sirius, the three left to return to Hogwarts. Tonks had left just before flying out on her broom for Grimmauld Place, after convincing a very concerned Molly Weasley she would be okay getting back ,despite being a little tired.

"Don't worry about Ginny, let her stay here with her family, we will see you all bright and early in the morning, ready for classes. That is except those of you that have moved on past Hogwarts already. It was good seeing you boys again, I am glad all is going well. Take care Molly, Arthur." Dumbledore had nodded to each of the older of the group upon saying their names and with a small wave and a twinkling eye, he turned to walk out where Lupin and Black were waiting for him. They all three disappeared with a pop.

"Well, boys, you are all welcome to stay in your rooms, they are empty. These four are sharing Ron's room, so there's plenty of bed space." No one seemed surprised at hearing their mom's relaxed policy on bed sharing, though most of their brains had been over taken by their sleepy bodies, when told how late it was and really weren't very alert at the moment. "What time will you all need up in the morning, I know these five will need to be dressed, fed and packed by seven thirty, so they can get to school with plenty of time to get to class."

"We don't need up at all in the morning, if it can be helped, mum. We're not open tomorrow since we use Mondays for inventing, so we have nowhere to be." George spoke for he and his brother, both yawning.

"I'm off until Wednesday, myself so I could visit with you guys for a few days, so I too have no reason to see the morning other than to see these guys off." Bill said, stifling his own yawns.

"Well, unlike my fortunate brothers here I have to leave tonight, so good night everyone. It was great meeting you Draco, welcome to the family and all that. I guess I'll see you all at Christmas in a few weeks, and mum, since you seem to be okay with the idea of bed sharing, I'll be bringing home someone to meet you." His lips formed a tired smile before giving the woman a kiss. "Good night all."

"I've got an early morning, myself. I'd better head home now, also."

After Charlie and Percy had Apparated, they all made their way up stairs to bed. Ginny opted to share a room with Bill since she preferred to not be alone after sharing a room with five other girls and Hermione was already spoken for. It took less than twenty minutes for everyone in the house to fall into a deep sleep, and less than an hour for Draco to wake screaming from his first nightmare.

VvVvV

Six o'clock came way too soon for everyone. Despite having told her they didn't need up, the twins and Bill were eating a quiet breakfast with the rest of the house. Even Arthur, who always seemed to barely contain his joyfulness, was looking rough. There were only two people in the kitchen who seemed to be awake and looked like they had gotten rest and they were both bustling around getting food to everyone. Draco and Mrs. Weasley were both fussing over the rest of the family, getting them more food when their plates were empty and refilling glasses with juice or coffee.

"Well, well, Arthur. I see now we remember why exactly our wife disapproves of drinking, especially so late in the evening." She tutted at her husband before filling an extra large mug with a gas station logo on it with coffee and placing it in front of him. Draco was on his other side emptying the contents of a pan onto his plate.

"Yes, dear." He mumbled before taking a few gulps of the coffee and digging in to the food on his plate. Despite being very tired, everyone seemed more than able to put away plenty of the food prepared for them. Eggs made every way possible, bacon crisped perfectly, sausage, toast, pancakes and even hash browns were piled before them and quickly devoured.

"Wow, I think you two make a very dangerous, yet delicious combination." Bill said with a mouthful of eggs to Draco and his mother. "I haven't eaten this well or this much for breakfast in a long time."

"Well, when you work with the best, expect nothing less." Everyone smiled and watched Mrs. Weasley again turn red.

"Draco, what did I tell you about that. I really think you're hoping to be hidden away somewhere by me and kept from returning to school."

"We all are mum, honestly, what's one more day going to hurt, we already missed a week."

Ron had taken a while to say the whole sentence, being that he took large bites of food between nearly every word.

"Ronald Weasley, don't talk with your mouth full, it's just plain rude." Hermione and Mrs. Weasley echoed each other. The entire kitchen was filled with laughter as the two women shared smiles and blushing faces. "Well, it is." Hermione added in quickly.

Draco and Mrs. Weasley sat down themselves and began to enjoy their mornings work. Both decided Bill was right, they were good together. Although, unlike the rest of those eating, they seemed the only two taking the time to actually taste the food and swallow besides Hermione. Ginny had joined in with her brothers at attacking the much missed food of their mother's.

Eventually they all made their way to shower and pack to return to Hogwarts. At seven thirty, Arthur

Weasley stood in the front yard with his children, their various belongings that had been brought to them from Hogwarts over the week and, along with Bill, began apparating them just outside the gates of Hogwarts. When they had all been brought along with their stuff, Bill echoed Charlie's sentiments to Draco, and added that he would definitely be home for Christmas if Draco was helping with the cooking again. The five students made their way back up to school, getting ready to return to the life they had been able to escape, if only for a little while.

Before they walked into the doors, Ginny stopped them on the steps. "You all need to be warned that everyone knows about Harry and Draco. Some Hufflepuff went blabbing after some picture supposedly told him about them getting off together in the prefect's bathroom. Oh and by the way, there's also some rumor that you two got off there too, and everyone's kind of let the story evolve into you all getting off at the same time, together." The very red faced girl slipped into the door at her back, before anyone could kill the messenger, letting a small, sorry slip before she was gone.

The four friends groaned and looked at each other, this was definitely not going to be pretty. "Damn mermaid, it had to be her." Draco said angrily. "I knew it had been too easy getting away with it, she probably couldn't wait to tell anyone who asked what she saw."

"Hey, U'all." Hagrid came walking up to the group on the stairs, "Hadn't you'd be'er be getin' to class. Oh, by the way tell your mom thanks for the great food, she really didna have ta."

"I will." They all answered.

They followed Hagrid into the school and immediately felt the looks of everyone on them. Every person they passed in the halls on their way to Gryffindor Tower had a look for them, some were smiling, some gave a thumbs up, but most glared with smirks or disgusted looks on their faces. When they walked in to the common room they were glad to only see Seamus and Dean sitting on a couch.

"Hey, you guys. Welcome back. Sorry to hear about your mum, Draco. You doing all right?" Dean spoke first, moving into the ease of friendship with the four after a week of being apart.

"Yes, thank you." Draco smiled his sincerity to the other boy.

"Okay, well since my friend here seems too classy to ask, how come you didn't let us in on the fun, huh?"

Dean had leapt from his sitting position and had tackled Seamus before he could ask anything else vulgar and stupid. "Please forgive this idiot, he can't help himself. Dropped on his head as a baby, you know. Numerous times." Dean said sitting on top of a squirming Seamus. They all shared smiles and laughter before taking their things up to the dorm and getting their books for their first few classes.

"Well, here we go. This should be a lot of fun for us all." Draco said with as much sarcasm as he could muster, which at the moment wasn't much.

"Hey, it can't be too bad, I mean we do have each other, don't we?"

“What did I say about deep things coming out of your mouth, dear?” Hermione teased her boyfriend before kissing him on the lips, hard.

“You know, I think I could use one of those myself.” Draco said, horrified when Hermione let go of Ron and turned to him.

“Well, alright but I hope our boyfriends don’t get jealous.” Draco screamed and twisted, while Hermione placed a great sloppy kiss on his cheek and wrapped her arms around him. The three boys seemed shocked again at this Hermione who seemed willing to just have fun and do silly things for no good reason.

“I knew it was true, I just knew it. You guys are all just so, so. . .well sexy. Wow a four some!” Before anyone could explain what had happened really, the screaming Pavarti was rushing down the stairs to tell her friends of the latest developments.

Hermione let go of Draco and stepped back next to Ron, saying, “Oops.” They all laughed, not knowing how else to cope with the situation. “I guess we should all show a little more restraint from now on, can’t be fueling those non existent fires with actual flames.”

“And I suppose that my sarcastic self needs to make a reappearance. Although, now that we’re not around mum, it’s getting easier to not be so. . .overly nice. I think there’s something in the cooking at your house Weasley.”

Ron looked amusedly over at Draco with a smirk. “Good to have the Draco Malfoy we all know and love back. It was getting kind of annoying not having you shooting your mouth off, I was beginning to think you didn’t care anymore.”

“Well, I’m sure I could make up for lost time during double positions.” His smile was again that trademark Malfoy smirk, but to the three seeing it, there was no longer any malice hidden behind it, only veiled caring.

Draco turned to Harry and got the kiss he had actually been referring to getting and then followed his friends out the door to go to their first class of the day, which was, thanks to every mean spirited fate in the world, double potions. It was definitely not going to be an easy day at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry for the four of them. Not easy at all.

VvVv

The cloaked figure stayed prostrate on the floor, neither moving nor daring to raise his eyes to look at his Master. "My Lord, I can confirm the relationship of Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy. They spent the entire week together at the Weasley's."

With a snarl, Voldemort rose from his chair to stand directly above the man kneeling before him.

"You know this with all certainty?" Lucius asked from his place next to Voldemort's throne. "How?"

"I saw them with my own eyes, last night."

"Very good, boy. Perhaps we can find a place for you among my followers." Voldemort's words were followed by the pain of the Cruciatus Curse, making it clear to his newest servant who was the master.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Fifteen - Secrets and Deciphering

The first day back for the four had indeed been very long and just down right ugly. They were all collapsed on the couches in the Gryffindor common room, too tired to make the last effort of going to bed. Draco laid with his feet propped on the arm of the couch and his head in Harry's lap. Harry was sprawled in the same sitting position he'd landed in after dinner and didn't plan on moving anytime soon, figuring he'd rather stay where he was, feeling Draco's presence and stroking the blonde's silky hair. Ron and Hermione had actually found the strength to curl up together after a while on a couch facing the one Draco and Harry were occupying.

It seemed that everyone had believed without question the idea of the four getting off with each other and had felt the need to let them know exactly what they felt about the whole idea. They had each received a pile of letters at breakfast, most just simply blowing up before they could get to them since they were Howlers.

The time in between classes had been the worst though, everyone would stare at them as if expecting them to start a love fest up in the middle of the hallway. Even Professor Snape had taken advantage of the moment to get in a few jibes of his own. Draco had wanted nothing more than to hex the disgusting grin off the man's face after he asked if they were okay with being broken up into groups of two, or if they felt the need to see if a group of four worked out as good at potions as it did in bathrooms.

For Draco, it had been worst when Slytherin and Gryffindor weren't together for a class, as he was then all alone and had to force himself to keep from cursing the idiots in his house. But now, they all seemed too tired to talk about it and too bothered by it to think about anything else, so they just sat in silence, enjoying the comfort of their chosen partner against them.

Neville and Ginny entered the common room, just getting back and looked sadly at their friends sulking on the couches. "Hey guys." Ginny said meekly, approaching the couches they were all slumped in. "I guess it's not a good time to ask how your day went, especially since I already know."

"Then there is obviously no reason for us to have to hear you droning on, is there?" Ron bit out the snide remark much more harshly than he'd wanted or even knew he had the strength to. In fact, he hadn't really wanted to respond at all. Stupid, lousy reflexes.

"Ron, I will pretend you didn't just speak that way to my girlfriend, and chalk it up to one hell of a day on your part." Ron was again stunned by the way Neville had taken to the whole being assertive thing so well. Maybe he needed to spend some time in a bathroom getting pointers from Draco. 'Now that does not sound like it was meant at all, thank Merlin I thought it and didn't say it out loud around Pavarti, everyone would take that as proof of the rumors as soon as they heard what I had said.'

"Where have you guys been anyways, let me know if you need a pass for something before you get in trouble. It is after curfew I believe, and students roaming around at night is strictly forbidden." There was nothing but a smile on her face, and a hint of laughter in her voice as Hermione said this, doing her duty as house prefect of scolding them.

“Actually, we were in the Hospital wing and had permission to be walking the halls, of course we were technically supposed to head straight here, but Neville missed dinner so we went and got him something from the kitchens.”

“What were you in the infirmary for this time, Neville?” Draco asked, voice muffled slightly from the pillow over his head.

“Well, actually, I got a sound beating from those apes, Crabbe and Goyle when I stood up for you all, especially you and Harry. I just couldn’t allow them to say such horrible things about anyone, let alone your parents.” Neville looked tired himself, and now that Harry took the time to notice, even Ginny looked as though she’d had a tough day of defending her brother and friends.

“Hey, thanks you guys for sticking up for us, this can’t have been very easy for you either. Neville, what did they say though that got you mad enough to take on those buffoons?” Harry felt the anger in his body begin to heat him up and he knew his fists were probably clenching and unclenching themselves at his side. Draco sat up, feeling the change in Harry and also feeling a growing apprehension of what those idiots may have said.

Neville looked at Harry, as if he were debating what to say, he knew he couldn’t just walk away without saying more and cursed himself for letting it slip. “Well, actually. You see Harry, they were saying, um that it made since for two sick little fags to um , well these are their words and not mine, now.” Neville seemed very much his old self now, moving from foot to foot, wringing his hands nervously, and starting to sweat a little under the gazes of his friends. “They said it made since for you two to fuck since you were both screwed up by losing your moms, but that neither had ever been more than just the bitch used to breed you with, so they didn’t really see why you would be upset. They had been mostly talking about Draco’s mom and, and well, it just got me good and pissed.” Neville looked sick at the words he’d just repeated and Ginny hugged him, seeing how hard it had been to say those words in front of his friends.

“I’ll kill those fuckers.” Harry said as he stood up, rage boiling over, uncontrollable.

“Harry, please sit down. You scare me when you get like this.” Hermione had been about to say the same since Ron looked every bit as upset as Harry, and every bit as ready to beat the snot out of the two offenders with Harry. “Neville, what did you do to get beat by them though?” Draco asked, both concerned for the boy he’d grown fond of and wanting to move past the subject, before Harry and Ron did something drastic.

“He told them to shut their holes or be sorry. It was so brave and sexy.” Ginny said, admiringly looking up at the boy standing beside her in her arms. “Of course, two on one never works out well and before I could hex them both, they had done a good number on my baby.”

Neville and the rest of the room blushed at the affectionate tone in her voice when she’d said baby, Ron letting out a long, exasperated moan while Hermione smiled at them.

“Thank you Neville, honestly. But everyone here now has to decide that no matter what anyone says or does, we can not respond in anyway but to ignore them or just laugh out loud at them. I mean it. I don’t want to see any of you get hurt. You are my family now, even Neville here, and I won’t have any

of you getting hurt over some ridiculously stupid rumor and those ignorant enough to make an issue out of it.” Draco was looking intently at each of them until he got a nod. Not surprisingly Ron, Harry and even Neville seemed reluctant but eventually gave in to Draco’s stare.

“What happened to the return of the old Malfoy? I can’t believe that you don’t want to get back at them just as much as we do right now. Hell, I never even knew your mother and I want to kill them.” Ron said, looking skeptically over at Draco.

“The old Draco would have probably sent Crabbe and Goyle to the Infirmary for what they said, and trust me, I want revenge for what they said very badly. I just don’t see the point in bothering anymore with stupidity. Those two idiots will most definitely get theirs in life when they realize that there’s no longer a need for brutes like them after Voldemort’s dead, and they don’t have any other skill.”

“Well, that’s for damn sure.” Ron frowned at the floor before looking back at Hermione and then Draco. “Bloody Hell, this new Draco is even more annoying than the old one. Now instead of fighting with simply words, you uses logic on me.”

“And that is entirely unfair?” Draco finished Ron’s thought with his own words. “I’m sorry Weasel, I did not know that change was so hard for you.”

Ron smiled over at the teen after realizing the insult was more a joke than anything else, even if it was at his expense. “Well, at least we know you still can be a smart ass when you want to be. It’s good to know that something’s will never change.”

The friends all got up with the help of Ginny and Neville and made their way to the boys dorm where they were all sleeping now. Ron was too worn out to even attempt making a joking remark to his sister and her boyfriend and just fell backwards on his bed. Everyone else let their robes fall where they fell and climbed into bed in their clothes, not caring at all to bother taking them off and changing.

When everyone had settled into their respective positions it was not long before the sounds of all his friends sleeping could be heard. Draco listened to each of them, even to the loud snores of Seamus and the quiet breathing of Dean and sent a prayer of thanks to whom or whatever had allowed him to be where he was, with who he was. Then he gave in to the sleep that was pulling his eyes shut and slowing his breathing.

VvVv

The house seemed familiar, but Draco couldn’t really place it. Somehow, though, he knew he had to get out of it. He began going from room to room looking for an open window or a door leading outside. Eventually he began to grow panicked, feeling as if something was creeping up on him, but he couldn’t see or hear it. He began running, dashing down the long corridors, hoping that the next room would offer escape. Then he heard it. A long, pain-filled scream that echoed through every room, reaching him in waves, rolling over him with fear and dread. He knew that scream, it was Harry.

Then the sound of harsh, cold laughter reached his ears and he shuddered with the cold fear and hatred it fed into him. He knew that voice as well. Voldemort.

Now his eagerness to get out was redirected at finding his Harry. The screams and laughing continued to grow in intensity and volume as he reached the end of a long dark corridor and reached to open two heavy wooden doors. Inside he did not see Harry being tortured, but his mother laying on a bed very still while his father moved between her legs saying, "You will give me a son, bitch. It is the only reason I married you at all."

Draco rushed to the bed and threw his father off of her, taking her naked body into his arms and holding her. She didn't respond with any emotion, just looked slightly put out at being interrupted. "You already have a son, why must you hurt her!" Draco shouted at Lucius, who was standing up from the floor unashamed of his nakedness.

"I have no son! Not any longer you little fuck! Now let go of my wife, we need to complete this before she dies." His hand slapped hard across Draco's face splattering blood on the white silk sheets. A few more hits and Draco was unable to hold his mother when Lucius took her away and returned her to the bed where he climbed back between her legs and started where he'd been stopped. Draco opened his mouth to scream but instead of his voice he heard Harry's again, this time much closer.

Draco ran to the far side of the room and flew open the doors he'd come in through, but found that they no longer led into the hall but into a cold stone room. He saw Harry hanging in the middle of the room, naked and bleeding from many different open wounds all over his body, tears flowing freely down his cheek, but not from pain, from something he was being forced to watch in a dark corner Draco couldn't see into. He ran to Harry, untying him and holding him up as he turned to make their escape, he now saw what Harry had been watching.

There in the corner, writhing on the floor were Ron and Hermione, both obviously in a lot of pain.

As they watched blood began pouring out of Ron's nose and mouth and he stopped moving completely, then Hermione stopped screaming and moving, but her back still rose with breath.

She crawled over to Ron's body, and screamed out, finding him dead. Draco walked with Harry over to the two and helped Hermione to her feet, then turned ready to make his way out of the dungeons and to safety. He now knew where he was, the Manor he'd grown up in. Before he reached the door he heard the cackling laughter and spun around, supporting his two nearly dead friends. "Well, well, well. If it isn't my good little whore, Draco. Of course, since you never let me actually fuck you, I'm not so sure about the good part."

"Fuck off you bastard!" Draco turned back around and headed for the door, but was brought quickly to his knees, dropping the two he carried and balling up on the dirty, cold floor in pain. Intense, body wide pain. 'This is it,' he thought, 'I'm going to die and Harry and Hermione will too.' "I'm sorry you guys, I tried. I'm just too weak." Darkness overcame him.

VvVvV

Draco jolted awake hearing his own screams and found himself looking into the very concerned faces of Harry, Ron, and Hermione. "Shit, Draco. You've never had a dream like that." Ron's face was completely pale and he was slightly trembling.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck. Help me, I can’t get this out of my brain. God, it was horrible.” Draco let himself be pulled into Harry’s arms and was grateful for the soon added weight of Ron and Hermione both placing their hands on his shoulders. His breathing was short and uneven and he was quickly growing light headed. He could not focus his eyes from the tears in them and the lack of oxygen that was blacking out his vision. Unable to prevent it from happening, Draco let the darkness overwhelm him and with a small, whimpering scream, passed out in Harry’s arms.

“Merlin, I think he passed out, Harry. We have to get him to Madame Pomfrey, this could really be something bad. I think it’s more than we can handle, that was definitely worse than anything before. Did you hear what he was screaming. Fuck Harry, he was fighting You-Know-Who and watching all of us die before losing himself.” Ron was getting paler and was soon the same pasty color of the boy being held by Harry. “He’s never passed out from an attack either, something really needs to be done. I don’t want to see him doing this to himself anymore.”

Nodding his agreement, because he was still in shock over what Draco had been screaming in his sleep, the three of them lifted him from the bed and made their way to the door.

“Hey, Harry. You need anyone else to come with you?” Ginny asked from Neville’s bed. He looked at them and saw Neville already moving towards them and Dean and Seamus both looking at him, ready to move if he needed them.

“Why don’t you guys try to get some sleep, no sense in all of us being walking zombie’s tomorrow.” Hermione said to the other four when Harry hadn’t responded after a few minutes.

“No way am I not coming with you.” Neville said, his look daring anyone to tell him otherwise. “I heard every word of that dream and I know a massive panic attack when I see one, I’m the king of them after all.” He turned and looked over his shoulder at Ginny, “Ginny babe, you should try to sleep though, Hermione’s right some of us will have to be at least a little alert tomorrow.”

Seamus and Dean seemed to accept that as their fate too as they were soon laying back down on their beds. Ginny nodded to her boyfriend and laid back down, but knew she would never find sleep that night, not after Draco’s cries. Not after hearing her brother and friends die on the lips of his tortured body.

The room was soon quiet as the only one’s left in it were Ginny, Dean and Seamus. Snoring was soon heard again, but Dean was as awake as Ginny, slightly amused by the ability his friend had to fall asleep so easily. At that moment he wished for nothing else than to join his friend, but laid in his bed until dawn lightened the dark room and eventually the sun shone through the windows.

He groggily got out of bed and was joined by Ginny who hadn’t slept either, in the common room, where they waited for their friends to get back, anxious to hear how Draco was.

VvVv

Draco was doing great. Seeing as how when they’d arrived Madame Pomfrey looked him over, revived him and then gave him some dreamless sleep draught and Draco had fallen into a truly blissful sleep by the look on his face. The other four in the room however were still awake, hours

after seeing Draco would be okay for at least the night, talking in hushed voices about what Draco had screamed while asleep and about what they could possibly do for the boy to help him sleep better and not wake into panic attacks every time he did dream.

“Couldn’t we just give him some dreamless sleep draught every night before he goes to sleep?” Ron asked with a scratchy tired throat.

“Ron, we’ve already gone over that at least five times, you git. If he never dreams he’d go insane. The brain has to dream or it will simply overload itself.” Hermione answered again in as complex of terms as her brain would allow with an hour of sleep at six in the morning, for what was in fact the fifth time.

“There are other sleep aids though, I used to take them in our earlier years to help cope with my insomnia from anxiety.” Neville said from the chair he was slouched in with eyes half way closed.

“I guess we could always ask Madame Pomfrey, since she is the medical expert here.” Harry said with a small chuckle, really touched at the amount of concern his friends were showing for Draco. As he spoke, the very woman came walking around the corner from her office towards them all carrying a tray of various with numerous glasses on it.

“You all need to get yourselves to Gryffindor Tower and sleep, you are excused from classes, as you would not be likely to gain anything from them today but a few detentions for falling asleep.” She placed the glasses on the nightstand next to Draco’s bed. “I have one of these for each of you, along with three more by the Headmaster’s order for your room mates. Also I will have Draco brought up to Gryffindor Tower, also by the Headmaster’s order, so that you all may be able to get rest without worrying about him. Although, I must say that I’ve never seen such bonds formed between houses. Anyway, you all go and Draco will be along shortly. Scoot!”

Not ever taking the woman in any way but serious, the four took the glasses for themselves and Ginny, Seamus and Dean, too tired to wonder how Dumbledore knew they were all sleeping in the same dorm, and headed sleepily up the many stairs to Gryffindor Tower.

When they got there, they found Dean and Ginny both sitting on a couch, half awake but losing the fight against sleep quickly. Neville picked up Ginny and kissed her cheek and Dean was half carried on Harry’s shoulders. When they got to the room, they were greeted by the groggy good morning from Seamus, who quickly fell back into his pillow.

They told the other two who were conscious that they’d been excused and were supposed to take the potion and sleep for the day. No one argued or made any comment, just downed their glass and went to bed. Seconds before Harry was pulled into slumberland, Draco was placed by his side and they curled into each other naturally. Professor Dumbledore looked at all eight students in the room, six of who were snuggled with another in bed and smiled. Shaking his head slightly, he walked out of the room, shut the door, and put an anti-disturbance charm on it so that no one would disturb the youths.

VvVv

Voldemort read the latest reports from the school with a growing smile. The boys had returned

finally to the school. He was still outraged at missing the chance to get them at the Burrow, but he knew that any attack would have been easily repelled by the members of the Order that had been hiding around, waiting for such a thing to occur. Also, after the last attack, the number of Death Eaters had nearly been cut in half from deaths and defections. Lucius had paid dearly for the treachery of his son, the man had been unconscious for a few days, but was back to full strength now.

“We’ll still get you both, have no worries about that. Soon you will both be my play things and my games are much, much more deadly than any sexual teases you play together. No, my games get your friends and everyone you care for killed before your very eyes. Then we will see how strong your love is.” The cackle from Draco’s nightmares echoed throughout the dimly lit, cold stone underground lair.

Voldemort talked to himself for a while longer, approving of the plans he was about to set in motion with the new year. This would be the last Christmas holiday anyone would ever enjoy if he had his way, and he honestly saw no reason why he wouldn’t. “Just a few more months and I will finally have what is mine.”

He turned and slithered/walked back to the rooms that had been set up as their new headquarters, their fourth in a week due to all the defections. Voldemort felt it was time to once again remind these fools why they stayed loyal to him. He needed to remind them all of the price that was paid for deserting and betraying him and he would remind them with the deaths of their family members. Besides, once they had no family to worry about, they would be less inclined to let their hearts turn them away from their Dark Lord.

“Lucius, I have developed more plans.” He hissed when he entered the main chamber and swept past the man sitting in a chair watching the fire. The beaten man stood regally, belying the pain his body was screaming with and followed his soon former master into his lair for more mind numbingly stupid plans.

“Coming my Lord.” “You are so blind to those around you that you wrap their venomous mouths around your own neck.’ The time was near, Lucius knew that all the latest lessons by their leader to remind his followers what happens to deserters had only strengthened the numbers who were ready to be led, not ruled. They all also knew that not a single one of them could kill the creature alone. But at the current rate of spreading mutiny, all Voldemort had to do was make one more drastic move against say, a followers family, and his fate would be sealed completely.

Preparing himself to look interested and agree with the most ignorant and overly intricate plans possible, Lucius joined the Dark Lord at the table in his room. ‘Let the games begin, He-Who-Must-Soon-Be-Killed.’

“I have come up with a way to re-instill devotion in my followers. You are to organize and execute an attack on the Zabini family. Kill them all except the father, he will live with the knowledge that he killed his family by turning to Dumbledore. I will remind them who is to be feared!”

“My Lord, possibly we should wait until the end of the coming holidays, as the two oldest sons attend Hogwarts, but will no doubt be home during the break.” Lucius knew that Voldemort would never suspect him of buying time, but he also knew that if he didn’t the family could be dead by

morning, even the sons at Hogwarts who slept with a few overly anxious servants. “It would require the loss of good spies in Slytherin house if we were to act rashly.”

“Very well, I suppose we should be sparing with the remaining children, after all they are our only link now that our esteemed potions professor has been revealed. Another one of your mistakes, I believe.”

Lucius didn’t speak, they both knew he had been the one to bring in Severus and to place him in a position to know a great amount of information. He had been blinded by a boy hood infatuation, but now there was nothing but the cold hatred for the man that he felt for his own son. They had both betrayed him and left him at the mercy of Voldemort, something he would probably never fully heal from, no matter how much he reported being back to full health.

They were both going to pay, and the payment was nothing less than their very souls. But for the time being, he had to find a way to get the Zabini out of harms way and fake their deaths so Voldemort would not take his life in return for sparing the others. His own family may be dead to him, both literally and figuratively, but that was no reason to kill another man’s family because he had followed Lucius’ orders perfectly. Things were definitely looking up for Lucius Malfoy, future ruler of the world.

VVVV

It was three in the afternoon when the first stirrings were made in the seventh year dorm room. Seamus, who hadn’t taken any potions, but had slept as easily as the others through most of the day, sat up and picked up his watch from the edge of his bed and nearly fell to the floor upon seeing it was nearly evening. “Holy mother of God! He jumped down slightly clumsily as his legs were still trying to stay asleep and dropped his full weight on Dean, waking the boy from an obviously deep sleep. It took at least two minutes before Dean was able to hear or say anything coherent. “What’s the problem with you being up my bed is sleeping.” Seamus laughed at the last attempt by his friend to talk.

“I think what he means is, ‘why are you waking people up by making noise when we’ve been excused from classes for the day to sleep after Malfoy kept most of us up all night.’” Ginny spoke from the bed next to their stacked beds. “You really are making it hard to call you a friend at the moment.”

“What happened to Draco last night? I don’t remember being up at all.”

“That because you weren’t you twit. You slept soundly all night and apparently all day as you haven’t bothered any of us till, well what time is it anyway?” Ron spoke from the bed at the far side of the room.

“It’s a little after three by my watch.” Harry announced after looking at his wrist. He was a little irritated to find he had slept with even his shoes on all day. “I guess we should get up now anyway or we’ll never get to sleep tonight.”

“Hey, what happened to Draco, no one answered my question.”

Harry nearly jumped out of bed when the body curled around him suddenly spoke. "I had a rather disturbing dream and it sent me into a right frenzy. Of course, I dare anyone here to dream of Seamus doing a thirty minute pole dance and not require medical attention afterwards." Everyone laughed, returning to the routine they had gotten used to of banter and laughter to get them all awake. Even Seamus laughed after telling Draco to go do something very vulgar involving Draco and a hippogriff.

After a few more minutes of laying in bed they all worked their way to standing positions and began taking turns in the showers, enjoying having the entire Tower to themselves, except for Collin who had been hexed by a Ravenclaw for taking a rather compromising picture of her and her boyfriend down by the lake. His hands were still fused to the camera, along with his eyes, which had been near blinded by the continuous flash of the bulb that now faced him directly.

They were all sitting in the common room enjoying the warm fire on a particularly cold afternoon. Hermione was reading a book, Ron and Draco were again trying to actually win a game of Wizard's Chess and the rest were either staring at each other or the fire, letting their thoughts wander aimlessly around.

Harry looked over at Hermione and teased her by asking, "Do you feel so guilty about having missed a whole day of classes that you're actually learning what we were supposed to?"

Rolling her eyes, and giving her best annoyed sigh, she looked at Harry. "Actually, I'm doing a little research on that little project of yours and Draco's."

"Oh, yeah. I keep forgetting about that. Had any luck yet?" He asked, not allowing any actual remorse show in his voice for letting Hermione do all the work, but with a big grin meant to annoy.

"Well, actually, none. There just doesn't seem to be any mention of these runes in any history I can find. They must really be ancient."

Seamus was knocked to the floor when his friend jumped up from the couch they'd been sharing and asked, "Did somebody say ancient runes? I love ancient history, maybe I've come across them before."

"Well, I doubt it, but what can it hurt. Someone has to know what these mean or where they come from." Hermione said as she handed the scroll with the rune writing on it to Dean, who eagerly took it and looked over it with wide eyes.

"I think I see the problem you're having with finding them." He turned the scroll sideways and began to tell them what they all meant, with a huge smile.

"Hold on, hold on. Let me write this down. And just so you know that is how they were given to us, we didn't write them sideways." She pulled out a quill and fresh paper and began to write what Dean said aloud. As he read though, he kept turning the parchment either left or right on it's side or upside down.

"It's no wonder this has been so hard, I mean these were all jumbled up."

“Thanks Dean, that would have taken us forever and we probably would have never found out what those meant.”

“No problem mates, but now we have to arrange the words Hermione wrote down because I know that didn’t make any kind of an actual sentence.” Dean returned to his seat beside Seamus, a huge grin still plastered on his face. “See Seamus, that’s what happens when you actually read a book every now and then, or pay attention in ancient history class, not that you would ever take it though.”

Everyone looked to Hermione to give them the words, eager now for something to do besides fire gazing. “Well according to Dean, there, we have a rather lot of words seeing as how most of the runes were actually just single words, instead of the normal, which is phrases.” She looked up at the expectant faces, happy to see they still all looked to her for their major source of wisdom. “All right. Well, we have : two enemies, strengths, weaknesses, love, multiplied, collide, and lastly banish.” Everyone was looking about as confused as Neville in potions.

“Well what in the bloody hell does that mean.” Ron voiced the thought in everyone’s head, though maybe a tad more elegantly. No one spoke for a while as they all tried to arrange the words into a coherent thought. “Okay, I’ve got it.” Everyone looked at Ron, Hermione hoping for one of his deep moments. He cleared his throat and sat up straight before continuing. “Two enemies with multiplied strengths collide and banish love weaknesses.” He finished with a proud smile that quickly faded as he looked at the others in the room. “Come on now, it wasn’t that bad! I’d like to see someone else do better.”

“Actually, Ron. That makes a lot more sense than anything I’ve combined yet.” Harry gave his friend an encouraging smile before running the phrase through his mind again. “You know it really makes some sense when you think about it, or maybe not, I don’t know.”

Draco looked at his lover and smiled at the wonderfully cute face he made when he got confused and flustered. “Are you sure about all those meanings, Dean?” He spoke after admiring the beauty beside for a few seconds longer.

“Honestly, I can only say for the most part. And they could be old enough to have been replaced with a different word over time after this was written.” The last hope of getting something really great accomplished with their free time vanished, along with their enthusiasm to work on it. “So basically, we could be nowhere closer to knowing what it means than you guys were last week.”

“No, we definitely have made a major step toward getting this figured out. I think I’ll go to the library now that I know what I am actually looking for.” Hermione got up and kissed Ron’s cheek and headed for the picture frame to head out.

“Hey, wait! Mind if I tag along, I love this stuff and I’m bored as a Dementor in an orphanage here.” Dean was already following Hermione out of the door before she had nodded an okay.

“Whew, anyone else feel the I.Q. level return to a comfortable level when they left?”

“Speak for yourself Seamus, I find it hard to restrain my intellect around you five.” The friendly banter continued for some hours, along with continued games of chess and fire gazing.

Although Harry spent a lot more time trying to figure out what those words could have possibly meant, especially in reference to Voldemort and him. Could they be the two enemies that collide? He only hoped that it wouldn't happen for a while yet, he was finally starting to find a reason to be truly happy and didn't want anything to get in the way of him and Draco's love, most definitely not his own death at the hands of Voldemort.

Deciding to leave those thoughts for nights he couldn't sleep anyway, Harry focused solely on enjoying the day with Draco, Ron, and his other friends. He could really get used to just living, and not living a destiny. With a soft sigh he cuddled into Draco and watched his lover and his best friend once again end their game in a draw.

VvVvV

Dumbledore sat in his office reading the Daily Prophet, a luxury of time he very rarely had anymore. He hadn't bothered looking at the headlines since he knew what had actually happened in most cases, it wasn't much of interest to the old man. He went to the middle of the paper, where the facts were allowed a little leeway in the interest of a good bit of gossip. He chuckled his way through the supposed sightings of a very much alive Sirius Black, the sordid love lives of various witches and wizards who were recognizable by name, but stopped dead when he turned the paper over and saw the story taking up the entire front page. There was a picture of Harry and Draco sharing what was obviously a very passionate kiss, and a smaller photo of Ron and Hermione in a similar lip embrace.

A cold fury rose up inside him as he read the story that followed. This was going to be bad, very bad. Tomorrow morning these four were going to get much more than a few Howlers from upset classmates, they were going to be very much thrown into the public eye and scrutinized. He rose from his desk and went to tell the house elves to prepare for a large amount of mail to be sorted. He would not allow something as ignorant as a school house rumor cause the poor youths anymore trouble. This was not something that any of them needed to deal with, ever.

Still, in the back of his mind, the question was raised of just how much of this rumor was based in fact. The part of them all four doing things together was such an obvious falsehood, it seemed ridiculous that anyone would give it a second thought, but if both couples had in fact been using the prefect bathrooms for late night activities, even if separately, than he was going to have to have a very uncomfortable talk with them about being more discreet.

He grimaced at the thought of such a conversation, but he figured it could be much worse of a circumstance. 'After all, they are each deeply in love with their chosen other. I've definitely had more grave conversations with Harry.' He rounded the corner for the last hallway and tickled the appropriate fruit to be let into the kitchen so he could talk to the house elves, both to warn them and to ask what they knew.

VvVvV

Remus sat in his office, letting the events from two nights before run through his brain again. He wondered now why he hadn't just let everything out then. Everyone who had a right to know had been there and he trusted each of them to not let it be widely known. He even found himself able to

trust Harry's lover, Draco Malfoy. He was still shocked that the two had fallen in love, but was glad Harry had found someone that seemed to be so good for him. He still couldn't believe little Harry was so grown up, he had been forced to miss so much of the boy's life. He wondered how Harry would react when he found out the truth about Remus Lupin, and hoped he would understand why he'd been forced to play his part in the deception even to Harry.

'It's odd how often we convince ourselves that the best way to keep him safe is to not let him know what's going on.' His hand ran across his stubble covered face, he hadn't been able to really face the last two days beyond teaching class and eating meals. Every time he saw Harry, he nearly exploded with the secret he was forced to hide behind for the time being.

Sirius drifted in through the door, looking sadly at his friend. "Hey, how are you doing?"

The other man snorted, "Fine, considering I'm living a lie for the only person I care to protect. It kills me Sirius, he should know about me, he should know about the extra precautions Remus and I took that night before I went into hiding. He should know why I wasn't there the night his mother and our friend gave their lives to protect him. He should know why I've never been more than a friend to him. He deserves to hear an explanation from his father, Sirius." The man sitting behind the desk was crying without reservations. The last sixteen years of his life had lead him to this moment, yet he knew that the very reason he and Remus had performed the complex body switching spell all those years ago, was still the reason he couldn't tell Harry, or anyone for that matter.

If James Potter was known to still be alive, than Harry was in much graver danger than his current threat to Voldemort allowed. But, two Potters was a much more considerable force, a much larger threat. One that every Death Eater and power hungry bastard would be out to take advantage of, either by capturing one or the other, or using some means to get one to use his powers to keep the other from getting hurt. Harry was a very powerful wizard, but with his father alive he was more than just very powerful, he was the most powerful.

James let his heart grow heavy again as he thought of how even Dumbledore had been tempted to use that power to wipe Voldemort and his followers from the earth when Harry was born and found to be exceptionally powerful. James had hid so that no one would ask his son to ever kill such a large number of people. Even the most evil of enemies left nightmares behind when they were killed. His son would not be haunted by such dreams, not if he could help it.

"I'm sorry that I made it that much harder to keep it from them all. You know Dumbledore caught something, and I'm sure that Draco was watching us afterwards, looking for something to confirm a suspicion." Sirius drifted closer to his friend. "I know that it's been hard on you all these years, watching your son grow up without a father, but you have to remain strong. Remus and Lily gave their lives to keep Harry from being used as a weapon, and even Dumbledore has come to see the horrible consequences that using Harry in such a way would have created for him. He's told me that much himself, regrets the way you two left things the last time you spoke to him before switching."

"Yeah, I know, he's told me about his regrets when we've been talking about the friends we've all lost over the years battling Voldemort. I nearly told him then myself, he looked so sad. But I can't let such a temptation be known, even to Dumbledore. It is too easy a thing to ask of Harry, hell, I've considered it myself, but there are some prices that are never worth paying."

“What if Dumbledore figures it out, since you know it’s just a matter of time now.”

“Then I will tell him everything, and let him know the lengths I’ll go to just to make sure Harry can never be used in such a way. I was ready to kill myself long ago, before Moony came up with the switching spell idea.”

“My friend, I truly hope it never comes to that, I like having you around in solid form.”

Both friends shared smiles with each other and grew silent. Together they sat and let the years of memories pass through their minds. James shedding a fair amount of tears when he remembered how happy he and his wife had been, how lucky they had felt having Harry. How ready they had been to throw it all away to ensure their son never had to face the choice of murdering thousands to save millions.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Sixteen - A Lot Of Explaining To Do

As early evening crept over the school, and students were returning to their common rooms to blow off time before curfew and lights out, Dean and Hermione were only just starting to feel the slightest bit of weariness seep into their quiet corner of the Library. They had found the books they thought they would need and had dived straight into them looking for any alternate meanings for the now readable runes. Hermione had been kicking herself for the past few hours while they read for the fact that she'd never even bothered thinking about the runes being in the wrong directions. She was glad they were getting somewhere finally with it all, but slightly let herself be jealous that Dean had been the one to know something the others did not this time. 'Great, I'm starting to sound like Ron back in fourth year when he was jealous of Harry.'

"Hey, over there. Whatcha thinking?" Hermione shook her head out of her reverie and smiled at Dean.

"Just remembering some of the things that Harry, Ron, and I have gone through over the years."

"You guys sure have been through a lot, huh? You know, me and Seamus used to get so mad about not ever being included. Not that we ever let you guys know we wanted to come with you and all, but still we were all friends."

"Wow, I'm sorry Dean. We just never thought about bringing more people in on it all."

"It's okay and all, I'm over it. Just don't rush off with this translation and kill Voldemort or something and leave us behind again." The two shared a smile and slipped into a silent search. After a while Dean's body cried for a stretch and he gave in, while standing up he glanced at his wrist and frowned. "We missed dinner."

"Really? I didn't think we'd been in here that long. Ready to call it a night, then?"

"Well, I don't think I'll find anything tonight now that I know I missed food."

They placed their books in the middle of the table where they would return themselves magically and headed for the kitchens to get food. They were both just letting their minds wander as they walked, not really paying attention to much other than walking in the general direction of the kitchen and not falling down stairs. They were taking what was easily the longest route, now passing by the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom when Dean tripped over a pair of feet sticking out into the hallway.

"What the bloody Hell!" Dean called as he collided with the floor. He got to his knees and crawled over to the wall to see what had tripped him, and was shocked to see a shaking body. "Draco, are you okay? Draco, talk to me! What's wrong?" Hermione lit her wand so there was at least some dim light in the corridor.

"I think he's having another attack." She said as she knelt down and took him in her arms. "Draco, it's okay. What are you doing out here? Draco? Can you hear me? Where's Harry?"

Dean looked unsure of what to do, he'd seen the three of them calm the boy when he woke from dreams, but he'd never seen him so bad during the day. There were times when he would get panicky, but he'd never looked so completely terrified and withdrawn. Dean just settled down next to the two friends, his two friends, and wrapped an arm around them both.

After a few minutes they were glad to feel the tense body relaxing in their arms, and were relieved to hear his breath slow and his voice return. "I've heard something, something I really wasn't supposed to." He began to shake again, tears falling down his cheeks with renewed vigor. "Oh, God, what am I going to do? I can't tell anyone, especially Harry! Oh God."

"Draco, you have to calm down, just breathe." Dean had snapped into his element, he knew how to get a person focused before they overreacted. His two best friends were Neville Longbottom and Seamus Finnegan, after all. He was shaking the boy by the shoulders and forcing him to look him in the face. "Just start from the beginning, okay? Now why are you out here?"

Draco calmed slightly again, finding strength in the eyes of his new friend and let himself form the story in his mind. Looking from Dean to Hermione, he started with a shaky, tear filled voice. "Well, I had to take care of some prefect duties after dinner and it took a while, those damn first years were rowdy tonight." A small smile flashed across his face, barely long enough to be seen in the dim wand light. "I was taking the long way back to the tower so I could have some time to just think to myself, when I saw Sirius drifting down the hall and figured I would say hello and try to make a start at getting close to him, because Harry thinks it would be great and thinks we would just be smashing as friends." He had started to speed up his words and started babbling for a few seconds under his breath where neither Hermione nor Dean could make out anything he was saying. Dean gave him another soft shake and got him to slow down and take some deep breaths before continuing.

"Right, sorry. Anyway, I saw Sirius and followed him, hoping to get a chance to talk to him for Harry. He went through the door to Professor Lupin's office and I was about to knock when they started talking and. . .and. . .and I've really messed things up now. They'll never believe I wasn't eavesdropping, but I swear I hadn't meant to, I just got lost when he started to say things that just didn't make sense." He was shaking again and despite what either one of the friends by his side tried, there was no calming him down again. Dean picked the smaller boy up, surprised that Draco was actually as light as he looked and started moving down the hall as fast as he could with the added weight, because while he was more on the muscled lean side than scrawny, it wasn't from working out and being overly strong.

Hermione was rising from the floor to follow them and help Dean as much as she could from falling down the many flights of stairs and getting he and Draco both killed, when Sirius came right out of the wall next to her causing her to scream and jump away only to fall back on the ground, flat on her butt. Her eyes grew bigger than the shocked ones Sirius was sporting at having found someone just outside the room he had been in with his friend. Oh, no, She knows. She must have heard, been listening at the door and was caught off guard when I came through the wall. The door to the office swung open and Professor Lupin's face went as pale as his floating friend's.

"Hermione? What are you doing down there? Where you, did you. . .Merlin, you heard everything didn't you?" He was walking over to the very stunned girl and noticed Dean a few feet away holding

someone in his arms that was shaking badly and clutching onto him hard. "I think you three better come into my office, there's a lot of explaining to do. On my part, as well as yours."

"Professor, I don't know what is going on here, but we found Draco in a right horrible state and we couldn't get him to stay calm enough to tell us anything other than he heard something he shouldn't have and that he's scared himself pissless that he's ruined everything now and that you will think he eavesdropped when it had been an accident. I'm taking him to Harry or the infirmary, whichever I can get to without collapsing first, I'm sorry but there's no other way at the moment. He needs help."

Without another word and without looking behind him, Dean lugged Draco towards the only person that seemed able to really bring him down from these attacks. He was taking him to Harry, because Harry was what Draco needed. It was that simple to him. He knew the power of love, he'd spent the last six years of his life with the best living example of it, and he knew that Harry and Draco were very much in love.

The remaining three watched until Dean was out of sight from going around a corner at a rather impressive speed before turning back to each other. They all seemed to have had time to recover from their earlier shock and seemed ready to sort this all out. At least one person did, no matter that Hermione or Sirius actually felt like running (or floating) away quickly from the tense and very awkward situation.

"Hermione, I need to know what Draco heard and what he told you." There was a very determined and almost scary look in his gaze that Hermione had never seen, and was hoping she would never again.

"Professor Lupin, he...I...we...what's going on?"

The man standing before her seemed to break down and to give in to something. With a great sigh his shoulders sagged as if under a great weight and his eyes closed leaving a very sad and defeated face. "I'm afraid that Draco heard something that he very much shouldn't have, something that will make Harry's life much more complicated. Something that will make all of our lives more complicated. But mostly something that will put those two into much more grave danger than they can imagine." His words had been a whisper, but the emotion carried with them was a storm of the pain and the futile fighting of years. "Why don't you go make sure they make it to Harry and I'll come along shortly to make sure of what he heard and make sure that nothing gets confused. Harry will need us all there, and since this will effect you all, you need to hear it with him."

Hermione didn't speak, she was way too confused as to what in the world could be so bad, but she did as the man had said and got up and followed Dean in a run to catch up with him and Draco. She didn't know why, but she knew that the happy obliviousness of the past few days was coming crashing down and that they would pay for trying to escape reality. This was going to be bad, really bad.

She caught up with Dean at the foot of the last staircase to Gryffindor Tower and let herself be amazed at the boy's speed. "Dean, you doing okay?"

"Yeah, I think I've gotten quite a kick of adrenaline going, so I'm taking advantage of the super-

human strength while I've got it." He smiled over at her when she came to his side and together they walked up the stairs and headed for the picture frame to get in.

"Not all snakes are poisonous." She said the new password, causing the picture to swing forward before the Fat Lady could ask any annoying questions. They found Harry, Ron, and Seamus sitting with Dumbledore by the fire forming somewhat of a circle by the chairs they were sitting in to face each other.

"Harry, he needs you!" Dean hadn't stopped walking and was handing Draco into Harry's arms before he had a chance to stand up. Ron was instantly on the couch beside them, joined quickly by Hermione and the three took to comforting the still shaking boy. His lips were going blue from the short breathes he was gasping at erratic intervals and were trembling. His eyes were half closed, but focused onto Harry the moment the boy spoke.

"Shh, my love. I'm here for you. You're not alone." He looked to his friends clearly asking what had happened and what was going on.

"Harry, we found him outside of Professor Lupin's office, near delirious from anxiety, but we haven't really figured out anything beyond that." Dean said, leaving out a lot of details for when there was time to get beyond the basics.

Hermione spoke softly next to Harry's ear, "He heard something that he wasn't supposed to on accident. Something big enough to upset Remus and Sirius, and obviously throw him into a pretty bad attack here."

"Did either Professor Lupin or Mr. Black tell you any details about what he'd heard?" Professor Dumbledore finally spoke from behind the youths, causing most of them to jump a little, having forgotten he was there in the excitement.

"No, only that he got really sad and said it would complicate things for Harry, Draco, and all of us, but he never said what it was. He did say to get us all together because he needed to let us all know since it would effect us so badly."

"He said he was coming up here to tell you what Draco had heard? Are you completely sure?" The Headmaster was surprised that the man would seem so ready to tell, though he supposed it was growing to be a very heavy burden. Of course, he wasn't positive of what the man's secret was, but he thought he knew well enough to feel slightly betrayed for the past fifteen years by the man. It had all pretty much fit together after Sirius let slip the wrong name at the Weasley's, he'd started to notice slight things that were out of place between the interaction between Harry and Remus, but had been nowhere near the thought that Sirius planted into his mind. But now it seemed he would find out for sure, whatever it was the man had kept hidden for so long.

If it is James, then I will certainly understand his unwillingness to let anyone know who hadn't been there when it had been done. Dumbledore remembered the last conversation he'd had with James, when he had tried to all but forced him into using his son and their amazing power to kill off Voldemort and his followers. He had been desperate and knew it had been wrong, but at the time he had let his grief and despair get the better of him.

Neville and Ginny came down the stairs from the boys' dormitory and reminded Dumbledore why he had come to see them all in the first place. 'Well, now hardly seems the appropriate time for a lecture on being discreet, it will have to wait. But they really should at least pretend to be sneaking in and out of the dorm, there are rules after all.'

When the last two of the group saw what was happening, their happy smiles faded and they rushed to the couch where Draco had been slowly calming down, but was still balled up tightly and clinging to Harry's arms so hard they were sure to bruise from his grip. But the breathing had evened now and he was no longer shaking, which seemed to allow the others in the room to relax their bodies from a state of ready action to an exhausted one. They heard a scream from the door and then saw Sirius come drifting right through the middle.

"Could someone please let this old fat broad know that Lupin can come in, she seems to remember me from our last encounter and refuses to allow any friend of mine entrance."

"Well, one can hardly blame her after all, you nearly killed the poor dear's frame." Dumbledore walked to the frame, pushed it open and allowed the other Professor inside, much to the dislike of the door's guardian.

"What's the point of even bothering with a password, I could just remain open for everyone to pass freely as they wish."

Once both men had returned to the area around the fire, a very uncomfortable silence blanketed everyone present. "Is everyone else in bed, and is every single person here, in this room, trusted with your full confidence?" Everyone looked around and eventually all nodded that it was as he had asked. "Okay then. Flocci non facio!" All of the friends shared a jump of surprise, a few letting out a soft squeak when the man yelled the last words with wand raised and swinging around the room, sending golden sparkles dancing around the walls and enveloping the entire room until every inch was covered, then was instantly gone.

With a small smile, Dumbledore said, "Ah, I haven't heard that one used in a long while. You must desperately want to keep anyone else from over hearing, casting such a taxing spell, but I'll cast a few silencing charms myself just to be sure."

It was obvious to everyone present just how taxing the spell had been, as the professor barely made his way to an empty chair before collapsing from a nearly drained body. The spell, along with his worry and sleepless nights had taken quite a toll on him. He rubbed his face with his hands and sighed deeply before opening his eyes and looking sadly at the young adults waiting eagerly for him to explain what in the world was going on. Even Draco was looking at him, having released his death grip of Harry and sat up cuddling into Harry's side, wrapping his arms around the boy and laying his head on his shoulder.

"Draco, may I assume you heard everything?" He finally asked the boy, after a few minutes of silence, which had allowed Professor Dumbledore to cast his charms and to reacquire a seat facing all of those present. "And I'm sure you've got it figured out by now, too?" He watched as the old man nodded against his steepled fingers.

"Only just recently, though." Sirius mumbled something like, 'I told you he had, me and my big

mouth' at Dumbledore's confirmation. He returned his sad gaze to Draco, who only nodded against the shoulder he was getting all his strength from to stay conscious.

"Well then, I guess there's no need to keep you all hidden in the dark any longer. Harry, this will be hard for you to hear, and you'll probably be angry with me, but that can't be helped. So, here goes." He took a last attempt at a calming breath, but found it ineffective. "First I will tell you why this all happened and then I'll tell you how."

He shifted into a more comfortable position on the edge of the chair he was in and began to tell his story. "I was married to the most wonderful woman I could have ever found on this earth and we were going to have a son. We were so happy that we could nearly forget about the horrible reality surrounding us. We were in the middle of a war, our friends were dying, but it was hard to let that be real when we were in hiding. Voldemort was after us specifically for a reason we had no idea existed." He turned his eyes directly on Harry. "My child, once born, would be the greatest of all that had ever been or would ever be, and would be for the most part invincible, but only when combined with my living force. Which meant that we both had to be alive for the power to be available. If I were dead, then the child would still be very powerful, but also vulnerable. When my son was born, Dumbledore told me of the power once he was sure it existed, and that it allowed him a great gift, yet terrible at the same time."

After a brief pause to allow everything he had said so far to be processed by his audience, the professor continued, once again staring at the floor. "My son would be able to kill Voldemort and his followers with very little more than a thought. He'd have to face them, point his wand at them and will it so, but he'd be able to kill them all without even getting tired or saying a single curse. The only draw back was that he would feel the full brunt of their dying souls and have their final moments forever ingrained in his memory. He would see the faces of those they would miss and feel the pain of dying, just as they would. He would relive their deaths and most likely be driven insane from it all. I couldn't let such a thing happen and Dumbledore agreed, so for his safety, we went into even deeper hiding. If Voldemort were allowed such a power and forced the boy to use it, then we were all doomed, along with my son." He looked up to see everyone paying rapt attention, barely breathing from anticipation.

Running a hand across his chin again, he continued. "We had taken every precaution possible, even used a secret keeper, but I knew somehow it would never be enough. My child would grow up in a world living in fear. We were trying to make him safe, but I knew there was only one way to ensure he'd never be used by anyone for a weapon. I had told my two closest friends of my willingness to end my own life for my son's sanity and they both tried their hardest to persuade me differently. They had almost succeeded too, until the last thing I had ever expected happened." He turned his gaze to Dumbledore again, unsure how the wizard would react upon hearing again of his darkest hours. "There had been a gruesome attack on our headquarters and we lost more friends than we were willing to except, but Albus lost not only friends but all of the family he had. Every single brother, sister, niece, nephew, and even a son."

The Headmaster had his eyes closed and tears falling into his beard. His head was bowed and he suddenly seemed to age greatly. He felt the eyes of everyone in the room sending their sorrow and pity to him.

"If you don't mind my friend, I would like to tell this part. I am the one responsible for the events that

followed.” They watched with caught breaths as the body of Remus Lupin nodded and the old, tired man now before them began. “I allowed myself to fall into a most unfortunate state of depression. I had lost all of my living relatives in one swift moment. Even the young children whom I had not been able to get to know well due to my obligations to the war effort. It is not an easy process to lose a loved one, but to have every single one pulled from life sent me to a dark and dangerous place. I was consumed eventually by nothing but hatred and revenge. I wanted Voldemort and every one of his followers dead, and I cared not the consequences of what that entailed. I pressured my friend to use his son as a weapon and completely destroy anyone daring to stand against me and fight for Voldemort.” He fell silent, unable or unwilling to continue for what seemed like hours to all those sitting in dead, oppressive silence. “I’m afraid I don’t know the details for the rest of what you three did when you left after our fight, please continue.”

“Right, well I left Albus, now with my mind made up that the only way to keep my son from being used as a weapon and being driven into a state of complete madness was to end my life so that the power was not an option to anyone. I was about to use the killing curse on myself when my friends stopped me and pleaded for me to reconsider, but I had made up my mind. Then at the last minute, one of them came up with a dangerous and desperate plan. Switching bodies so that no one would be able to use my son’s powers through me, since they would not actually have me, but him in my body. We did it and I left the house with Sirius here to recover while he stayed there with my wife and my son. Later that very night though, we were betrayed by our secret keeper. You all know the rest of this story, only you don’t know that the reason Voldemort tried to kill everyone in the house was that he thought that it had simply been a lie when who he thought was James Potter didn’t have the life force to power the child. Of course, after Lily sacrificed herself and with me actually still alive, he was unable to kill you Harry. With me still alive my son was, and is, basically invincible.”

Although everyone had put together what the story was leading up to, it was still quite another thing to hear it spoken. No one moved at all, their bodies heavy and their jaws open. A few were looking at Harry, but most were still staring unblinkingly at well, they weren’t sure who they were staring at. “Harry, are you okay?” Remus/James asked eventually.

Harry was finally snapped out of his state of shock and found that he was growing angry, no it was more than anger, it was betrayal, bitter hatred, it was a desire to punch the shit out of the man who had just confessed to being his father. He stood up quickly, pushing Draco on to the floor in a heap. Before the smaller boy could grab his boyfriend and keep him from acting on the anger he saw in his eyes, Harry had lunged across the room and given in the his desire to hurt the man he had called friend.

Remus’ body, which had started to rise from his chair in defense was knocked flat to the floor with a hard fist to his temple. Before anyone was able to react from seeing Harry’s surprising response, he had given the man more than a few open wounds on his face. Draco ran to Harry and tackled him to the ground off of his father. “Get the hell off me, Malfoy!” Draco’s face set into a scowl at hearing his surname used again with such venom from Harry.

“Harry, if you ever call me that again with such hatred and you don’t calm the fuck down right now I will hex you into next year! Don’t even think about testing me, you ass!” Draco was now standing in front of Harry, making a barrier between father and son. The former was getting up from the floor wiping his mouth with the back of his hand to pull it away and see how bad he was bleeding. He knew he had a cut above his right eye, as it was bleeding into said eye, forcing it to remain shut. He

hadn't been prepared for physical violence, hatred yes, but something like this, no. Not from his son, not from the Harry he had come to know as a friend.

"Harry, I can understand why you would feel angry, but did you have to break my nose?" He let a smile slip to his face before bringing his wand to his face and casting a few healing charms that would stop the bleeding and heal the minor cuts completely. He would have to be stopping by to give Madame Pomfrey a visit later, for sure. "I really hadn't expected that kind of reaction; Merlin you can throw a punch."

"What the hell did you expect? Did you think that I would run to you and take you into a hug, because you're actually my father? That just because you are alive and even though I've had to live with all the shit from the Dursley's for years, I would just fucking call you daddy and everything would be alright? Tell me you aren't that stupid!" Harry hadn't calmed down at all, he had only gotten a little more pissed at seeing the man make jokes about getting attacked. "Who the hell are you to stay out of my life, watching me struggle without parents, listen to me confide in you my pain from hearing their deaths from the dementors, and not tell me who you were? I don't want to know this, not now! I don't want you, I have made my own family for myself, and you no longer have a place in it as a friend or as my father. I have all I need without you! You took too long, too fucking long, you bastard!" He was shaking with his anger, unable to hold any of it back, he just let it pour out of him.

Draco felt the cold wave expanding off of Harry, but let it pass through him. He was not going to move and let Harry do something else he'd regret later. He stood there, holding Harry's shoulder as the rage ripped through him and weakened his knees. He had to hold a little more on to Harry and all but collapsed when the other tried to jerk his grip away when his fingers dug hard into his shoulder. He was so intent at looking down his father that he hadn't even noticed the effect his released energy was having on the person he loved, he didn't even realize he was releasing energy until a final wave of cold fury burst from him and Draco collapsed to the floor unconscious.

He was so consumed by blind rage that he actually let a moment pass where he almost took advantage of the boy being moved to go after Remus' face again. "Harry! You must stop this now, you will hurt him greatly, more than already you have if you do not reign in your emotions! NOW!" Dumbledore was standing as close as he could get to Harry, being repelled by the energy bubble Harry had unknowingly created with his emotions. Hearing the old man yell with such force scared Harry out of his focused anger and brought his mind back to the moment. He immediately dropped from exhaustion next to Draco and slipped into the same darkness as his lover. A final wave of energy was released from his body then expanded outward like the shockwave of an exploding star. Everyone in the room that had stood up during the confrontation was knocked off of their feet and to the floor or nearest piece of furniture, except Professor Dumbledore.

"Boys, I need you to help carry them to the Medical Wing, immediately. They will be fine but they must receive attention soon." Ron and Seamus collected Harry under the shoulders and feet, while Dean and Neville did the same with Draco. They all walked somberly, yet quickly to find a waiting Madame Pomfrey at the door of the infirmary.

"What happened, Headmaster? I felt an enormous wave of . . . of, well I don't know, it was like a blast of cold air sweeping through the castle. We've had twenty other students already brought in unconscious, as well as a number of complaints of dizziness from all over Hogwarts. What is going

on, are we under attack?”

“No, Madame Pomfrey, at least not anymore. There was a most unfortunate accident in which a quite unintentional power was unleashed. Everyone is fine now, please make sure these boys are okay and that they remain asleep until I return for them.” This got him a weird look from the woman, but she didn’t ask, she never did when he talked in his current tone. He had a reason for everything, she knew, and she trusted him. “And if you could give our professor here a quick fix of the face we must be on our way, there are things we must see to immediately.”

Madame Pomfrey made a slight wave of her hand and the pain was gone along with every cut and bruise from his face. “You’ll need to drink this too, to make sure everything returns into its right place, dear.” She handed him a cup with a very thick blue liquid then turned to see to the boys.

“Professor, if you would follow me.” Dumbledore was walking down the hall and the other man followed after him, drawing up to his side in a few strides.

“Did you see the power that flew out of him, he didn’t even have a wand and he knocked out students all over the castle. That scares me, Albus. This is why I was ready to die all those years ago. Do you think anyone will know what actually happened, will Voldemort be able to put it all together?”

“Doubtful, he assumes that it was nothing more than a fairy tale and that Harry survived the first attack solely on Lily’s ancient magic. But none the less, Harry now knows himself, and I fear what he may do with that power. Has he ever tapped into it before like that?”

“No, never. I was nearly drained by the last burst, but as soon as he was out, it returned to me from him. I think that was why he fainted, without my power to sustain him, he had simply used too much of his own to be able to function when it was released.”

Dumbledore looked to the man walking beside him, worry very evident on his face. “That would seem a very bad side effect we had not known about.”

“Not surprising as we really don’t know very much about this at all, with it being such a rarely occurring thing, there aren’t a lot of volumes on the subject in the library.” Both walked in silence for a few paces, then “Do you think he really hates me that much?”

With a deep sigh, the Headmaster looked to his friend again. “James, I hope not. Let us just assume it was his surprise and anger from finding you alive, not actually true hatred. I don’t know how he would cope with actually hurting someone permanently with another uncontrollable outburst like tonight.”

The very flustered looking form of Professor McGonagall came striding down the hall towards them. “Albus, Remus, did you two feel what that was? I really think it has something to do with Harry’s, um powers. I thought that was gone now with James and Lily being dead, how was it possible for such a strong wave of magic to be released, unless we have someone messing with some very dark magic.” The two men closed their eyes and shared a sigh.

“It’s possible, Minerva, because James is not dead as we thought. He has been very near to us all

along.” The woman looked puzzled at Albus, then followed his gaze and gasped slightly.

“James?”

“Hello, Professor. It’s been awhile since I’ve heard you call me that. It’s been awhile since anyone called me that, actually.”

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Seventeen - When Heroes Fall From Our Pedestals

A/N - Every time I reread through this I can't believe it happens. This chapter is most definitely darker and harder to read than anything so far. The story takes a definite darker turn in this chapter. I have tried to find a way around it, but the story demands what it demands. So, I apologize now for the feeling of disbelief and anger towards me you will undoubtedly feel for writing this. Please heed the warnings...

VvVvV

Draco let his mind slowly clear the darkness and reemerge into consciousness. Having learned from the past number of weeks that opening your eyes after first waking up is a bad thing, he kept them shut. It was one of the advantages of living in a dungeon that he sorely missed, no sun through the windows. Everyone was alerted he was awake however, when a slow groan vibrated his throat from the pain his body was registering as it woke. "I think he's waking up, guys." Draco figured that he might as well add a headache to the pain all over his body and slowly let in the light.

After a few minutes, the blurry images cleared into people. He just blinked in the many worried faces all looking at him. Dean and Seamus were sitting against each other on the floor, Ron was in a chair between two beds with Hermione in his lap and Ginny was leaning against Neville, who was standing against the wall.

"Where's Harry?" The effort to speak with his overly dry throat was hardly heard, but his eyes were easily readable. Everyone looked to the bed on the other side of Ron. He looked over to see the peaceful face of Harry asleep. "What happened?" His voice was finding itself a little as the questions and memories started to form in his mind.

"I'm afraid that you and a number of students at Hogwarts received a first hand demonstration of why James has remained hidden in the identity of his friend." Draco looked quickly to his side, regretting it immediately as the sharp pains shot through his neck and head, to see Albus Dumbledore sitting in a chair on the other side of his bed from Ron and Hermione. "You however received the brunt end of the physical manifestation of Harry's emotions. Thankfully, no one else was able to figure out the source since it is a rare and untraceable magic."

Draco was looking from face to face, trying to figure out what in the world the old man was going on about, when Harry began to stir and return to the land of the living. The room remained silent as they waited for Harry to open his eyes and adjust to the pain of awakening.

Eventually his own raspy voice echoed the same questions as Draco's had, with only one exception. "Where's Draco." He too followed the stares of his friends to the bed next to his. "What happened?"

Dumbledore smiled at the two young men, and then spoke again in the gentle, kind voice that seemed to soothe a little of the throbbing in their heads. "As I was just beginning to tell Draco here, you demonstrated the powers your father was hiding from for the past sixteen years. It seems that with his close proximity, your intense rage and uncontrolled emotions, you let a small amount of the destructive force loose to remove any obstacles between you and the object of that hatred. You gave

Mr. Malfoy quite an unintentional thrashing. He was much worse than he had appeared superficially in the common room when I looked him over. Madame Pomfrey had to spend a lot of time on the both of you, all of your internal organs had begun to shut down in shock from what happened.”

Harry looked stricken, his face grew pale and he was very much fighting the urge to wretch violently. He had nearly killed Draco for trying to protect him from doing something he would regret, he had almost killed himself from the outburst. He was scared mostly by the former than the later, afraid of what might have happened had someone not been there to help Draco. His outburst of emotion could have cost him everything. “Wh. . .what about Professor Lupin. . . Remus. . .James, oh bother! What about my father.” His hands started to tremble, afraid of the answer.

He was still angry, angry as hell, but he could hear the small voice in the back of his mind screaming “He’s alive, I have a father that’s alive!”, but he wasn’t ready to let it go at that. There were a lot of questions he had to have answered before he could ever forgive the man, even if it was his father. But he hadn’t wanted to permanently hurt the man, just release some of the life he’d had thrust upon him, when his father could have been with him all along. He had wanted to give back every punch he’d received from Dudley, every smack or rough grip from Uncle Vernon, every cold heartless word from Aunt Petunia. He had wanted revenge, payback.

He had wanted his father to grab him and stop him from punching, to shake him and hold him. He had wanted his father to make everything all right for the first time in his life. He’d wanted the man to hit him back, to slap him, to call him names. He wanted to be punished, not because he enjoyed pain, but because he had a dad to do it for him. In the end, everything he’d wanted in that brief second came down to he had simply wanted his father.

He was brought out of his thoughts, by a word from Draco. “Harry?” He could tell he had missed something while he had drifted when Dumbledore and Draco were looking at him expecting an answer.

“Sorry, I was lost in a thought. What did you ask?”

“I simply asked if you were all right, well as all right as one can be after the events of three days ago.”

“Yeah, I guess, but it still. . .hang on, did you say three days ago?” Harry was surprised, though he figured that was actually a small amount of time, as well as a testament to Madame Pomfrey’s abilities, that after such a major shut down of their bodies, he and Draco seemed to be healthy and very much alive.

“Yes, Harry. You and Draco were the only ones brought in that were not able to return to bed the same night. Thankfully no one else was seriously injured. As for your earlier question, James is perfectly fine. He only required a good bit of sleep to rejuvenate him. Though, as his strength was returned to him when you were done using it, he really felt few side-effects.”

Harry’s face had fell even further and his eyes bore into the back of his hands, now he knew he was going to be ill. “There were others?”

“From all over the castle. Most people just got dizzy, but I believe at last count, thirty-seven were

rendered unconscious.”

“Everyone thought we’d been attacked by Voldemort using some kind of black magic. You should have seen how scared the first years got in Gryffindor Tower when I jumped out at them in the middle of the night in their dorm. I know I made at least one wet the bed.” Seamus had spoken with such pride at the fact he could still find time for joking no matter how serious a situation. Of course, no one was surprised anymore by the fact, but that didn’t keep them from all sharing a small chuckle and a shake of the head.

“Yeah, and you got three weeks detention for that too, you git!” Ron spoke from his place underneath Hermione. He turned to Harry with a smile in his eyes, “I gave it to him myself. Prefect responsibilities and all.”

Seamus mumbled something about being a Percy something or other, but didn’t seem willing to say anything audible. Draco watched as the friends found a place to still smile, no matter the pressing matters that were now unavoidable. “Professor, what does Harry’s father being alive really change? Wouldn’t Harry have been able to pull on the power before, maybe even unknowingly has?” How could it be that so much power could have existed with out ever showing signs of it’s presence?”

“All good questions, Draco. Unfortunately I do not know for certain on any count.”

“Don’t know or won’t tell.” Harry did nothing to keep the bitterness from his voice. He still held regrets from the past year, regrets he figured Dumbledore shared the blame for. The old wizard looked sadly at Harry, then sighed heavily.

“I don’t know anything about this, and I am hiding nothing from you. You deserve the truth, Harry. I no longer hold any of it from you at all. I am sorry that you hold such reservations towards me, but the past is gone and there is nothing either of us can do now to change it.”

“But, there’s no written record of others like Harry to at least know what to expect?”

“I am afraid not, Hermione. In fact, what little we do have seems to be either false or that the effects of using such power varies from person to person. There has never been a mention, in what little we have, of the user being left unconscious and affected so dangerously as Harry was. Of course, there are no books what so ever on the subject that go in to more than just passing detail. The only actual hope for a little more understanding as to what happened in the common room that night, rests in the translation of those runes. They were written in the margins of a section of text about Harry and James’ power under the words, God-like strength.”

“I completely forgot, sir! We figured out what most of the runes mean, but still have a few to translate more directly, Dean was able to see that some of them were written sideways and upside down. We’d been working on them that night before we stumbled into Draco, and everything else happened.” Hermione had nearly come out of her seat with the excitement of telling Dumbledore of their progress.

“Mr. Thomas, I am impressed and grateful, as well as with you Ms. Granger for all of the work you have put into this task. Please let me know when you have it all figured out, and if you could write down the runes in correct order and position and let me have them at your earliest convenience I

would be more grateful.”

“I have them right here Professor.” Dean spoke from his seat on the floor where he was pulling his bag to him and pulling out a stack of parchments. He sifted through them and handed one to Dumbledore with a smile, he did love being able to contribute.

The Headmaster looked over them and stood abruptly from his chair after a look of revelation brightened his face . “I must go now, thank you all again. Harry, I think I will be able to answer your and Mr. Malfoy’s questions, but I must check my translation thoroughly. Please excuse me.” Without another word, the old wizard strode quickly from the room, leaving eight questioning faces behind.

“What do you suppose that was all about?”

“I’m not sure Ron, but I hope we don’t have to figure this out on our own again, like usual. I’m really tired of having to do work that is already been done, just not shared.” Harry let the shadow of mistrust fall across his face again, but quickly put it aside before anyone noticed. One person did though, and Draco found himself worrying again about this side of Harry that he’d rarely seen. He knew the reservations the boy still carried towards Dumbledore and most of the Order. Remus had been the only person he’d felt able to trust in, of course that had changed now, he was sure. Remus was his father, James Potter.

Draco felt goose bumps form along his arms when he remembered the rage that had filled Harry that night. He could remember the intense cold pulsing through him and tearing away his strength so easily and quickly. He was sure that whatever secret those runes held, that they were sure to make things more complicated than they already were, and he wasn’t sure how much he or Harry could take before they broke. Draco let a worry settle in his stomach, a suspicion that the next few weeks were going to change him and his new friends for life. He only hoped it was for the better and that they all grew closer, rather than apart. Draco had gotten used to having friends help him through his problems, he wasn’t sure if he could ever go it alone again and survive. This would not be easy, that was for sure.

VvVv

The room was completely dark. There was no fire burning, no candle lit, and no window open. The only occupant of the room sat in complete silence, letting the darkness and the quiet soothe him as they always had over the years. He was not sure what it was that allowed him only to find a semblance of peace when his senses were deprived, but there was no reason to start changing what worked.

Unfortunately, even the darkness and the silence were proving to be unable to prevent all turmoil from invading his brooding mind. He had hoped that when he was no longer bearing the burden of a hidden life from those he loved that he would feel better, but now he only felt more consumed by the depression that had been threatening his life for a number of months.

Harry hated him, had nearly killed himself and the boy he loved just to get at him. He had every right of course, he had again been betrayed by someone he trusted and loved because they had withheld secrets from him. He thought back to how he swore that after Sirius’ death that he’d never let Harry be put into that kind of position again, he’d never allow Harry to feel helpless.

He didn't bother justifying any of his reasons over the past months since returning to Hogwarts for not telling Harry everything. In the end, he knew that Harry would have been better off never having found out about his father being alive, or the amazing power they possessed together.

James was startled from his thoughts by a rough knock on the door to his office. Pulling his disheveled body out of the chair he'd been in all night, he opened the door. "Yes?"

"James," was all the greeting he received.

He closed his red-rimmed eyes and sighed, calming himself before responding to the man in front of him, disturbing his reflections. "What do you want, Severus?" He was too eager to be done with the man, that he didn't even bother asking how the man knew who he really was. Dumbledore had sworn McGonagall and all the others that knew into silence, afraid of the consequences should the news get out.

"I am here merely to bring you your monthly dose of Humanity to keep your inner beast from taking control. The last thing we need now is an emotionally disturbed werewolf running loose. Two catastrophic phenomena in a week would seem a little over the top, even for Hogwarts"

"Thanks for your concern." There was as little emotion as there was actual thanks in his voice. "Is that all, then?" he asked after he had taken the proffered cup from the other.

"For now." He watched the man's back until he could no longer see him, and muttered a few curses at the jerk.

"That's all I needed, to see him today." He scratched at the now week old beard on his face and returned to his chair, content to not move again until he knew how to handle everything with Harry. Somehow he had to get the boy to trust him again, well at least talk to him. He wouldn't push for much, just hoped the anger of his son would subside eventually and allow them to share time together now as more than just friends. He wanted to have his son again, he'd even settle for getting knocked around a bit more if that was what it took. He returned to his catatonic state and let his brain work out all of its problems with the minimum number of distractions.

VvVv

Harry and Draco were soon released by Madame Pomfrey, who was all too happy to have her quiet infirmary returned to her, and the whole pack of friends relocated to Gryffindor Tower in the room they all shared at night. Dumbledore had his talk with them at some point and they were now all going to at least sneak into the room at night, if they weren't assigned a bed in the sixth year boy's dorm. By the sound of the talk, Draco and Harry were glad they had been unconscious and missed the whole ordeal.

It was late Friday afternoon and most of the school was in class, a fact that Hermione had pointed out several times. She, unlike the others, seemed bothered by the fact that they had missed every class that week except those they actually weren't excused from on Monday. Harry, Draco, and Ron felt it some what of an accomplishment having missed out on two weeks of class without being in trouble for it, but ordered to do so.

“You really should have seen Hermione arguing with Dumbledore about going to class, she nearly blew a vessel she was so heated.” Ron was laughing as he recounted the story for the only two to have missed out on it. They were all filling the couple in on the last three days worth of events.

“Honestly, it’s not like I was going that far, I was just trying to get him to let me in to my classes, since I couldn’t do anything but wait in the hospital wing anyway. He really can be a bugger when he’s got his mind set though.” Hermione defended herself, only slightly toning down the truth, she had gotten desperate and she knew she could carry on a little much when she was also set on something.

The friends all shared a laugh, a therapeutic laugh, that let them all escape for a few moments into the happy oblivion of the previous few weeks. But as they all came down and the laughter ended, Harry decided to bring the reality of their lives back into focus. He had put off asking about James, but he really wanted to know if he was doing okay, other than being healthy.

“So, how is my dear ol’ dad doing with the way I reacted.” There was more venom than he had intended, but if his friends noticed, they said nothing about it. “Been skipping around with a lighter conscience no doubt, now that his little secret doesn’t weigh so heavily on his mind anymore.” Draco flinched next to the boy, feeling a wave of anger roll off Harry again. It was no where near the force of before, but he could feel the coldness seep into him and he pressed himself closer to the boy he was sitting beside on their bed.

“Well, actually Harry, Professor Lupin has been looking real bad the last few days. He staggers into class and sits behind his desk just staring forward at nothing, then gets up and leaves Sirius to teach us something. He looks worse than he ever did during his transformations three years ago.” Hermione was the only one brave enough to speak first, no one else wanted to risk being the focus of Harry’s attention when he was given bad news. But to everyone’s surprise and sadness, Harry just laughed.

“Ha! Serves the bastard right. He’s got to do a lot more than feel bad for a week before he’s been through what I have. I spent most of my life locked in a fucking cupboard because he was scared of a dead wizard. I’ve spent every summer between terms living in Hell, crying for the parents that I would never get to meet and the whole time, the whole God-damned fucking time, he was alive. I could have been with my father, crying only for the mother I would never meet, but no. He has a long way to go before I’m giving him a chance at being anything but an old friend that I used to know and trust.”

“Harry, don’t you think you’re being a little dumb about this?” No one moved or even breathed after Draco had spoken from Harry’s side. His voice had been soft, but after Harry’s tirade, silence had ruled. Now the silence seemed deafening and everyone wanted to escape from the room, but were too terrified to move. They all remained, eyes transfixed on the two boys, waiting to see what would happen next. They were like a crowd watching a car crash, unable to help the soon to be victims, but unable to turn away and not watch. For a few minutes the only movement was on Harry’s face. A chorus of emotions flashed across it, fear, anger, dread, relief, remorse, but finally settled back on the rage from a few minutes prior.

“What?” This time Draco wasn’t the only one to flinch, but it was only from the word and the way it

was said, rather than from any magical tidal waves breaking in to them. Harry brushed Draco off of him and stood up, turning on the boy laying stunned on the bed. "What?!"

Draco turned a shade of translucent as the fear pulled all the blood from his face. His lips began to tremble and he looked very much like a toddler who was going to cry at any moment. "I just. . .I. . .didn't. . ." Draco trailed off into shaking breaths that were heaving his chest and back up with each intake of air. His eyes began to water from the pain in his chest as he felt the now familiar webs of panic creeping through his lungs and out to his body.

"You didn't what?" There was no relenting in Harry's tone, he was still yelling and leaning over his lover in a very threatening manner.

"No, please don't hurt me again!" Draco screamed before he broke into body wrenching sobs and curled into a quaking ball on the bed. Ron and Neville both jumped to their feet and pulled Harry backwards.

"What in the bloody Hell are you doing! Merlin, Harry! You're scaring the living piss out of him!" Ron screamed before turning to Draco, hoping they wouldn't need to put him back into the hospital for the night. Harry started to advance again towards the bed and the back of his friend now trying to comfort his boyfriend.

"Get the fuck off of him, he's mine!"

"Harry, I'm sorry to have to do this but, damn it. . ." Neville pulled Harry around to face him and with wand in hand muttered a curse that knocked the other boy to his knees, before dropping heavily to the floor. Neville looked up to see Hermione standing on the other side of Harry, with raised wand from also casting a spell. "Hermione, what did you hex him with?"

"Just an immobilizing charm, what did you use?" Hermione asked with shaking arm still raised and pointed with wand extended.

"I can't tell you, we're not supposed to know it unless we're Aurors. It helps get you out of tough spots, and I really couldn't think of anything less drastic that quickly. It's the only one that has ever been drilled into me by my Gran. After what happened to my parents, she wanted me to at least have a fighting chance. I'd better go get Dumbledore and let him know that I used it though, it's not illegal if you're a trained wizard, but. . ."

Ginny followed numbly after Neville as he left the room. The only sound now was the crying coming from Harry's bed where Ron was cradling a shaking Draco, who was looking at Harry's unconscious body slumped in the middle of the floor.

"I'll just get him into a bed, then." Seamus walked over to Harry, picked him up and carried him over to Ron's bed, where he laid the boy out straight with every other pair of eyes staring unblinkingly at him. Seamus quietly walked back to Dean's bed and sat down beside him, resting his head onto the boy's shoulder. No one moved or spoke again, just breathed occasionally, until Neville and Ginny returned with a very concerned looking Headmaster and a worried, fretting Professor McGonagall.

The former of the two walked to Harry and began checking him over, then walked to Draco and

placed a cool, aged hand on his forehead. "You should get to sleep, Draco. This excitement will do nothing good for you after the last few days."

"But what about him." Draco didn't say Harry's name, afraid he might cry, afraid he might actually be scared to even hear it spoken aloud.

"I will arrange for another bed to be provided for him to sleep on, he will be fine, but won't be waking up for awhile. Fortunately with his powers from James, he suffered very little of the actual effects of Mr. Longbottom's curse. If not for the power he drew from James just a short while ago to deflect it automatically, he would have missed another week of classes." The older man stood erect and walked toward the door, "When he wakes I will be here and we will sort this out, until then I suggest that you all might try to get rest since none of you got much sleep in the last three days."

"You sure it's safe to leave them alone again, Albus? They have so much to work through, and obviously Harry is taking this badly." Professor McGonagall said as they left the room together.

"Yes, Minerva, they will be just fine. We must let them sort this out as much as they can alone. No matter how much we feel the need to protect them from this pain, they have to learn it."

A few minutes of more silence was interrupted by the abrupt appearance of a sixth bed in the room. With evening fast approaching it's end, they finally moved towards a place to sleep. Ron, after making sure Draco was okay, laid the now quiet boy down on the bed and stood up, stretching his muscles, letting a yawn slip from him. He walked over to the bed that had appeared and figured it looked as comfortable as his own and that he didn't much feel like moving Harry again. Hermione joined him as he laid down, and they curled into each other.

Neville and Ginny sat down on his bed and just held each other for awhile, not ready to give in to sleep just yet, and wanting a little more time to hold each other in the waking hours. Seamus moved to the far side of Dean's bed and laid down, soon followed by Dean, neither caring about what it may look like, but needing to be near a friend now, not alone in a bed. Despite the lights being off and the fading sun soon leaving the dorm in darkness, Harry was the only one not awake.

There were quiet, intimate whispers coming from the three other beds in the room, but Draco couldn't help feeling he was alone and stranded in the cold. He stared into the darkness, unable to see anything at all, being that even the moon seemed unwilling to show itself this night. The fear of being alone soon overrode his current fear of Harry and he gave in to the need to be beside the boy he loved.

He quietly stood up and removed his robe and shoes in the darkness. Placing them on Harry's bed, he soon added his pants, shirt and everything else except his boxers. He walked to Harry and undid his robe, carefully removing it and placing it next to his, he then repeated the movement until Harry was also clad only in his boxers. Then he pulled the covers down and crawled in to bed next to Harry. He covered their mostly naked bodies from the night and cuddled into Harry, thankful for the warmth, but angry at his need for it to survive the night.

"Draco, you okay?" Draco smiled at the genuine concern in Ron's voice, and at the memory of the boy standing up for him with Neville and Hermione, then holding him as he wept. Along with his smile was a small voice that mocked his dependency and weakness for these people.

“Yeah, I will be.” ‘I hope.’ He drifted off to the chastising that his newly awakened ego was giving him for becoming so pathetic so quickly. This was definitely not the behavior of a Malfoy, but he wasn’t sure what he was anymore so did it matter what a fucking Malfoy would be? The voice in his head that was growing steadily louder seemed to think so.

VvVvV

Harry woke up in the middle of the night completely disorientated and with a splitting headache. “What the hell, happened?” He spoke aloud. He tried to move his leg, but found it held in place, but before he thrashed out at the restraint he recognized the weight of Draco against him as the other slept. He relaxed and pressed himself into the body asleep on him.

“Harry? You awake?” Draco asked groggily as he lifted his head to look into green eyes. Harry just reached up and stroked the blonde hair behind his ear to get it out of his face, then ran his hand along the slightly flushed cheek, a little concerned at the warmth he found there.

“Are you feeling well, Drac?”

“I’m just a little, um, overly excited at the moment.” Draco moved closer into Harry, placing a hand onto his chest. Harry realized for the first time that he and Draco were both pressing almost completely nude bodies together and felt himself getting ‘overly excited’ by the thought. He pushed his hips against the blonde and sighed from the friction it caused.

“Draco, I need you now, so bad. I need to make love to you, to feel you around me.”

“I don’t know, Harry, I’m still real sore all over from a few days ago. Could we just snuggle and I’ll get you off another way?” Draco asked, still feeling drained and achy in most of his body, unsure if he could take the pain and pleasure they had shared in the woods at the moment. He was caught off guard by Harry’s reaction though, and felt the instant chill of fear sweep through his already tense body.

“God, Draco. Are you going to throw that in my face forever? I’m sorry okay? It’s not like I did it on purpose, but if you don’t want to do anything, that’s fine by me.” He pulled away from Draco and turned on his side, facing away from the dumbstruck teenager.

“Harry. . .I’m sorry.” He reached out a hand to his shoulder and laid it gently on it. “I didn’t mean to make you mad at me, please. . .I didn’t mean anything by it. I’m just tired is all, we can do stuff though. . .if you want to.” He felt a sickening sensation in his stomach follow his words, but it was nothing compared to the nausea that almost caused him to wretch over the side of the bed when Harry turned around.

“It won’t take long Draco, I just need some release after these last few days, okay?”

He moved himself closer to the blonde, pushing him onto his back. Draco fought the urge to scream as his boxers were pulled down, followed by an equally naked Harry getting between his knees and spreading his legs. “Draco, you okay?”

“Please don’t hurt me.” It was all the boy could say.

“Don’t worry, I won’t. Just trust me. Please don’t tell me you don’t trust me anymore.” Harry barely finished his sentence before he pushed himself into Draco completely and grabbed the other boy’s erection. Draco stifled the cry from Harry entering him fully so quickly, and without a lubrication charm. He fought the ever present raging storm in his stomach when he responded with pleasure from Harry’s hand on his own growing erection. He kept his mouth from stopping Harry, he couldn’t let the one person he loved and needed in the world think he didn’t trust him anymore. He wouldn’t do that to him. Besides, Harry loved him and wouldn’t do anything to really hurt and cause him pain.

But the sensations from Harry’s eager thrusts was anything but the wonderful act of love they had shared back outside by the burrow. Harry never even looked into his eyes, never asked if he was okay while they fucked, never bothered to see if Draco had found release after Harry had done so and pulled away from the body next to him. He never even said I love you before turning on his side again away from Draco and falling asleep.

'Well, well, well. I guess you really are a good fuck aren't you? He sure got what he wanted from you. Did you see the way he made you his little whore, not even talking to you during or after he fucked you hard. Merlin, can you even walk now? I bet that will hurt even worse in the morning, but not as much as knowing that he doesn't love you like before, not that he ever did anyway. You're just a pathetic little fuck.'

Draco could find nothing wrong in what the voice in his head was saying. He knew he'd let Harry fuck him, it wasn't love. That had been pure lust, nothing like the way his Harry held him, kissed him, made love to him. Draco wanted to hide from himself, he didn't want to be here when Harry woke up. He didn't want to see the now unrecognizable gaze in those green eyes. He didn't want to ever be touched by the Harry he'd just been ravaged by. He was scared for the first time since falling in love with Harry James Potter. Of course, that was the reason for the change. His father. Harry was no longer alone in the world, he didn't need some sad, lonely, orphaned tag along anymore.

But no matter how much he tried to get his body to walk away that night, he never moved from where Harry had left him hours before. He let the pain from Harry's forceful entry wrap around him and keep him from noticing the cold air on his naked, uncovered body. He let the bleeding stop on its own eventually and stared at the dark room as it lightened and soon reformed into people and shapes instead of a void.

He didn't respond in any way, other than to watch the little elf work, when his former house elf found and cleaned him and the bed underneath him before covering his freezing body with blankets. He vaguely heard something about a fever and concerned questions about what had happened before his exhausted body won out and he plummeted into his nightmares once again. But not before his inner voice got the last word and the last laugh.

'What's it like to finally be what you were destined to be. You're just someone's good fuck. You escaped from Voldemort only to become the Boy-Who-Lived's personal love slave. Way to go, you're just pathetic. How did you ever think he loved you?' The all too familiar cackle followed him into his dreams where it tormented him without stop until he was shaken awake by Ron. He glanced beside him to find an empty bed and no sign of Harry in the room.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Eighteen - Finding The Heroes In Our Friends

“Hey, you okay there mate?” Draco looked into the eyes staring worriedly at him, and wondered what kind of a friend their owner actually was. He had stood up for him, surely he would help now, but who would believe him? “Did you and Harry get into it last night or anything, after whatever you were both naked for, I mean.”

Draco realized at that moment that he was still completely nude from the night before and had worked his way nearly all the way out of the blankets Dobby had covered him with. Feeling nearly as embarrassed as Ron was looking, he pulled the covers back over his body.

“He was supposed to stay here when he woke up and wait for Dumbledore, but he’s gone. He usually goes somewhere and broods when he’s argued and knows he’s wrong, so I just figured that you guys had argued and you were right.” Hermione added, trying to pretend that no one had noticed the awkward situation.

“I . . . I think he hates me now.” Draco stared at his hands, avoiding at all costs looking into any of the faces in the room that were now looking questioningly at him. “He didn’t even say he loved me after we . . . we . . . well you know.” He chanced a glance into the other teens eyes, and found confusion mingled with sadness. It was against everything he had been taught to confide in anyone, but for some reason he felt compelled to continue. It was yet another sign that he was most definitely being changed by the events of the last so many months. “He turned away from me all night and never said a word, never even looked me in the eye. I think I did something to hurt him, make him mad.”

Once again, silence dominated the room, as no one seemed able to find the right response. Ginny climbed out of Neville’s embrace and walked over to the bed her brother was leaning on. She got onto it and sat cross-legged next to the naked boy, putting his head into her lap and stroking his hair after placing a kiss on his forehead. “Well, I’ve been treated like that before and know how it hurts, but never by someone I’ve been in love with. I’d die if Neville didn’t hold me, or didn’t say a word after we made love.”

“I’d never, my angel.” Neville called from under his covers.

“You’d better not, or I’ll kill you.” Ron said, no one taking it for a joke.

“It wasn’t even love, it was just sex. Nothing more. It was nothing like the other time we did that.” Draco ignored the voice in his head as it made fun of him for being so weak and needy. He just let himself be held by the sister of his former enemy, the girl that was his sister of sorts now. Eventually the voice gave up and Draco was thankful for the silence, even though he was becoming confused himself as to how open he wanted to be and just how many truths of his life his new friends could handle.

“Wait, you’ve only had sex twice?”

“Seamus! Please, Merlin’s sake you can be a jackass.” Dean elbowed the boy sitting next to him in

the side none too gently.

“Honestly, though. You share a bed every night and you don’t do anything but sleep together, and not sleep together.”

“Seamus, why is that so hard a thing to grasp? Ron and I don’t do something every night we spend together. Sometimes all the love you need is to snuggle.” Hermione said from her place on the extra bed, where she sat fully dressed and ready to face the day, even though it was a Saturday morning and there was nowhere to go.

“That’s not what Ron. . .” Seamus’ voice was cut off by a pillow being stuffed into and held on his face.

“It’s not what Ron, what?” Hermione asked, giving her boyfriend an evil glare.

“We’re all forgetting the point here. Draco is hurting and it’s from our friend’s lack of basic relationship skills, and his ability to make those who love him feel like nothing but a worthless tag along.” Ron directed all attention back to Draco, not only to remove it from him, but because he was really concerned for the boy. He found that he really couldn’t help it anymore. Draco had grown on him, maybe like a fungus or something, but still had grown attached none the less. He felt responsible in a way for the smaller boy that his parents had welcomed as a son, which made him a brother. And you never let brothers hurt like this, especially when it’s another brother that’s doing the hurting.

“Why don’t you throw your boxers back on and go take a nice shower and let your thoughts collect for awhile. We can talk then, once you’ve had a chance to wake properly.” Ginny spoke soothingly and gently to the boy in her lap, looking down into his confused, child like eyes, that were seeking some direction. She let the mother in her take over and began to help Draco do as she had suggested by find the boxers in the blankets and handing them to him and waited till he finished moving under the blankets to help him get up from the bed. She was worried at the stiffness in his posture and the intake of breath as he stood up and closed his legs together.

When he started to walk with her across the room, he was doing so with an obvious need to keep his legs apart. She also took note of the cold sweat of his body and the warmth of his head she had felt while it was in her lap.

“Oh fuck, Draco. There’s only two reasons I know of for walking like that, and one of them is riding a horse for a few hours. The other I don’t want to think about, but shit, are you okay? Well, I mean besides the obvious pain in walking.” Everyone turned to Seamus, who had a very uncharacteristic look of horror frozen on his face. “I’ve seen that walk enough from my mate back home to know that it means nothing good. Draco, what happened.”

Glances were moved from one boy to another, the confusion evident on the other teens faces. “Nothing, Seamus. It’s not what you think, he wouldn’t. . .I mean. . .he loves me and he’s never. . .I know him, it wasn’t on purpose. Just please. . .let it go. . .he didn’t mean it, he wasn’t thinking. He loves me, he does.” Draco had slowly dissolved into tears and was leaning heavily on Ginny for support and leaning into her for comfort. Neville saw the struggle of his girlfriend to hold the taller figure standing and walked over to help with the burden, grudgingly leaving the warmth of his bed

behind.

“Don’t Draco. Don’t fucking start that with me. I know you’re scared, I know you’re hurt, but do not make excuses for him. Not now, not ever. He’s hurt you in a way that I would have never thought him possible of doing. Shit, shit, shit. I can’t believe it happened right here with us all in the room. Damn it, Harry, what the fuck is going on in your mind.”

No one had seemed to grasp on to what was happening, except Dean who had heard all about Seamus’ friend back home. How he had been forced to do. . .things. . .that made him want to wretch for the poor boy. But, could that really be the case, could it really be the same with Harry and Draco? It seemed impossible, but he couldn’t deny the fact that Draco had seemed barely able to walk across the room without cringing in pain every step he took. Even now he was standing so as to keep as little friction as possible from occurring around that area. He hoped he and Seamus were over reacting, that it was something else than what it seemed, that maybe Malfoy just was not used to things yet.

He hoped, but somehow knew something was out of place, maybe not as much as it was for Seamus’ friend, but something was wrong, he could see it in Draco’s eyes. He was scared they would find out and even Ron could see fear when it was so blatantly portrayed.

“Don’t blame him, he just got carried away, lost in the moment. I wanted it anyway, begged him to do it even after he hadn’t wanted to.” Draco was growing frantic, hoping no one would say the truth out loud, hoping they would not all figure it out before Seamus dropped it. He was ashamed enough that he had allowed it to happen, he couldn’t live with them all knowing what Harry had done. They would know the truth about him then, they would know he was just a good fuck toy for The Boy-Who-Lived and he’d lose their respect. You don’t make friends with a man’s mistress, you ignore her. He didn’t want them to see him for what he had become in his own mind in the matter of a few hours. If he lost them along with Harry he’d have nothing, no one, nowhere to go.

“Stop. That. Right. Now. You will not fucking lie to me, I know what happened and I know you feel responsible and guilty and afraid we’ll all be disgusted with you or some similar bullshit, but stop it. Damn it, Draco. Tell me what happened, and I mean the truth. NOW!”

Draco jolted under the teens shouts, he was shaking uncontrollably and breathing at an ever quickening pace. He was falling into the familiar, almost comforting, rhythm of a panic attack. It was his only option as he saw it, his only possible escape, at least these were familiar to him, not a new pain like the fresh wounds from Harry or the onslaught of tough questions from Seamus. He allowed himself to be lowered onto a bed, his head again cradled in Ginny’s lap. He heard the room burst into questions and accusations of being too harsh. He just focused on the gentle stroking of his hair, the soft scent of detergent on the girl’s t-shirt, allowing everything else to fade away.

“What the hell was that all about? What wasn’t Harry’s fault? What is going on, Seamus? Why did you attack the poor boy, Merlin isn’t he messed up enough as it is?!” Ron was inches from Seamus, who had gotten up along with Dean when Draco had collapsed into Neville’s ready embrace.

“Ron, something very not good happened last night, something between Draco and Harry. Something that was the very last thing the ‘poor boy’ there needed. Something no one should ever deal with ever. I can’t be sure of the details, but Harry really did a number on Draco. Must have been

brutal to go through, shit I could really punch something and cry now.”

Hermione stood slowly and turned Seamus to face her directly. “Are you saying what I think you might be?” She felt her body being slowly paralyzed with the fear of what she had figured out already being true. “Seamus, are you sure there’s no other way something happened?” Her body was ten times heavier than usual and she felt the tears cascade over her eyelids where they had been brimming.

“Hermione, I really wish I wasn’t so sure. But, I’ve seen this before. I’ve seen the denial, seen the pain, seen the guilt and shame, and I’ve cried and hurled and cried some more for the boy. I really wish I wasn’t seeing the same things here, but I can’t pretend otherwise. I wouldn’t be any kind of a friend if I did.”

“But, not Harry. I just can’t. . .there’s no. . .Oh, God.” She put her hand to her mouth and bent slightly at her middle. “I’m going to be sick!” She said through her hand before dashing to the girl’s bathroom. Ron looked confusedly at Seamus and then followed Hermione, she’d need someone to hold her hair, after all.

“Seamus, Dean, I need to know what is going on. I think I’ve pieced it together, but I need to hear someone say it out loud before I can even begin to grasp it.” Neville was facing the two who had turned back toward Draco. They saw that he had fallen into a fitful, restless sleep in Ginny’s lap.

“Yeah, I have to hear it to make it seem possible. I don’t like the idea or the implications, but something happened last night that Draco definitely feels ashamed of. Did you notice how he tried to get away from the subject? I’ve seen that enough with Fred and George, but never that desperate.”

“I think Harry. . .well. . .there’s no better way to put it and not try to sugarcoat it. He raped him.” Neville ran in the direction Hermione had earlier, feeling the contents of his stomach coming back up. Dean and Seamus both dropped heavily to the bed next to Ginny and the sleeping Draco.

“What do we do? I mean Harry’s fucked up big here. Draco already had enough problems, I just can’t. . .not Harry.” Ginny said, shaking her head with the disbelief. Soon tears were falling from her cheeks and falling on the face of the broken boy in her lap. “What do we do?” She repeated helplessly.

“We beat the living shit out of Harry and get him to snap out of whatever world he’s fucking living in and try to keep Malfoy from getting worse. Merlin, think how messed up he’ll be now. Harry was the only person he felt completely safe around. What do you do when you have no one to hold onto?”

Neither of his friends answered him and Seamus was glad. He didn’t want to know what you did when there was no hope, no reason to live. Harry was all those things to Draco, but now he was the source of the fear, the pain that Draco had turned to him to relieve. Who is there to save you when your savior is the very demon you need saving from?

“You find someone else to hold you.” Dean softly answered the question, minutes after it had been asked. “And we have to be here to hold him, we have to pick him back up and put him together again. He is going to be shattered. Harry was able to keep him together, but now everything has

fallen and he will be a right mess.”

The other three friends returned all looking pale and sick. “Neville told us.” It was all that was said, all that was needed. The six of them huddled on or around the bed with Draco. Each trying to sort through how this had happened and why they hadn’t done something to help Draco, being that they had all been only feet away in the same room at the time.

When Draco’s eyes fluttered open he saw some of his friends piled together in a jumble of limbs with him in bed and others sprawled in chairs or the floor, all asleep. Somehow, he found that it wasn’t so bad knowing that they all knew. He was sure Seamus would have told them all by now, unable to hold anything secret for long, and he really didn’t mind.

He was still ashamed and felt filthy, not because he’d never made his way to the shower, but because he had trusted Harry with his life and he had been betrayed. He had placed his welfare in Harry’s hands only to be bruised by them and ripped into by the boy. He wasn’t sure what was going to happen now, but he knew that trusting Harry, or anyone for that matter, with so much was a definite mistake. A mistake that he would not make again, for anyone.

He laid his head back into Ginny’s lap, he felt dizzy and was burning up all over. He let the delirium of fever sweep him away into a waking dream world where all the nightmares from his sleep were waiting for him, only now more powerful, having escaped the normal weaknesses of being in a sleeping dream. Draco was soon fighting for his life again, only this time the laughter was not a cold cackling voice, but the laughter of the boy he loved.

As the fever worsened in his body, so did the situation in his head. He was going to die, Harry had him by the throat, straddling him at the waist. He could feel the fury of Harry’s thrusts tearing into him, felt more bruises joining those already visible on the boxer clad body, and he knew the end was near.

Deciding there was nothing left to fight against the other for, he gave in and began moving with the rhythm that the body inside of him dictated. He began to moan with pleasure, allowing himself to enjoy the raging force ripping him apart. ‘That’s right, take it like the little whore that you are. Oh, yes. Draco it feels so good. You like it like this don’t you. I always knew you’d be good for at least something.’

The real Draco was sweating profusely, soaking every body and bit of bed that he touched. It wasn’t long before Ginny was nearly covered in sweat herself. She woke to find her clothes wet and a trembling boy, with sweat soaked hair plastered to his face and her legs.

“Oh, damn! Neville, get up something’s really wrong with Draco. We have to get help, now!” Everyone jumped up at the same moment, hearing the pleading cries of the girl and began running around trying to figure out what to do.

Draco raised his head, briefly escaping the tormenting dreams and screamed in pain, unable to form any actual words, before slipping back into the agony of giving in to Harry over and over again in his mind.

“What is going on?” Professor Dumbledore was standing in the door way, looking at the panicked

confusion of the room. “Where’s Harry, he wasn’t sup. . .What is wrong with Draco?” The man asked as his eyes fell upon the shaking wet body in the lap of an equally wet Ginny.

“He’s not well at all, Headmaster. I noticed a fever on him earlier, but what with everything that happened then, I hadn’t thought much about it until I woke up from his sweat making my clothes cling to my body.” Ginny was the only one not completely lost in the currently unproductive task of someone getting help. Dumbledore walked over to her and withdrew his wand and moved it over the sick body in front of him, searching for an indication of a problem. Everyone else had gathered around the group now, watching the scene being played out. When Dumbledore’s wand neared Draco’s waist, a red beam began to glow down onto the boy from the tip.

“What happened?” No one seemed willing to talk, unsure of what to say. How do you tell someone that the savior of the Wizarding world had just done what he’d done to Draco. “I need to know why my wand is telling me of trauma in the area that it is. I don’t want to jump to conclusions about the worst if there’s a more logical explanation to be had”

Draco opened his eyes and they soon were four times the normal size when he saw the Headmaster leaning over him. He looked to the others in the room begging them with his eyes not to say anything. Everyone seemed to understand, not wanting to tell the older man anything anyway. “Sir, we’re not sure why that is, he just got sick this morning with the fever and all.” Neville spoke quietly, using the meek voice everyone hadn’t heard in a while.

Dumbledore looked down at the boy and saw the pleading in his eyes and got all the answers he needed. Slowly standing he said, “I will have something sent up for the fever and for the pain, my boy. When you are ready to talk about this, if ever, I will be available. Has anyone seen Harry this morning? I had hoped to catch him when he woke, but had been distracted at the time.”

A room full of shaking heads was his answer. He slowly made his way to the door where he paused and stared into the corner for a moment, then exited without another word.

“Thanks. I’m not sure if I could deal with him knowing too. It’s hard enough with you all having figured it out, or so I assume.”

“Careful Malfoy, remember what happens when you assume.” A few smiles were raised to Seamus’ words, but they didn’t stay long.

“Draco, can you tell us what happened so we’re not thinking the worst for no reason.” Draco looked up into the face above him, and smiled weakly.

“I don’t think it could be worse.” His face and voice becoming seriously flat. He looked at the others in the room again before taking a few shaky breaths and beginning. “First, I want you all to know how hard this is to trust you all with my feelings again, after Harry.” Everyone nodded their understanding and support to him. ‘They don’t care about you, you idiot. They just want to make sure it was your fault and not Harry’s.’

Draco pushed the voice back and decided he could not feel worse than he already did anyway, even if they all betrayed him too. “Last night I went over and got into bed with Harry because I was afraid to be alone. I fell asleep next to him, but was woken a few hours later by him moving around. He

asked if we could. . .um. . .you know, and I said that I was too sore and tired. He got pissed and turned away saying something about me throwing the whole nearly killing me thing in his face, and I felt bad for hurting him. I told him we could do stuff even though I was tired, and he about took skin off with my boxers.” There was silence for a few of the longest minutes they had ever lived through.

“Draco, dear, you can stop there, we can fill in the rest ourselves.” Ginny was in full mom mode now. Rocking the boy in her arms, tears mixing with his as they both wept.

“He told me to trust him, that he wouldn’t hurt me, but he did. How could he do that?! He said he loved me, oh God. Fuck, I’m so stupid.” Draco was near vomiting with each body tensing burst of emotion and tears. “I told him not to. . .not to. . .not to hurt me. I told him not to, but he just said not to say I didn’t trust him and broke me with something that was so beautiful before. But still, I know it was from everything going on right now. He didn’t mean it.”

Neville crawled next to Ginny and wrapped himself around her and placed a hand on Draco’s, his own tears soon running down his girlfriend’s shoulder. Seamus again gave up any pretense of appearance and hugged into his friend as Dean put his arm around the other boy and stood silently. Ron and Hermione both felt an unimaginable weight crushing down on them, their friend had destroyed something beautiful. Harry was no longer their savior and friend, he was the source of their friend’s misery. They both nearly collapsed in on themselves, unable to feel emotions, too overwhelmed by the sense of dread that was consuming them. They both wandered what they could have done to keep Harry from changing into this frightening person he had become.

Draco’s last words were a little comfort to them, though they still couldn’t see any good coming from this, even if Harry hadn’t meant or known what he was doing at the time. The question most of them were mauling over inside their brains was how do you forgive someone for something like this, if you even could.

VvVv

It was late afternoon before anyone was able to even move, to face the idea of leaving the room and seeing people in the common room or the halls seemed impossible. But eventually their famished bodies reminded them all that they had not eaten last night and had missed both breakfast and lunch already. Being that evening meal was only a little while off, they decided to get themselves around and some what presentable.

“Okay, mate, if you need a shower as bad as me, even though I’m not sure if Malfoy’s actually sweat, then I suggest we head to the showers and wash the last twenty four hours down the drain.” Ron had stood up and had offered a hand of help to Draco who took it and found standing up a little easier this time, but still harder and more painful than it had ever been before. His face still winced a little as he and Ron gathered their needed items and with a slower walk than normal, made their way to the showers, followed shortly by Dean, Seamus, and Neville, who thought a shower sounded really good at the moment.

“How are you doing?” Hermione asked Ginny when they were alone in the room. She moved over to the bed and sat beside the red haired girl she considered a good friend.

“I’m still not sure I can really believe what has happened, I mean I believe Draco, I just never. . .not

Harry.” Both girls sat in silence, something that had become a comfort over the last months. “What do you think Ron’s going to do when he finds Harry?” Ginny finally asked, worriedly.

With a sigh, Hermione shrugged her shoulders. “I’m not sure, but it won’t be a good thing, though I don’t know that Harry doesn’t deserve a good beat down at the moment. How could he do something like that to Draco, I know he is very much in love with him and would never hurt him on purpose.”

“That’s just it Hermione, I don’t think it was on purpose, like Harry didn’t stop it from happening, but in a way couldn’t. He does deserve a good thrashing though. Poor Draco.”

“I just hope Harry hasn’t gone and done something horribly stupid out of regret today. He was gone before any of us woke up and we haven’t heard anything about him all day. I am worried about him, even though I think I would give him a good smack and share a few words with him right now if I did see him.”

“Yeah, me too. On all counts. He has been known to be rash and over react at times.” Ginny yawned, stretching away the tension from staying in the same position for so many hours.

“I hope he’s alright, and that he can somehow pull his head out from wherever it’s stuck now and somehow get Draco to trust him again. None of that will be easy, but they’re both going to need it to happen if they’re going to survive. I don’t think Draco or Harry could make it alone anymore. Not after finding a love like theirs.”

VvVv

Sitting in the corner, under his invisibility cloak where he’d been all day without moving, Harry hoped the same things, he knew he could never make it without Draco beside him, but how in the world was he going to fix this. He had fucked up bad and he knew it. All of his friends wanted to beat the shit out of him and his boyfriend was scared to death of him. He remembered Draco saying to please not hurt him. At the time he had taken it as a request to be gentle, but when he woke up he knew it had been a request to stop, to not do what he was about to do. And what had he done? He’d done exactly what he had wanted, ignoring the words for whatever they were intended to mean.

He took out all the anger and frustration he felt from Dumbledore and his father on Draco. He had looked away, because he couldn’t see Draco’s eyes while he was tearing his insides with such carelessness. He had turned to his side and not spoken to the boy because he had known he would have cried and spent the night begging him to forgive him for what he’d done. He knew that he had done far more damage than make Draco walk with a wince. He had destroyed, probably even killed, the trust and love they had shared. Draco would never want to sleep in the same bed with him again, he’d be too afraid Harry would force himself on him again.

At least that’s what Harry convinced himself as he sat there feeling sorry for himself and for the love of his life, who was still bleeding inside from the emotional scars Harry had inflicted last night. In less than five minutes, he had destroyed what fate had taken years to assemble and what he and Draco had spent months securing. He had thrown a wrench in destiny and stopped it cold. Harry pulled his legs tighter against his body as the door opened again and all the guys returned clean and with wet hair.

Draco was walking with a bit of a bowlegged stagger, but seemed a lot less stiff. Harry watched the sad gazes follow his lover across the room to where he began pulling on clothes over his boxer clad body. He was no longer sweating or looking flushed as Dumbledore had sent something that relieved the fever as he'd promised, along with some pain draught. Harry watched Draco bite his lip to keep from screaming while he balanced on one leg and pulled his pants on to the other. He watched him repeat the move but fall backwards into a seating position on Harry's trunk, this time unable to hold in the whimper that escaped his lips and broke Harry's heart.

At that moment Harry wanted nothing else than for his friends to actually beat him. He deserved it, he knew. Watching Draco struggle and be hurt by the simplest actions made him hate himself even more than he had managed to build up over the day of brooding. Standing up, he removed the cloak from over him and waited until all of the gasps of surprise and a short squeal from Ginny ended and the room returned to silence before looking up into the waiting faces.

"You son-of-a-bitch!" Seamus was the first to lunge for Harry, only to be held back at the waist by Dean. "What the fuck do you think you are doing! He loves you, you bastard! Shit Harry, shit, shit, shit, shit." He screamed as he pounded the closest piece of furniture.

Eventually his fists stopped pounding the chair and he turned into Dean's shoulder letting his emotions return him to tears for Draco, and for the pain he felt for the other friend. The one he hadn't done anything for, until it was long past being too late. He wasn't going to let this end that way, not again. Not for Harry or for Draco. Not for anyone in the room. He had sworn that much to himself over the summer, standing in front of the granite slab bearing his friends name.

Ron hadn't moved from where he had been when Harry revealed his whereabouts. He flexed his hands open and shut, anger and disgust fusing together on his face. "I'm sure everyone in this room expects me to be the one to hit you, to give you the beating of a lifetime. To pull your head out of your ass and force you to see that you are dealing with everything in the worst way possible. But you know what Harry, you aren't worth it. You don't deserve someone to do it for you."

"I am sick of watching you fold inward, closing off those you love and need desperately, just so you can take out your fucked up emotions on them. Well, boo fucking hoo! I can't imagine how Remus feels being the target of your death glare, that can actually kill people, and I certainly can't fully understand Draco's pain from what you did to him last night. But I can say with the rest of the world that I am tired of hearing you fucking whine about the unfairness of the world because they expect you to save it."

Ron had taken a few steps towards Harry as he'd spoke. His face was growing a deeper red than crimson and a few veins were visible on his forehead. "You want to hear about unfair?! Let me tell you about it. Unfair is trying to be there for a person who pushes you away just because you aren't the savior of the damned world like he is and so you couldn't possibly bare the same fucking burdens that he does. Unfair is trying to love a person so consumed with his hurt little feelings that something so horrible as his dad actually being alive causes him to abuse the love and trust you gave him by fucking raping you! Unfair is causing all of your friends to sit in a room, crying and feeling sick all day because you allowed something so horrible to happen under their very noses and they feel responsible and worried for you!"

“Yes, we were worried for you even though you are a piece of shit that doesn’t care for any of us when it gets a little tough in life. I am not going to beat every last breath out of you, because I don’t waste my time on beating sense into those who already have it, but just aren’t brave enough to use it.” Ron stopped, breathing heavily and only inches from Harry’s face.

“Well, if no one else is going to, then I’ll beat him.” Neville said as he strode towards Harry and Ron.

“Wait. Don’t.” Neville stopped and everyone looked at the source of the small, quiet voice. “I still love him and don’t want him hurt.” The blonde haired boy said as he buttoned his pants and began walking slowly across the room.

Every person in the room followed him from one end to the other, moving their bodies as he walked past them to keep him in eye sight. Ron moved to the side when Draco reached Harry and walked up to him until he was able to feel the other’s breath brushing against his face. He placed a soft, gentle kiss onto Harry’s lips, then stepped back from him. Before the wonderful sensation that was Draco’s kiss had left Harry’s lips, Draco slapped him hard across the cheek forcing him to stagger to one side from the force of the impact.

“You, Harry James Potter, are a fucking bastard, and I don’t think I can stand having you around in my life right now. One of us is leaving this room for awhile, until you can figure your head out and regain my trust and love, if you ever can. You decide. Me or You.”

Harry looked to each face in the room and knew they didn’t want him around either for awhile. He had shattered something he shared with them all, the trust they had all been apart of since first year and he would have to repair it before it would work again.

“I’ll go.” Without another word Harry turned and left Gryffindor Tower without looking back to see the boy he loved crumble into Ron or all of his friends gather around them. He wasn’t sure where he was supposed to go, but he knew the last place he wanted to be at the moment was the only place to start. Albus Dumbledore.

Harry remembered the way the man had looked at him by the door earlier that day. How his eyes had made it clear that “when you are ready to talk about this, if ever, I am here” had pertained to him, as well as Draco. Harry didn’t doubt that somehow the Headmaster knew already about what had happened, he had a knack for that. Besides, Harry was sure Dobby must have been in at some point to clean Draco up a little and cover his naked body up, because he knew he’d left him lying there still bleeding and unprotected from the cold and that the boy hadn’t moved for at least an hour before Harry had fallen asleep into his nightmares and regrets.

Dobby would have told Dumbledore of anything that seemed wrong or out of place, and what he would have found was definitely wrong. Harry decided against Dumbledore when he reached the password protected entrance and just walked on by. There was only one place he could go, and he needed to start there anyway if he wanted to work through his problems so that he could be there for Draco.

He stopped outside of the Professor’s personal quarters, thinking how Draco being here had changed their lives, and how he was about to try doing the same. Only he was going to change everything on purpose. He knocked on the door and waited for an answer. Just as it opened, a group

of Hufflepuff girls came walking down the corridor by the door.

“Um, can I help you Mr. Potter?”

“I really hope so...Professor Lupin. I need a lot of it.” He stepped inside the door into a dark, musty room smelling of anguish and grief. He really had a long way to go with everyone before this would work out. Taking a deep breath and nearly choking on it, he figured there was no time like the present.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Nineteen - Unresolved

Harry looked around the room at what he could make out in the dim light from the low burning fire. It was a stark contrast to the brightness of the room when he'd last been in it a few weeks ago, then the room had been bursting with pent up energy. Now the room was flooded with the rank air of sulking and crying. "Professor, look I know I'm the last person you want to see at the moment, and that I'm the last person you want to grant a favor to, but I've been kicked out of my dorm for being a total git and I need a place to sleep. So, is there anyway I could use this couch in your office until I get a lot of things straightened out in my head and stop hurting those who still, for some idiotic reason, love me?" There, he had gotten through it all. Gotten it all out. He turned to actually look at the man who had followed him deeper into the room after closing the door behind them.

"Do you really think you're the last person I want to see, Harry?" Harry felt his temper rise a little at having the rest of his words ignored after the first line.

"Well, actually that's just the line you say when you are trying to ask someone something you really don't want to. I honestly don't know what you want, and really I have to tell you that I don't much care at the moment. There were a lot of times when you were the only person I wanted to see, to hold, to touch, to feel. But not now. I got used to you not being there for me when I cried for you in the night, so I haven't done that in a long while and don't plan on it any time soon. Well, after asking for a place to stay that is." His anger was seeping into all the words, making them harder and harder to get out of his throat without choking on them.

"Calm down Harry. I understand that you hate me for a lot of reasons right now, let's have this conversation some other time, okay. You are welcome to my couch for as long as you need it. I'll be in the other room preparing for the next few weeks worth of lessons if you need anything or want to talk." He turned and left the room, leaving Harry standing alone in the dark room.

He sat down on the couch that would be his home for a while and started thinking about what in the world was wrong with him. He knew he was being a complete jerk to his friends and that there had been no excuse for hurting Draco the way he had. He thought back to the rest of the day, how his friends had all gathered around Draco, not letting him think for a moment that he was to blame, not letting him feel alone, and he really missed them all. He felt more alone than he'd ever felt, even while at Privet Drive. At least then he'd had friends that wanted to be with him. Now he had driven them all away and done such a good job that it was going to take a lot of time and a lot more than a simple 'I'm sorry' to patch it up.

He realized that was all he could do now, patch it up. There was no returning to the innocence they had all lost over the years, and there was no taking back what he had just put the boy he loved through, or his friends. He'd seen them run from the room sick at his actions, he'd heard them curse him, and he'd listened knowing that everything had changed forever. He just hoped he could patch it up enough to move on with their lives and all remain together, especially he and Draco.

Harry curled up into a ball on the end of the couch and stared at the dying flames of the fire, wishing that he could just flicker out unnoticed along with the last wisps of smoke as they left the room by way of the chimney. A cold chill settled into Harry, not from the lack of fire, but from the guilt that

was starting to engulf him. The guilt that would scar him and felt like it was never going to subside for the rest of his life it was so overwhelming. Harry Potter, the boy-who-lived, wanted only to be the boy-who-died at that moment.

He wasn't sure how he was going to live with himself, let alone try to get everyone else to want to live with him, but he knew dying would have to be easier. He closed his eyes and gave in to the sleep that was dragging him away from such ridiculous thoughts, and leaving a broken, yet determined Harry in its wake the next morning.

VvVvV

Draco woke up alone. He already hated being apart from Harry after one night, even with everything that had happened. He wanted Harry to come back and ask to be forgiven, to cry and say how sorry he was and how much he regretted doing what he had done. Draco knew that even so soon after Harry betraying their love he would forgive him. Harry would have to try harder than fucking up big only once. True it had been a big fuck up, but Draco knew it had been due to a lot more than Harry just being an uncaring horrible person inside who felt no emotion.

It had happened because Harry felt so much emotion that he didn't know how to deal with it, he'd simply overloaded and let one of the worst possible scenarios play out. He had released all the pent up emotion on Draco. 'At least the bastard didn't pull something stupid like last year and end up getting himself killed in the process. This side of Harry can be worked with and eventually forgiven, but a dead Harry leaves me with nothing to live for myself. But, he will have to make me feel safe with him again, and that will take time. Fuck, why didn't I just push him off, then we'd have had a fight and none of this would be happening and I would not feel such hatred along with this unwavering love for him.'

"Draco, breakfast is over in under thirty minutes so you'd better hurry and get up and dressed." Ginny informed as she bustled around getting herself ready in the dorm. "And I know you need to eat, you haven't had much in the last forty-eight hours. You'd better be down there with a full plate in ten minutes, or so help me I will climb back up to this tower and force food down your throat myself."

Draco smiled at the motherly way Ginny treated him, along with the other boys in the dorm. It was comforting and reminded him of Mum Weasley, which always made him smile. "Okay, okay. Merlin, you'd think you were my mother the way you carry on sometimes." Draco tried to sound exasperated, but was getting up none the less. He knew there was nothing but love in her words, but that she meant every single one of them too.

"You think you have it bad? Try dating her, then we'll talk." Neville whispered as the two got dressed.

"I heard that sweetums!" Ginny's voice called into the room in an overly sweet tone. Neville looked up at Draco with a grin and headed out the door, followed by Draco.

There was never a reaction anymore when anyone in the common room saw Draco, Hermione, or Ginny come down from the room in the morning. They had tried to be more discreet as Dumbledore had asked, but that only raised more questions from people when they didn't see them coming and going from the room. So, in the end they had just given up trying to keep everyone from knowing

what everyone had already known anyway.

“Where’s Harry?” The simple question stopped the three friends in their tracks. No one had thought about this dilemma, how were they going to explain Harry’s absence without letting way more than anybody needed to know out.

“I’m right here, Collin.” Harry said as he walked into the room. He looked at Draco and felt his heart speed up and his palms grow slick, they locked eyes and it was the way it had been months before, both were drawn into the world of the other. Harry broke the contact with a small smile and made his way to the fire place where he stepped up onto one of the couches to get everyone’s attention. “Just so no one wastes anytime creating some fantastical rumors about my whereabouts the next few weeks, I will be staying with Professor Lupin to work on some project for Professor Dumbledore.” With that said, he jumped from the couch and headed up the stairs to gather his clothes and anything he’d be needing for the next few weeks and left abruptly.

“He seemed a little on the overly cheery side, did you two notice?” Draco asked Neville and Ginny as they walked the corridors heading to the Great Hall.

“Yeah, we did. Are you okay about it?” Ginny answered after a shared look with Neville. “I mean, to see him all happy and bouncy after the last two days kinda pissed me off.”

“He wasn’t happy, not at all. It was all in his eyes. He was putting on his ‘smile for the world’ face, but I know him too well. He was screaming his pain with his eyes.” Draco felt a little of the hatred break away, but there was still no trust being let free. He smiled though, despite himself, and his friends were glad to see it lift his cheeks. He noticed their looks and raised an eyebrow at them in question. “What about my face could have you both so enraptured with it?”

“Wow, did you even understand what you just said?”

With a small laugh that sounded more like a sigh, Draco just shook his head saying, “Gryffindors are just hopeless, hopeless.” The couple nudged playfully into him and joined in the light laughter, thankful for a small break and taking everything they could get at the moment.

Even though it was a Sunday, the school was bustling with activity and students. The Great Hall was as full as on a weekday when they walked through the doors and found their friends sitting at the far end of the Gryffindor table. “Oi, Malfoy!” Draco heard as he was taking his seat between Seamus and Ron.

“What do you want?” He asked as he stood back up and turned around to face Blaise Zabini, who was striding over to the table with a malicious grin on his face.

“I’ve been elected to inform you that your services as prefect of Slytherin house are no longer needed or wanted, and that we require the badge be returned so that your replacement may have it.” As he had talked he had continued walking and had already taken the liberty of removing the badge from Draco’s robes. “We can’t have a Gryffindor’s orphaned whore setting the example for the lower years, think of the children Draco, the children.” His mouth was prevented from speaking further when a blur brushed past Draco and collided fully with Blaise, sending a fist to his jaw on the way to the ground.

“Mr. Longbottom! What on earth do you think you are doing!” Neville was pulled to a standing position by the surprisingly strong arms of Professor McGonagall. “Explain yourself immediately! I swear, child, I don’t know what has gotten into you lately!”

“This little piece of vermin opened his mouth and let a lot of crap fall out, so I shut it before we all got sick from the stench.” Neville replied coolly, never taking his eyes off the rumbled Blaise. “Unfortunately, I reacted physically before I was able to pull out my wand and hex it shut for good, but I do what I can for the world.”

“That’s a weeks worth of detention for your actions and be thankful you aren’t getting more for your cheek.” Draco and Neville returned to their table where the few people who knew how much those words would hurt Draco were waiting to comfort him, while the rest of Gryffindor was cheering for Neville and waiting to clap him on his back and congratulate him.

“Thank Merlin I don’t have to go down to that hell hole anymore! I’ve really grown quite accustomed to living in the sunlight with the rest of humankind and not in the dark with the snakes.” Draco spoke loudly, so that all in the Great Hall heard his words clearly.

“Yeah, that’s the spirit mate. I hear that once you taste the real power in life, you see how pathetic those who embrace Death Eaters really are and how truly noble a thing it is to sweep the floor with them all.” More than a few cold stares glared at the two boys, who only returned each one with a big smile. Ron’s comment had been low, what with so many having lost their Death Eater parents recently, but Draco was glad to see the pride on the faces of those who had lost family to the good fight under Dumbledore.

“That will be quite enough, boys. I’m sure you weren’t aware, but the entire room has heard you. Please try to reign in your comments.” Dumbledore spoke from the teacher’s table, the twinkle in his eyes clearly broadcasting his own appreciative thoughts to the two.

“Oh, and Longbottom, while I appreciate your willingness to jump right in there for me, I can still handle little shits like Zabini myself. I may not be a Slytherin by name at the moment, but I am still one at heart and I will always be a Malfoy. We fight our own battles, well except for my father who gets his idiot. . .”

“Mr. Malfoy, continue and you will be spending that week in detention with Mr. Longbottom.” Draco sent an apologetic look to Dumbledore in response and stopped talking so the whole room could hear.

The rest of breakfast was uneventful as it was only a few minutes before most of the students and teachers had moved on about their days. The seven friends sat around the end of the table and wasted the rest of the morning just talking and laughing, even breaking into a few games eventually as they just simply enjoyed each other and being alive.

VvVv

Harry sat in the office watching a freshly lit fire slowly eat its way through the logs. He imagined the fire to be the remorse that burned inside of him and the logs where his soul. He was losing it to the

raging fire inside himself. He knew that the only thing fueling the blaze was his hatred for his father. If only he were able to let it go and embrace the father he had missed for so long with love.

'But it can't be that easy, I can't just let it go and not say a word. He abandoned me.' But Ron's words from the day before still rang inside his mind. Maybe it was stupid to be so consumed with his past and everything that happened that he missed out on the present, leading to a future that is every bit as bleak and depressing as his childhood had been. Harry knew he was going to be upset about the way things had turned out, but couldn't live with the thought of being the reason things would never get better.

Standing up from the couch he decided to look for his father, because sixteen years is too damn long to go without being able to find your father sitting in the next room busy with something. Harry had a lot of memories to make up for and if it helped get him straight with Draco again, then he could move beyond his hurt feelings and heal his shattered mind.

He walked into the classroom where he found James reclining in his chair with his feet propped up on the desk in front of him, reading *The Daily Prophet*. Well, at least holding it open as he dozed in the sunlight coming through a window and giving warmth to the man on a cold day. Harry stood and watched, thinking of how amazing it was to watch his dad sleeping lightly in a chair holding the paper. He remembered all the times Uncle Vernon had done the same, only he would ruin the quiet of the afternoon by snoring loudly. Harry decided that his father's soft whistle through his nose was much more comforting of a sound.

Harry imagined himself as a child sitting on the floor playing with toys or reading while James sat in his chair behind him glancing smiles at his son each time he turned the page. Harry felt a slight sting rising to his eyes when his brain dreamt up his mom coming in from the kitchen and placing a kiss on his forehead, then sitting in his father's lap placing a soft kiss on his lips, sharing a deep smile as she pulled away.

The false memory faded in a flash of green light and Harry was dropped back harshly into his reality. He was startled to see James staring back into his eyes with what appeared to be understanding. "Good morning, Harry. Since I know you couldn't have slept well curled in a ball on the end of the couch, I won't ask if you did." The man let a small smile lift the corners of his mouth.

"Does the offer still stand to talk?"

"Always." James said as he sat up properly in his seat, adjusting to get comfortable again. He refolded his paper and laid it on the desk before entwining his fingers over his chest. "I'll even go with just listening if you need me to." Again the small smile.

"Why?" Harry finally asked quietly. He wasn't sure what to say or even what he wanted to know the why for.

"That asks a lot of questions, doesn't it? Like, why did I leave you and Lily alone, why did I hide from you for so long, why do I fear this power so much. There are a lot of things you could be wanting to know."

"There are, I want to know everything. I want to know about the simple things you and mum shared

together, about your love and good times and silly fights. I want to know all the bigger issues that caused you two to sacrifice your lives together for your son. I want to know every funny story I never got to hear about your pasts at the dinner table or while driving in the car on a long trip. I want to know it all. I just want to know.” Harry ended in tears, the lump in his throat preventing him from continuing. He looked up to see his father also blinking away tears, nodding his head slowly.

“Well, why don’t we go sit in the other room where you can get a seat and we can be a little more comfortable. This will take a while to get through.” They returned to the couch where they sat together and watched the still burning flames gnaw through the last of the wood causing the ends to pull apart.

“I feel like those logs. Like I’m being torn apart from the inside out. Part of me wants to just hug you and say that I forgive you for all the years spent alone and the life I will never have, while another part wants to just attack you again and never speak to you, ever. The part of me that wants to balance things out, let myself blend my hatred with my love and eventually come to forgive you, is being left as nothing but ashes between the two extremes. I can’t decide what in the world I want, but I know it’s not whatever I’ve had the last few days.”

“Lily used to say, ‘There are two halves that make me a whole, James. Whatever half you get depends on the day and the mood I’m in, but you’d better love me as a whole, either way.’ I guess I never really got that, until now.” He sighed and turned to face Harry.

“Harry, I love you more than anything in this world. You are the reason I kept fighting all those years to survive being a werewolf and being cast aside by most people. I know there are a lot of things that we need to work through before we can just hug and make up, but you need to know and believe me when I say that every reason I ever had for leaving you were the right things to do, but I regret every single one of them. I used to wish I had never switched with Mooney, but I know that if we hadn’t done it and I had been there that night, your life would have been much worse than anything those bastards you grew up with did to you.”

“How would you know? I was a slave to them and they treated me a little worse than that. How can you say that when you don’t know what would have happened, we could have killed Voldemort for good if you’d been willing to make a little sacrifice, but instead you ran and left me to die and then be dropped into the nightmare that I grew up in.”

“Harry, trust me. There was no other way to avoid you being turned into nothing more than a murdering weapon. I will admit though, that it was mostly fear that kept me from you all those years after Voldemort was gone. I should have come for you once the Death Eater trials were over, but I let my fear drive me further away from everyone. For that I have no excuse and no reason to be forgiven, but I still ask you to. I was scared and devastated, and you really were much safer with the Dursley’s than roaming around with me.”

“You obviously never saw what I was subjected to.”

“You’re right, I never did. I tried a few times but could never bring myself to get that close to you, I knew that I would probably end up coming clean then and there, and you already had enough to deal with. I am sorry though, if I had ever seen you and the way you were treated, I would have probably broke down years ago to Dumbledore and gotten you taken away from them.”

They sat in silence, both still staring at the flames, searching for words to say, questions to ask. After about an hour, a knock at the door interrupted their silent thoughts. The older of the two got up from his seat and opened the door.

“Well, hello there, can’t say I’m surprised to see you coming around.”

“I just wanted to make sure Harry was staying here like he had said and to bring him some stuff he forgot that I figured he might need.” Harry’s heart leapt at the sound of that voice he knew so well. He wanted to rush to the door, take Draco in his arms and hug him tightly until his arms gave out, but he stayed seated where he was.

“He is staying here, would you like to come in and see him? I’m sure he’d like to talk to you.” Harry waited to hear the response, hoping it was both a yes and a no. He was surprised when he heard them both combined.

“Nes.” James gave the boy an odd look, but said nothing. “What I meant was, yes, I would, but I think he needs his space at the moment, so I’ll just be going. Thank you, Pro. . .uh, sir.”

James slowly closed the door, watching the frail boy walk down the hall with a slight bowed out stagger. He returned to the couch and handed Harry his toothbrush, a comb, and a sealed letter. He watched Harry open and read the parchment, noticing the glossy eyes like Lily’s just before she cried.

Harry looked up from the words, a few tears leaking down his cheeks, and looked into the eyes of his father. “I really am such a fucking bastard, you know that? I sit here and whine about you abandoning me and hate you for making a huge sacrifice that couldn’t have been easy, while I ignore the fact that I nearly destroyed the only other good thing in my life besides you.” There was no stopping the tears now as they began to flow freely, finally being released. “Do you know that I have done something as bad, if not worse, than what you did to me and all he can do is tell me that he loves me and wants to forgive me when I’m able to forgive myself and ask him for it? Do you know that I don’t deserve a damn thing from him, not after hurting him the way I did, but he is still waiting to give it all to me, everything he has? I can’t believe I could be so wrapped up in my emotions that I would be blind to everything going on. How do I deserve him?”

“I always wondered the same thing about your mum, and then you when you were born.” Both men sat in silence, Harry softly crying. “Harry, what happened between you two that caused you to need to leave the dorm?”

Harry looked intently at the other man, wondering how he would react to hearing what his son was capable of. “I. . .used his trust and love for me to vent my feelings with. I took all of my anger and helplessness out on him Friday night, using something so beautiful as making love to destroy someone else like I was being destroyed on the inside.”

“You. . .you. . .Harry, I’m so sorry.” The man was shocked, he’d never expected this, not from Harry, not from his son.

“What are you sorry for! I am the one who fucking raped him! I am the one that betrayed our love

and forced myself into him, making him bleed and bite his lip to keep from screaming at me to stop!” Harry was on his feet, screaming at the man on the couch. He had been ready for anything, just not an apology, not sorrow or pity. He deserved to be looked at as something evil, to be screamed at and hated. He had tried to kill this man, had nearly killed Draco, and then forced himself inside the boy for his troubles. Why did everyone seem so determined to love him despite all the bad things he had done.

“Why can’t you just hate me! Why can’t you just hit me, or call me names, or tell me how horrible I am! Why do you and he have to just love me, I don’t deserve anything but your hatred.” Harry folded into a ball on the floor and began rocking, holding his knees tightly to his chest.

James got down next to him on the floor and held the boy to his chest. “Because Harry, we don’t know how to do anything but love you.” He just held the boy as he cried on his shirt. They sat there for what seemed like a few hours before Harry cried himself to sleep against James’ chest. He stood up and placed the boy on the couch, then spread a blanket over him and sat down in a chair to watch the boy sleep. It wasn’t long before he too had drifted off into a restless dream filled slumber.

VvVvV

Harry woke up the next morning with a pounding headache and a scorching throat from fever. He regretted immediately not eating anything in the past two days, or at least getting something to drink. He sat up on the couch and patted the floor for his glasses, then searched the arms of the couch and then the nearest table, only to realize he still had them on his face. Seeing that it was only four in the morning, and breakfast wouldn’t be served for another few hours, Harry decided to head for the nearest sink he could find and just gulp whatever came out. The bathroom off of the office was small, but easy to move about. Harry bent over the sink and stuck his head under the faucet letting the cold water run over his burning skin as well as down his throat. After a few minutes of filling himself on the water, he stood up. His head swam with dizziness and nausea, but he still felt a little better.

He returned to the couch and noticed the man occupying the opposite chair. Again Harry had flashes of memories of what could have been, scenes of waking during the night while sick to find his dad watching over him, or staying with his son who was afraid of the dark. All of these brought tears again to his eyes, but this time they never fell. This time he smiled at the memories and the tears receded with the pain. Harry spent the next few hours dreaming up all the things that the two of them had missed out on.

It was somewhere in the middle of these dreams that Harry came to realize that his father had also missed out on their life together. He was still angry that the man had left him alone for so long, but decided that he wanted to have some real memories with his father, not more pain and missed opportunities. Harry sat and stared at the father he needed in his life and had been given a chance to have again while the room lightened a small bit through the drawn curtains. James woke to find his son staring at him with a small smile.

“Well, someone is definitely in a better mood this morning.” He said in a gruff voice. “Any particular reason for it.”

“I’ve been thinking for awhile and I’ve figured some stuff out.” Harry said with a shrug.

“Yeah? Well, what did you figure out?”

“That it’s stupid to waste time hating you when we’ve got a lot of memories to make up for missing out on. I still haven’t forgiven you, but I know I will be able to eventually.” James nodded at his son, happy for even the smallest of steps towards being with his son, never having expected Harry to make this big of a step so soon, but happy that it had happened.

“You sure you want this?”

“Very. . .dad.”

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Twenty - Turning Wounds Into Scars

A/N - Many apologies for the absence. I hope you enjoy this chapter.

James watched as Harry paced around the room telling his story of everything that had happened in the last months since returning to Hogwarts for the new term. Harry was now telling him the events of the past weekend in greater detail, pausing and taking breathes and nervous glances at the man sitting and listening. When Harry told him what he'd done to Draco, he'd wanted to scream at the boy, ask him what in the hell he'd been thinking, anything but sit and listen with an encouraging smile. But as Harry continued he could see the pain and torture the boy had been putting himself through ever since it'd happened. Well, at least I know he's remorseful and as scared and angry at himself as the others are sure to be with him. Harry finished speaking and collapsed into the couch across from his father.

"So, I've really fucked everything up haven't I? I mean aside from the amount of pain I've caused him, there have to be rules and laws about this sort of thing, even for the 'Boy Who Lived'." Harry looked into the older man's eyes with a defeated gaze. "I've managed to push every single person I love and care about and need past any point they should ever be asked to cross."

"Well, Harry." He took a deep breathe and looked down to his hands. "For one, there are laws and rules that deal very severely with something like this, especially here at Hogwarts. Second, I would say that you have done a lot of damage to your friendships and all your relationships with this. But, overall, I can tell you really didn't mean to do it, that you let way to many things get way to out of control and you weren't ready to stop them when you should have." He raised his eyes and looked into those of his son's that were still red from days of crying and waking nightmares. "But, for whatever reason, Draco has let you know that he is willing to forgive you and work on getting through all of this mess. You really have someone special there, strong and loving. Don't let it slip Harry, just don't ever let things spiral to this point again or you will destroy everything good about what you and he share.

"How can I ever ask him to forgive me and to trust me again? I don't trust myself around him, let alone think this can be forgiven. He will always have to live with what I've done to him, every time we would make love it would flash through his brain. How can I look into his eyes and see that flash of pain and fear and be okay with it. I'll never be able to move past this. How can I ask him to?"

"You can't ask him to forget it, son. But you can ask him to forgive you and try to move on with each other." A silence settled between the two, blanketing the room with an uncomfortable false peace.

"Can. . .could you. . .I need help." Harry looked pleadingly into his father's eyes. "I mean, could you help me think of ways to ask him to forgive me. I need to have some memorable moment to help counter this unforgettable weekend."

"Well, I think I can pull on some of my memories. I used to be pretty good at hurting your mom and having to come up with some elaborate plan to get her to forgive me, of course, I never hurt her like

this.” Harry winced at the last few words.

“Well, when I do something I like to do it big. Hurt as many people and effect as many lives as possible.”

“Sorry, I didn’t mean that to sound like it did.” James said, after realizing his last comment.

“Yes, you did. But it needed to. I really did do something far beyond what most people deal with in a relationship, especially at sixteen.” The two shared sad smiles and eventually set to work developing a plan to show Draco he was loved and to beg his forgiveness, and to make it all become a scar instead of an open wound.

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“Did you guys see Harry this morning? He wasn’t at breakfast again, I hope he’s getting food. I should go look for him if he’s not in class today. I’m really worried, you know. He gets so stupid sometimes, I mean I know he should be feeling bad right now, but what good is it if he wastes away to nothing before he can work through all this shit and ask me to move on with our lives? You don’t think he’ll do the whole ‘push you away to avoid hurting you more bullshit’ do you? I’ll kill him if he even tries it. Bastard has put me through enough of his shit for one three-day period without pulling that stuff. I really will kill him.”

“Draco, calm down there guy. I’m sure Professor Lupin is making sure he isn’t dying from starvation. And you won’t be able to kill him if he tries to push you or us away cause I’ll do it first,” Ron said with a smile to the other boy across the table. They were sitting in the Great Hall eating lunch at the Gryffindor Table. Draco, Ron, Hermione, Seamus, Dean, Ginny, and Neville had again been excused from classes. It had happened so much lately that few people had even asked if something was up.

“We’ll all kill him. One at a time,” Neville added.

“So, you did give him that letter right? I mean it was so brave of you to move first. I can’t imagine being able to be willing to forgive him, well, actually I can sort of. Damn, love. Neville, if you ever hurt me like this I will personally rip off your set of ornaments.” The look on Ginny’s face left no question to if she was serious or not. Seamus gulped nervously for his friend at the words.

“How long do you think it will take Harry to make the next move?” Draco asked the other six students. “How hard can it be to beg when you already know the outcome. I love him and need him in my life, even if it will be a while before I can fully feel safe with him and trust him again. The hardest part of all of this has been not having him there when I fall asleep and when I wake up. By the way, thank you all for being here for me. I would have crumbled without you all. Even though it’s against my nature to be dependant on anyone, especially Gryffindors, I can see now why friends are a lot better to have around than lackeys.”

“Stop, Draco. I’m getting way to used to hearing you being grateful.” The group laughed at Ron’s words. It was something they had taken to doing a lot over the last day, laughing. They knew that if they hadn’t been able to move past the grief as friends that they would never get to a place where Harry could be in their presence and not fear for his life.

“I don’t think we have to wait for long for Harry’s first move.” Dean said noticing Hedwig swooping down from a window towards them. The snow white owl landed softly in front of Draco and held out its talon. Draco removed the letter tied there and stared blankly at the envelope in his hands.

“Well. . .open it already!” Hermione nearly screamed anxiously.

Draco’s pale, soft hands slowly pulled the parchment and unfolded it and stared at the words written in front of him. He read over them again and again before he felt the expectant gazes of his friends, waiting to hear what was written. Looking up finally, Draco read aloud,

“There are no sorrys I could say
That would chase all this away
But if you will let me atone
For every thrust and every wound
I can promise with no lies
I’ll make this up to you for life.
Harry”

“Wow, I never knew Harry could rhyme.” Seamus was the first to speak after Draco had drawn quiet again. “It’s a tad on the sappy side for me, but I guess if that’s what flies your broom. . .” Six pairs of eyes glared him into silence.

“What do you think he’s up to?”

“I don’t know, this isn’t Harry’s usual style. He usually charges in full force and takes the problem head on. I’ve never seen him be tactful before. Honestly, it kinda scares me.” The others nodded their agreement with Hermione.

“Well, I know it can’t be any worse than the last few days.”

“Uh, Draco. You’re never supposed to say things like that, you totally jinx everything.” Seamus joked. The rest of the group just nervously laughed, hoping the boy wasn’t right.

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Albus Dumbledore stared at the words in front of him, unable to believe what he was seeing. The runes, which were now fully translated thanks to Dean and Hermione’s efforts, gave a startling revelation. He read aloud the words again, hoping that hearing them spoken would make them easier to grasp.

“When two enemies join forces in love to fight, their strengths and weaknesses will multiply.”

“No wonder it said ‘godlike strength’ above those runes. By Merlin, do realize what this means with both James being alive and now Harry’s relationship with Draco?”

“It means, Minerva, that what James feared the most is now an even greater problem than we believed. If Harry and Draco were to both fight Voldemort then there would be little control over Harry’s powers. I fear that anyone surrounding him would die from the sheer exposure of such

hatred, including Harry himself.” The old wizard looked heavily to the old friend across from him in his office. “We must not tell them of this, not now at least. James and Harry have enough to work through without James being driven into hiding again. Not to mention the pain Harry has inflicted on young Mr. Malfoy.”

“But Albus, we could be done forever with this dark magic rubbish. Harry could kill them all with a passing thought now. We have to act on this, end it now before more people are hurt or lost.”

“Minerva, I can not allow such an action to take place. I will not. It also says their weaknesses will be multiplied. Harry would be left an empty shell, if he were left alive at all.”

The other looked at him and sighed, “You’re right, I’m sorry. I just want this all over and done with. I’m almost willing to pay any price for it too.”

“That is a dangerous place my friend, a very dangerous place to be. I have walked down that path far too many times to ever walk it again.”

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“My lord, we know that the origin of the magic was Hogwarts. We just don’t know what at Hogwarts could have generated such a concentrated force. Perhaps Dumbledore has developed a new weapon.” The trembling man had yet to look into the face of the creature he was reporting to, afraid to see the snake like features that was the head of his master.

“I know what it was, there is only one thing that could have possibly allowed such a show of force and that is Harry Potter. Somehow he has tapped into the unique power that drew me to him and his parents all those years ago.”

“How can that be? Only his father could transfer the power to him, and he is most definitely dead. I watched him die at your hands with my own eyes,” Lucius spoke from his position next to the creature, ignoring the quivering form before him.

“Perhaps we have all assumed too much about what happened that night. James must have somehow survived and remained hidden all these years. There is no other answer, certainly not the one our idiot child spies were fed along with their parents. We must accelerate all of our plans, we are vulnerable now if Potter realizes the extent of his abilities and uses them. We attack after Christmas while the boys will be at the Burrow, once Dumbledore is nowhere around. Harry will be ours then, and again I will rule this pathetic world of wizards.”

“You don’t think that’s rushing things a little do you? That only leaves us a little more than two months to put together a strong enough force to attack that wretched place the Weasleys call home. It is also protected by old magic and that will take time to work around and figure out.”

“Lucius, never question my plans.” The voice was ice. The man standing across from them looked about ready to pass out where he stood, but had still yet to look up. “What are you still standing there for you fool? Get out if you are done before I have those shakes taken care of for you by removing your ability to move!” The man scampered backwards towards the door and began feeling behind him for the door knob in a near panic.

“Oh for Merlin’s sake, Avada Kedavra!” The man dropped to the ground, dead before he collapsed.

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Harry sat in the office eating lunch and talking with James. He was in the middle of telling him about the time he let a snake loose on Dudley when he grabbed his scar and cried out in pain. “Fuck!”

“Harry, what is it?”

“My. . .my scar. Something bad just happened I think.” Harry clutched his forehead for a while longer before removing his hands and opening his eyes. “Someone’s dead, he killed them.”

James sat in silence watching his son slowly relax as the pain in his head went away. “Do you ever see what happens when your scar burns like that?” Harry looked sadly into the eyes of his father.

“That’s how I know he killed someone.” No more was said between the two as they each were soon lost in their own thoughts. James began wondering how much more a mind could take seeing. He knew about Harry’s tendency to have visions of what Voldemort was doing; to see through those evil eyes everything that was happening. It had saved Arthur, but it had also led to Sirius’ death when Voldemort had used it against Harry.

James sat and watched his son lost in thought and began to ponder what would be worse to live with, the last dying moments of an enemy or the living moments of such an evil creature as Voldemort.

“Harry, would you ever use the power you have to kill him?” Harry looked back into the eyes staring at him. “Even knowing the price that you would have to pay by doing so?”

“Yes. Without a second thought.” James was scared to ask the next question, but had to know the answer, even though he was pretty sure what it would be now. He was terrified that the life that had been thrust upon Harry had molded him into a destiny of murder, even if that led to the death of such a disgusting creature as Voldemort, it was still murder and Harry would live with that for the rest of his life.

“Are you going to?”

“Yes.” There was no hesitation in the answer, Harry had been thinking these same questions himself and he knew what he had to do. He would kill Voldemort and Lucius Malfoy and then he would be done with this saving the world destiny bullshit. The rest of them could be sorted out and punished by the Ministry of Magic, he really didn’t care. All that mattered was killing the two monsters that had destroyed not only his life and those of thousands of people, but the one person he cared for more than anything in the world. He wanted to see the two of them dead for what they had done to Draco, the life they had tried to thrust upon him. It wasn’t the noblest of reasons, but it was all he had.

“Why? Do you feel that obligated to the world to take on the memories of so many dead, just to make people feel safer about their lives?”

“No. To tell you the truth, I really don’t care about the questions of who makes a better leader or who deserves death or who should be able to live. I have no desire to kill any of the death eaters because they are the enemy, I only care to see two people dead in this world and after they are laying dead at my feet I can rest easy. The world can deal with it’s own problems, I’m no savior and I’m definitely no saint. I want to kill Voldemort for all he’s done to me and Draco, for the lives neither of us will ever get to have. I want to see him cry in pain as he watches the life drain from his own body and I want Lucius to watch it all, knowing he is next. I’m going to kill them both and I’m going to enjoy seeing them die. I know it’s wrong, but I will get my revenge for what they did to Draco. They will feel pain for every bad memory they have scared him with, for every wrong thing they have forced upon him. I’m not going to kill them because I feel obligated, I’m going to kill them because I can and they don’t deserve to live. I don’t give a damn about any other reason or cause.”

James was completely pale and he could not move his face away from looking open mouthed at his son. ‘Where in the world did all the anger come from? I’ve never seen such passion for revenge since Dumbledore lost his family.’ “You don’t really mean that do you? Harry, you sound almost anxious to kill those two people. I know that they are pure evil and deserve death, but that’s why we have courts. Harry, be careful of where you are treading, it’s very dangerous ground.”

Both men returned to the corners of their minds where they sat and thought, picking at the plates in front of them and taking occasional glances at the other.

“Harry, I have to teach a class, and you need to go with the next step in your winning Draco back plan. I’ll see you for dinner then?”

Harry nodded, returning from the precipice he had been staring over and looking at the plunge that revenge would require. It was a long way down, but he would jump now if it meant killing them both and freeing Draco from their continued threat.

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Draco, Dean, and Hermione were sitting at a table in a secluded, little used corner of the library. Being that classes were in session, they were alone in the room and taking advantage of the chance to translate the runes.

“I still can’t believe they’re so hard to track down. We have the basics for them all, why can’t we just find the combination and the direct translation anywhere? This is more complicated than making a polyjuice potion,” Hermione groaned exasperatedly into her current book.

“I need a break; I can not look at these books anymore. If I read one more historical account on the development of runes through the ages and where they developed I will scream. Scream or kill someone, I’m not sure which.” Draco smiled back at the two faces grinning at him. “I think I’ll just look up some fairy tales in rune where the hero sweeps the damsel in distress to safety and kisses her. I need some sappy romance at the moment.”

“Oh. My. God. There’s no way it could be that simple!”

“I can’t believe we didn’t think of it yet.” Draco looked confusedly between the two across the table

from him, trying to figure out what in the world they had just stumbled on. “Draco, you are a fucking genius!” Both Dean and Hermione leapt from their chairs and dashed to the familiar aisle of ancient texts. Draco just stayed where he was, waiting for them to either explain what in the world was going on or just return with more books that would explain it for him. After a number of minutes the two returned, each with an armful of books.

“Draco, clear the table, we have to start fresh.” Doing as Hermione said, Draco pulled out his wand and charmed the many piles of books on the table back to their place of origin on the shelves. “We have to look through these books of legends.”

Draco finally turned on to the same page as the other two’s train of thought and swore, “Holy Hell! How could we have all missed the connection here. Of course it wouldn’t be written in any history books, it was too rare. It would have been nothing but a fantastical story to most people.” The next few hours were spent diving into the ancient cultures of various peoples. Wading through the all too similar tales of creation and how things are the way they are. They were startled out of their search by the voice of Ron.

“You guys coming to evening meal? You could probably use the break.” The three turned to see Ron, Neville, Ginny and Seamus standing just a few feet away.

“You guys, we are so close now we can’t stop. We were looking in the wrong place the whole time, but now we’ve just about got it all figured out, I’m sure of it,” Dean half informed, half pleaded with his newly arrived friends.

“Well, we’ll bring you guys some food then if you are staying. No more visits to the hospital wing for any of us for a very long time.” Everyone smiled at Ginny, with Dean, Hermione, and Draco nodding their agreement.

“Sounds good, we’ll see you guys in a while then.” With that the others left the library and headed to the Great Hall before they could get wrapped up in the enthusiasm of the other three’s search.

“I hope they get it figured out soon; I’m getting right tired of hearing about those damn runes,” Seamus huffed as they walked down a flight of stairs. “I swear it has consumed Dean lately, he won’t even talk about Quidditch, can you believe it?”

“Hey guys, uhm. . .so how ya been?” The four stopped dead on the next to last stair and stared unsuredly at the boy that had just talked to them. “Look, I know that this will take a lot of time and work before you want to talk to me, or can deny the impulse to beat me, but I need you to know that I want to make every effort and be there for you. I need you guys, I need Draco. I need. . .”

“Maybe you should shut the fuck up about what you need, for a while. It won’t win me over if you’re still stuck on your own selfish ass. Try thinking solely on what your boyfriend needs. Just work on his emotions and fears and needs, then you can bother asking us to give a shit about you.” Ron’s words surprised even him, but he put on the face to match them, staring Harry down.

“Harry, we still love you. Ron does too, even though he has difficulties expressing himself, but he’s right. Don’t bother with us, just focus on repairing Draco and getting right with him. We’ll all fall in after that.”

“Thanks Ginny, and Ron, I’m sorry. I truly am and I’m thankful for such an amazing best friend as you. Thank you for wanting to beat the shit out of me after what I did to him.”

“That’s what we love him for,” Ginny said with a smile, before Ron could say anything to ruin Harry’s almost pathetic apology. They walked past him and in to the Great Hall as Harry returned to James’ office with his food.

“Well that went better than I had hoped,” he whispered as he walked down the empty hall.

“Well, that could have been a much better attempt at an apology,” Ron said once they had all taken their places at the Gryffindor table. “He’d better be saving up a lot for Draco. He’s really gonna have to pull a number before I will forgive him for that one.”

“We know Ron, we know.”

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“Guys, I’ve found some of the runes here. It’s not all of them and they’re not together, but this book has been translated out into Latin underneath the runes. This line says, ‘One of the weaknesses of a love shared is the strength to fight’ I like that.” Draco looked up at the other two who had taken a few seconds from reading to cast a glance and an ear.

“Well, write down the words we need from it, you dolt,” Dean chuckled as he pushed the parchment and quill across the table. A few minutes later of reading and he too had stumbled across some familiar runes. “Hey, I’ve got one of them. ‘The two enemies met on the deadened slopes of what had once been a beautiful. . .’”

“Hey, we’ve all read enough stories, just write down the translated words.”

“Sorry, I’ve really been enjoying this one. I’m not sure how old it is but it’s been translated into four languages before being put into Latin and then English. I bet it would be really. . .” Dean was cut off from his thoughts by Hermione screaming.

“Sweet Merlin’s beard! I’ve got some more. ‘By joining forces, the strength of the weaker forces were multiplied. . .blah, blah, blah.’ Anyway, I think that’s all of them mostly. Arrange them and see what we’ve got.”

Draco sat about on the assigned task and soon had a jumble of words that almost sounded like gibberish, that or his mind was growing tired from hours of reading and translating. “Okay, what we’ve got is : two enemies joining forces love to fight strength weaknesses multiplied. I know that changes my world, whoa how enlightening.”

“Well, now we have to adjust for context and add a few adjectives that most earlier languages had little use for, it was just implied.” Dean began pouring over the parchment and the words written there.

“You had all better have a good reason for being out of your beds so late.” The chilled voice of

Professor Snape pierced through the room. “It is nearly one in the morning and you Gryffindors are actually going to be going to class tomorrow. With Double Potions and a few weeks’ worth of makeup, I suggest you get into your lovers’ beds.” Draco narrowed his eyes at the coldness of the man. He never could figure the bitter fool out, one minute he speaks as your ally, the next he says just the right words to tear into you as deep as possible.

“Sorry, Professor. We’ll just be on our way then.” As Draco had spoke all three gathered their things and began standing.

“I said you’d better have a good reason, and I am waiting to hear what it could possibly be, Mr. Po. . .excuse me, Malfoy.” It took all Draco had not to leap at the man with wand drawn. Dean seemed even more offended by the obvious slight at his friend, but it was Hermione that responded to the surprise of all present.

“You pathetic, bitter old prat. Why don’t you make up your mind if you are an ally or just a mean spirited, jealous little shit.” Everyone’s eyes, but Hermione’s were leaping from their shocked faces in disbelief. Not only had ‘the Hermione Granger, best loved student by the faculty at Hogwarts’ insulted Snape, she had also swore at him.

“You little. . .”

“I wouldn’t finish that statement Severus. While it is very unbecoming of a student to say such things at a teacher, it is unheard of in my school for a teacher to react in a like manner, rather than rise above petty comments.” All four turned to face the man they had not noticed come in. “However, I must insist that you apologize Ms. Granger; you were out of line. He has every right to demand an explanation of why you three are still in the library so late in the evening.”

Reluctantly turning toward Snape, Hermione mumbled an apology before launching into the tale of what they’d found. “We didn’t know it had gotten so late, though; no one came and told us after Neville and Seamus brought us up some food earlier.”

“Well, I can see you three are getting close to figuring this thing out. Just go to bed now and try to keep better track of the passage of time when immersed in a sea of knowledge next time.” The three returned their books and gathered all their papers together in a pile before grabbing a share of them and heading to Gryffindor Tower. “Good night to you all, and don’t worry, everything will work itself out.”

All the way to bed and then for twenty minutes after they had gotten to their room, Draco and Dean kept reenacting the stand off, as they had started to call it. It was really nothing to get so worked up about as far as Hermione saw; there were much more serious things happening at the moment than her giving a well over due tongue thrashing to Snape.

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Harry looked at the words he had just written with the help of James. “I’m just not one for rhyming words I guess, this really isn’t me. I’m the one that charges head first into things and puts people in danger, remember? Subtlety and patience are not my thing.”

James smiled at the boy beside him on the couch. “Well, I have to agree. I’ve never seen anyone have such a hard time finding a word to rhyme with love.” He started laughing again at the situation. “I’m sorry, son. Really I’m trying to not keep laughing, but seriously.”

“Yeah, it’s pathetic. I would be laughing now too if I were someone else.” He balled up the parchment in his hands and tossed it across the room and into the fire. “I’m tired of all of this, I need to talk to him. I need to see him and touch him and smell him and. . .and. . .oh, sorry.” Harry stopped when he saw the look on his father’s face go from laughter to a very uncomfortable looking smirk.

“It’s okay Harry, I just have to get used to the idea of you being in love still. Hell, I’m still adjusting to the thought of you calling me dad.” Harry nodded his understanding.

“Did you ever miss mom so much you started to see her everywhere you looked?” The serious tone in his voice brought a new feeling into the room, along with a momentary silence.

“Everyday for the last fifteen years or so.” James sighed heavily, staring into the fire. The flames cast shadows onto his face that deepened the sadness in his features. Harry wondered how much of those wrinkles had been there before his father had taken over the body. “I still see her in my dreams, holding you and crying tears of pure joy simply because of you. I still wake up every morning and reach for her just in case she’s there, even though I know she won’t be.”

Harry felt the tears stinging his eyes and leaned over to take the man in a hug. They sat there holding each other and crying together softly, both missing the mother Harry never got to know. Even after the tears had stopped the two men sat and remained in an embrace. This was what they had longed for over the years, this was what they had been missing out on, and this was what they had to make up for.

“Harry, I want you to know one thing. Your mom would be so very proud of everything you’ve done, as I am. You’ve done enough for the world, but if you feel that you have to kill Voldemort then I will support you and help as much as I can, just promise me you won’t try to do this alone.”

“I promise. . .daddy.” It was muffled into his neck, but James heard the fear and strength in the voice. His heart sprang to his throat at hearing his son say daddy. Sure Harry had called him dad over the last couple of days, but this had a child like quality to it - an innocence that he’d never been able to experience with his son. Harry was his little boy, his lost little child again, needing comfort and strength and wisdom. He held on to his son tightly and didn’t release him for over an hour. Even when he felt Harry relax into him and fall asleep, James held him, reluctant to end this moment. Finally he sat Harry up and sat into a more comfortable position on the couch. Before he made another move Harry leaned into him again, putting his head against his shoulder and stretching his legs out behind him on the couch. The older man smiled and just leaned back into the couch after placing a kiss on the teens forehead. “Goodnight, son. I love you.”

“I love you too.” It was whispered but James heard, and again his heart sang with happiness.

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Draco woke before the sun had appeared through the window, but found it impossible to fall back

asleep. He was cold and he found himself missing Harry even more than he'd thought possible. You know he's not coming back, right? You caused him to hurt you, he'll feel too bad to ever love you again. You blew it. Draco tried his best to ignore the voice that was usually there when he woke up alone in the bed he and Harry had shared. He couldn't understand how he'd slept alone all his life, but just sharing a bed with Harry once had left him unable to bear it again. "Why don't you go blow yourself, I don't listen to you. Why even bother wasting my time?"

"Draco? Are you talking to your voice again?"

"Shut up Seamus or I'll send it over to your head."

"Ahh! Damn woman, that was. . .well, amazing." Neville stood up from the floor where he had just fallen out of the closed curtains. He looked around and saw two sets of eyes staring at him, shocked.

"Holy God, Neville! Don't stand there naked, get back in there!" Seamus cheered his friend. Draco just shivered violently, trying to shake the image and the thoughts from his mind.

"Sorry, guys." He disappeared back into the curtains, which apparently had a good silencing charm on them.

"I really could have never seen that and been happy."

"Hey, you don't get to complain, I've had to see you and Harry both naked talking about shagging, you can get no worse."

"Ha! I know you liked it Finnigan, you were just upset that it wasn't you running around the castle naked with such a sexy beast as myself."

They both broke into laughter which eventually returned them to silence. Draco noticed a streak of dawn stretching across the horizon and decided that he'd watch the sun rise. He missed that most from living in the dungeons at school. He used to love watching the sunrise from his window at the Manor. He moved to the window and sat on the bench beside it watching the darkness being replaced with the soft light of morning. For some reason he felt that today would change his life again. He knew something was going to happen, he just hoped it would be a good something. He even prayed for it, now was not the time to get hung up on beliefs or the lack there of, now was the time to get all the help he could find.

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Harry was watching the sky turn lighter, being on the other side of the castle he couldn't see the horizon where the sun was rising but he could see the effects as the sky lightened and the darkness was pushed back for another day. "Today's the day. I can't do this without him, I need him to love me, I need him to know I love him and that I'm sorry." Harry caught his reflection against the sky in the window, happy to see emotion in his eyes again.

He returned to the couch where his father was still asleep. Last night had helped make up his mind about what he needed. His father had lost the one he loved deeply and missed her everyday, he, Harry Potter, was not going to miss any more moments or memories with Draco. There was no time

for being an ass, there was only time to love those that needed to be loved.

“Thanks, dad,” Harry whispered as he left the office and headed to Gryffindor Tower. He wasn’t going to waste any time on this, he had to move quickly before he lost all his nerve.

The halls were mostly still dark but Harry took little notice of anything other than walking. He was set on his goal and he refused to let any distractions get in his way, there was nothing more important to him at that moment than getting to Draco and begging forgiveness. He strode confidently up to the Fat Lady and spoke the password. “I’m sorry young man, but that is no longer correct.” Harry let his anger override his judgment and just started banging against the frame, ignoring the screams coming from the woman in the painting. He pounded for a good ten minutes before he heard movement from the other side. He stood back and waited for the picture to be swung aside.

He was surprised to see the only person he cared to see at the moment standing there. Draco was dressed in an old undershirt and worn pair of flannel bottoms of Harry’s. His arms were crossed and he was standing as stiff as possible giving Harry a hard stare. “What do you want?”

Harry didn’t hesitate or search for an answer, he just let the first words that came from his mouth be the words he’d go with. “I only want one thing. . .you.” He walked up to Draco and placed a hand on his shoulder. “I’ve been missing you. I need you in my life and I know that I hurt you as bad as I could and that I betrayed you and that you probably hate me more than anyone right now, but I need you to forgive me, Draco. I love you. You are my reason for fighting and my reason for caring. Without you I am nothing, I’m lost and lonely.”

He stopped there, letting his words settle in the air, growing scared of the silence and the lack of change on Draco’s face. “Oh.” It was all that came in reply. Harry felt his world crashing, he’d known this was going to be anything but easy and quick, but he’d expected more than that. Draco saw the look on the other boy’s face and closed his, swallowing hard. “Look, Harry. I need you too and I love you more than anything in this world, but I’m just not ready to trust you like this again. I miss you every morning that I wake up alone. I miss you all night long as I try in vain to sleep and freeze without your body there, but I just can’t. . .not yet. At least not in the same bed, but I need you to come back into my life Harry.”

Harry wasn’t sure what he was being told. He hadn’t expected to be trusted with sleeping together, he wasn’t sure he could even do that yet without scaring himself. “What do you mean exactly?”

“Harry, you dolt. I mean I need you around me as much as possible, just moving slowly back to the place where I feel completely safe with you again. I need you to be in that room at night with me, not in the same bed, but the same room. I need to hear your breathing when I wake up in the middle of the night and I need to see your face before I go to sleep and when I get up in the morning. I need you, even though you’re a complete bastard. I love you too much to let you destroy all we have, but I still need to forgive you. I haven’t by the way, not fully, but I will. I just need time. But mostly I need you.”

“That’s a lot more than I expected to get, really. Are you sure you want me in the same room with you at night?”

“If I wasn’t then you’d still be looking forward to that couch. Now, you’re going to have to get everyone else okay with the idea of you moving back in. You have a lot of forgiveness to earn, and a lot of begging ahead for you this morning.” Draco turned and headed back up the stairs with Harry following behind leaving some distance between them so as not to make Draco uncomfortable. “You ready for this?” Draco asked before he opened the door to the room. “It won’t be easy and Seamus is still pretty outraged that you would do. . .that.”

“I need to do this, for you. I can’t be with you if they don’t want me around. You need me and there’s nothing I won’t do to be there for you now. I love you, and thanks.”

They shared a smile, one that said it wasn’t okay yet, but that it would be. They’d make it through this, because they both wanted to be together on the other side of this storm. Draco turned and opened the door, once through he got everyone’s attention and then turned to look at Harry.

Swallowing his fears, the Boy-Who-Lived walked into the room. “Hey guys.”

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Twenty One - Penance

Harry watched all six pairs of eyes register him standing in the doorway and waited for their reactions. He did not doubt for a second Draco's warnings and he expected very little beyond an agreement to exist together and not kill him in the process. Ron was the first to make a move, offering his hand to Harry but no more. The two friends shook hands as if meeting for the first time, there was very little comfort to be seen in their body language. They stood awkwardly, waiting for someone to tell them what to do next.

"Well, I guess we have to do this sometime. You can't very well stay on that couch the rest of our time at Hogwarts." Hermione spoke, but did not move toward him, deciding to join the others in not moving an inch from where they had been when he had showed up.

"Oh, bother! Harry, I'm going to say this once. I can forgive you once Draco is able to trust you fully, but if you ever do anything to make him so much as look sad I'll solve all of Voldemort's problems by killing you myself." Harry was surprised that Seamus seemed ready to move on, he'd figured Seamus would be the last hold out, not the third to offer eventual forgiveness, even if it was veiled in a threat.

"You can say the same for Neville and me, we already talked it out and decided to follow Draco's lead on how far to let things go forward. We still love you Harry, but it takes. . . time to get past something like this in our minds. . . a lot of time." Ginny's words were met with nods from the rest of the room.

Harry figured it was time to speak. "Just let me say that I understand you haven't forgiven me, and honestly I haven't yet myself. Draco wants me to be back in his life, to ease my way in slowly, and I couldn't be happier. I'll do anything to see that he gets what he wants from now on and I won't make a move until he's ready for it." He looked around at all the faces of his friends and decided their looks were promising. "I've missed you all and I need you. But I can't do anything until you are all ready for me to return to the room. I'm ready to do anything I have to so I can earn your trust, and eventually forgiveness."

"There's only one thing I can think of and that's get your stupid, ridiculous, self-absorbed, world-saving ass back to where I can hold you and not be alone in the night." Draco's words seemed to be the only okay the rest of the teens needed to allow Harry to return to their lives and their bedroom.

"I guess Dumbledore figured we'd still need this extra bed eventually, I was wondering why it was still here. He doesn't miss a thing, just amazing." Harry was glad to hear Ron's unceasing adoration of the old wizard spoken again. Truth was he was glad to hear his voice at all and he hoped he could do this right so they could all return to the close friends they had been, he knew it could happen, just hoped it wouldn't take very long.

"Thanks, guys. I know this isn't easy."

"Just don't forget Harry, hurt Draco again and I hurt you." No one bothered wondering about the seriousness of Seamus' words.

This will definitely take time, but the first step is the hardest. . .I hope, Harry nodded his understanding to the other boy as he thought.

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“Harry! Good to see you back, did you get your thing for Dumbledore finished already?” Collin had cornered Harry the minute the eight had entered the common room after spending a few uncomfortable tries at conversation.

“Not really, but I’m done with everything that’s kept me away.” Harry doubted anyone but his friends would appreciate the true meaning of his words. He was done with it all, all the pain and pushing people away. He was done with fighting his destiny on his own, he had friends who were every bit as brave as he was and he was not going to rush off alone without them. They deserved their chance to save the world, they already had before, just not as obviously as Harry had. He had no doubts that Voldemort would have returned that first year and been much more powerful if it had not been for Ron and Hermione. He may have faced Voldemort directly, but he wouldn’t have gotten that far without the two of them.

They didn’t answer anyone else that asked questions of them as they made their way out of Gryffindor Tower. Once out in the hall and walking towards the Great Hall they began to fill Harry in on everything that had happened. “Oh, the best part is we figured out the runes and have basically what they mean worked out, thanks to Dean and his knowledge of ancient dialects!” Harry was thrilled to see the excitement in Draco’s eyes when the boy was telling him this. “Well, don’t you want to know what it is?”

Harry smiled at him, nodding his head. “You don’t know how much I’ve missed you and your enthusiasm when you get all excited about something.” Before Draco could say anything they were interrupted by gagging sounds coming from Dean and Ron, who both had their fingers in their mouths.

“Merlin Harry, if you’re going to be shooting off lines like that you have no hope of ever getting Draco to forgive you. You have to sweep him off his feet, not. . .well, whatever it was you were just trying to do.” Ron received a look from Hermione and a slap on the arm from Ginny.

“Really Ronald, would it ever hurt you to simply tell me how much you miss the simple things about me?”

“When would I ever miss anything about you? You’re always around and I don’t go and push people I love away.” Dean and Neville shook their heads out of pity for what Ron was going to receive for that, even Seamus wondered how one guy could really be so dense to say something like Ron had out loud to his girlfriend.

“I am not always around! Of course that could change. Besides, I miss you when we don’t share a class or when you are serving one of your numerous detentions. You really are thick Ronald Weasley!” Hermione sped up and moved away from Ron and next to Draco and Harry. “Boys!” Ron looked around to his friends trying to figure out what he’d said and how to fix it.

“Anyway, like I was saying. . .” Draco decided for a subject change. “We figured out the runes. If we got everything right this could really mean something big. Harry, if you thought what you did on accident a few days ago was something, if this is true, that was nothing. It would be the difference between Mum and Mother.” Only Harry, Hermione, and Ron understood the comment. Draco was comparing his mother with Mrs. Weasley, and the message got across. “Whatever it is your dad was scared of you being able to do would even pale next to this.”

“Well, bloody hell Draco, what did they say?” Harry noticed the way Draco flinched from the impatience in his voice. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to sound so annoyed or frustrated, I just want to know what’s so big about what those runes said.”

“Yeah, okay.” Draco was speaking noticeably softer and less enthused. “They said that when two enemies join together in love to fight, their strengths and weaknesses are multiplied. There’s more specific words and whatever, but that’s the basics.”

“But, what’s that got to do with me? I mean I know I’m going to fight Voldemort and all, but who am I joining. . .”

“Harry, I love you, but you can be just as thick as Ron! Just think for a second. Two enemies join in love to fight, fallen in love with any enemies lately?” Harry looked confused at Hermione but slowly realization dawned across his face as she spoke.

“Harry, it’s you and me. If we do this together, you’re even stronger. There’s no way Voldemort could even touch you. We could wipe him and all those bastards off the earth and never be in danger.”

“Wait, two things. One, I’m not going to kill anyone other than Voldemort and your father. Beyond them I could care less what happens to the Death Eaters. Second, it says my weaknesses are multiplied too right? So, how can I risk doing even worse to you and me than what happened last time. How do we know that wasn’t a side effect, like since we were already joined together when we triggered it and we both suffered from it. I refuse to do that to you. I’d take on those bastards face to face before risking you like that again.” His look left no room for argument, but that didn’t stop Draco from trying.

“Harry, don’t be a stupid ass! Why would you not take advantage of this now and rid the world of my father and that disgusting creature as soon as possible. We could be done with this all by Halloween! I can understand only killing the two of them, no sense having more memories than absolutely necessary and most Death Eaters aren’t a threat at all without someone to worship. But why wait, I’m ready to move on with our lives and doing that would be much easier without the threat of evil hanging over our heads.”

“Draco, I want to get on with our lives together too, but I’m not even sure how all this works, let alone if it works. I’m not risking you or what we have just to save the world again. I’ve risked too much too many times.” Harry swung his arm around, encompassing all of the teens in the hall. “You have all risked your lives for me and while I understand how much I really do need you all now, I’m not ready to make such a drastic decision without really thinking it through and making sure there’s no way I lose any of you.” He lowered his arm and slipped his hand into Draco’s before turning to look him in the eyes. “We will have our life together, free from Voldemort and destiny, just you and me. I promise. But, we can’t rush into this blind. I got Sirius killed by doing that and I won’t do it

again.”

Draco looked intently back into the eyes staring into him and squinted slightly. Inside he knew Harry had already won, he would get his way, but he had to at least look like it was a struggle. “Fine. We will wait, but don’t wait too long. Voldemort is bound to strike eventually and I’d rather strike him first. I hate being on the defensive.”

“Hey, speaking of defensive, have you got those plays developed so we can start practicing them with the team. Now that Harry’s back we really need to get prepared. Quidditch waits for no man.” Ron had moved up and wedged his head between the two boys.

The rest of the walk to the Great Hall, and consequently most of the meal, was spent talking about Quidditch. Hermione didn’t seem to be bothered though, she was happy to see the friends all jump into the ease they had all shared naively before. Now they watched it with a sense of loss for the past week and the time that would still be lost by Harry’s actions. It was easy to see that they would be able to move on, but it was just as obvious that they had all paid, and were still going to, for this to work out.

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James sat in the Great Hall at the staff table and watched his son and his friends. It seemed that Harry had been quite busy after he’d left his office, whenever that had been. Although he was sure this meant that Harry would no longer be sleeping on the couch, he hoped that their talks would still go on. He had gotten used to having Harry around so often, it was nice. He really regretted all the years on the run now. All the time and memories his son had experienced alone, when it could have been different.

“It does not do to dwell on the past and forget to live in the present.” James jumped slightly at the sound of a voice next to him and wondered how Dumbledore always seemed to know even what people were thinking. “However, to forget the past is to ignore the most hard learned of our lessons.”

“Don’t worry about that. I’m not letting him out of my life ever again, not after knowing what I’ve missed out on.” James turned to face the older wizard. “I just wish all this business with rare powers and saving the wizarding world was over and the biggest worry my son had was the coming Quidditch season.”

“We all dream of those days.” Dumbledore’s gaze became dreamy for a moment before returning to a serious frown. “However, I am afraid that there have been a few more serious developments concerning that very power. We have deciphered the runes and so have the children. I think you had better come to my office as soon as you get a chance today so we can discuss where to move from here.”

“Wow, the news is that good huh?” The sarcasm was laid obviously thick in his words. “I suppose that the words ‘godlike powers’ wasn’t as much of an exaggeration as I’d hoped.”

“That would be a safe assumption, my old friend. It seems you picked a very opportune time to let your secret slip.”

“Lily always said I had a way with timing things just perfectly.”

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Harry, Draco, Ron and Hermione were seated in chairs facing a number of other people in Dumbledore’s office. James, Dumbledore, and both professors Snape and McGonagall were looking back at them, as all were digesting the final conclusions that had been reached about the runes and what they meant.

“Not to sound rude, but we already knew all of this. In fact we’ve already come to a conclusion on how we feel best to use Harry’s powers while causing him as little permanent affects as possible.” Dumbledore raised his eyebrow at Draco as the boy laid out their decision to only kill Lucius and Voldemort and to do it soon.

“There’s only one problem with that plan and that is the assumption that Harry could actually be that focused with the energy to only hit two single men. About half of the writing available makes sure to tell of how unpredictable and impossible to focus this power is. I am afraid that in order for Harry to be as specific as you have planned he would have to be within visual range of them both and that is much closer than I will ever allow.” Dumbledore spoke softly, but left no doubt he was serious.

“Professor, I understand your worries but I am tired of living with the threat of Voldemort and I refuse to see the fear of what his father might do to him in Draco’s eyes any longer than needed. Everyone seems dead set on this being my destiny, so it’s time for me to kill the bastard so I can live out the rest of my life with the person I love and never have to hear about this bullshit ever again. Pardon my language, sir.” Harry sat down again, surprised to find himself standing when he finished talking.

“Regardless, it would be best to catch Voldemort in a time when he is not surrounded by hundreds of Death Eaters, as he will be for the next few weeks until they are all called away to deal with as many distractions as the Order can create in one night.”

“You all can not seriously think it this easy a task. We don’t even know where the snake has holed himself up after the raids on the Manor. Besides, even with most of them being drawn away, they won’t leave him unprotected, you’d still need a good sized force to get to him and then he will be ready and waiting for you.” Professor Snape was now the one standing in the room, only he did not sit down after speaking, he simply looked around at each face as if daring them to argue and disagree.

“Severus, we all know that. We aren’t complete idiots, although I’m sure none of us could ever possibly be up to the same level as you can we? You always were arrogant and annoying, nice to know some things never change.” James was leaning back in his chair, smiling widely at the evil glare he received from the man standing before him.

“Gentlemen, really. You are both grown men, can you not act like it for one meeting?” Both apologized to the woman sitting in the chair between their seats before she continued. “Now, I believe Professor Dumbledore has come to a decision and is waiting for you two to shut your

mouths before proceeding.” With these words everyone looked at the old wizard sitting behind his desk with fingers steepled and a grin on his face.

“Thank you, Professor McGonagall, you do know me well.” His eyes twinkled in her direction before he turned his gaze to Harry. “Harry, do me just one favor. Wait at least until after Halloween. We have the ball to focus on and I am afraid of what the Death Eaters might try to get away with that night. There is much planning to do if you are certain you want to get that close to them and kill them both.”

Harry simply nodded his head yes. He had no problems leaving all the details up to Dumbledore and the Order, all he cared about now was getting close enough to rid the world of Lord Voldemort and Lucius Malfoy. After another hour spent discussing all the details they had come up with themselves and James trying to dissuade Harry to find an easier path the students excused themselves to return to the dorm. The four of them walked in silence through the halls, Harry and Draco walking hand in hand behind Ron and Hermione.

“Harry, I want this all to be over with too, but don’t rush into this and take away the only reason I have to care about life after Voldemort and my father. Promise me you won’t do this alone, I’m beside you all the way or I’m not letting you leave my sight.”

“Draco, I need you there to make this all work anyway. But, I’ve promised already and I’ll promise again though, I won’t go it alone. You will be right with me through the end so I can know that you’re safe.” He kissed the smaller boy on the cheek and let go of his hand to wrap his arm around the other’s waist.

“Thank you.” Neither spoke again until they were explaining everything that had happened to the other four who had stayed behind in the dorm. As Draco laid staring at the ceiling a few hours later, the cold of the night creeping into him, he decided there were some fears that were easier to sleep with than the darkness and loneliness he’d known since that night when Harry had shattered his world. He crawled out of his bed and quietly walked over to Harry’s where he slipped in under the covers and snuggled up next to the comfortable warmth of his lover, the one person in the world who would protect him at any cost. Just before giving in to the sleep that came easily, he felt soft lips press against his hand that draped over Harry and smiled into the boy’s back, placing a kiss of his own there.

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Despite Dumbledore’s worries, the rest of October flew by without incident. November brought cooler temperatures and shortening night, but as the first Quidditch game of the season approached, Harry, Ron and Draco seemed to hardly notice the weather. They were spending more and more time developing strategies and working their team harder than even Oliver Wood had ever been able to.

“Harry, it’s been four hours already! It’s cold and it’s dark and this is the fourth day straight you’ve tried to wear us out! If you don’t let us go back to the dorms now I’m going to hex you and bury all three of you somewhere where they will never find your bodies!” Ginny called from her broomstick. Ron flew over between her and Harry and sighed heavily.

“Well, I can’t say I think we’ll beat Slytherin with this bunch tomorrow, but they are as ready as possible. We might as well head on inside and let them rest.”

With a nod Harry agreed, then directed his broom towards the stands where Draco liked to sit and observe, occasionally calling out advice to a player. “I never thought I would say this, but I miss Wood. He could turn any group into top notch players.”

“Harry, don’t be so hard on them. Most of them are second years to begin with and they really are getting fairly good. By next year they could be strong enough to win the Quidditch Cup for Gryffindor.”

“Well that’s all fine and good, but next year is a long time away.” Draco smirked at his boyfriend and walked over to him.

“Some things are worth the wait, my love.” He placed a soft kiss on Harry’s cheek before heading towards the stairs. “I’m heading back up to the Tower, I’ll see you in a few minutes.” Harry watched him walk across the Quidditch Pitch and towards the castle until he couldn’t see him anymore.

“All right everyone, that’s it for tonight,” he called out loudly, suddenly anxious to get back inside himself.

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The warm soft lips were exploring his neck, the tongue flicking out at certain spots, driving him wild. He could feel the roaming hands of his lover covering every inch of him they could find and removing any clothing getting in their way. His t-shirt was pulled over his head and tossed to the floor, soon followed by his boxers. He returned the favor for the beautiful body pressing against his and soon there was nothing between their flesh. Draco moaned softly when he felt Harry press himself in to his thigh while moving his tongue over his chest and kissing his Adam's apple.

“Oh, God Draco. I’ve missed you so much. I’ve needed this so bad, I’ve needed you so bad.”

“Me too, my love.” Draco gasped when he felt a hand gently take his erection into its grasp and begin to pull up and down on it. “Yes, don’t stop.” He breathed when the hand pulled away from his flesh but soon had no complaints as the boy on top of him lifted himself up and positioned his lips just inches from his shaft before those green eyes stared into his, asking for permission. “Please,” was all that Draco could say and soon was deprived of the ability to say anything as the mouth of his lover consumed him fully and began gently sucking and bobbing.

Draco could feel himself near climax when his shoulders were suddenly shaken and he found himself staring into the darkness and the worried face of Harry at his side.

“Are you okay? You were moaning in your sleep, so I figured I’d save you from any monsters that were chasing you.”

Draco laughed quietly at the boy next to him. “Damn it, Harry. I wasn’t being chased and it definitely was no nightmare. Just so you know, I haven’t had any release since. . .well in a while, if you catch my meaning. I was in the middle of what was becoming a very nice wet dream. I did not need

saving, although now I'm all ready for nothing. . .”

“Oh. . .” Harry seemed unable to respond to the blatant honesty of the other boy. “Well, anything I can do to help you out now?” There was no missing the grin on his face, even in the dark.

“I'm sure you can think of a few without my help. But. . .go slow.” Harry caught the worry in the boy's tone and nodded lovingly at him before running a hand down the bare chest lying next to him. When he reached the barrier of the boxer elastic, he traced around it before slipping his hand inside. He took the erection he found there in his hand and very softly began stroking it causing the body beside and underneath him to start tensing with the pleasure from his touch.

“Is this okay?” His whispered words were answered only with a quick nod before his head was pulled into a passionate kiss while the kisser began convulsing with pleasure and a quick release. Harry pulled his hand out of the boxers and wiped the cum off on his sheets. “That must have been some dream. You didn't take very long.”

“Yeah, but you're much better in person.” They kissed deeply again before cuddling up again under the covers. “Harry, never do anything to hurt us again. I love you too much to ever not be with you for the rest of my life.”

“I love you too, Drac. I promise I won't let you get hurt again.” They both fell asleep a few minutes later, followed by their friends who were ready to leave everything that had happened over the last month behind them, and forget what they'd just been witness to. It was great that Harry and Draco had made up, but they could have done it with the curtains closed.

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The next morning was the best Harry had woken up to in a long while. He had not even looked out the window yet, he'd only stared at the face of the boy laying next to him in bed and marveling at the way someone could look so peaceful and beautiful at the same time. This was the way life was supposed to be, at least Harry was thinking so at that moment. As he laid there he knew there was nothing he wouldn't do to keep Draco as happy as he was right now, as completely free of worries and fears.

He smiled when the eyes of his lover blinked away their sleep and returned his gaze. “Good morning, love.”

“Morning. How long have you been awake?”

“A couple of hours I think, but I'm not sure. I've been lost in you.” Draco smiled at the words and turned on his side towards Harry and wrapped his arms around him.

“I could just stay here like this, holding you and ignoring the world, forever. But we can't can we?” He kissed Harry's lips before the other boy could answer his question. “Don't answer that, I'd rather pretend I don't already know the answer.”

A soft knock on the door pulled both their attentions across the room to see Professor Dumbledore slip into the room and smile at them both. “It's good to see you two breaking school rules again.”

Both Draco and Harry blushed and separated from each other to sit up on the edge of the bed. "I'm sorry for interrupting what I'm sure was a sweet moment, but I needed to talk to you two alone about what took place a few weeks ago in my office. There are many doubts in my heart over the plan laid out and since you two are the focus of any plan that will be developed I wanted to talk bluntly to you both and know how you feel about everything. Being brave for those we love can sometimes lead us in over our heads."

"We know the risks, Professor, but what else can we do? Neither Voldemort nor my father will just fade away and leave us alone until Harry and I are both dead or they are. I've committed the ultimate betrayal and we all know how obsessed the evil git was with killing Harry to begin with."

"Draco, there are some things in life that make sense to us at the moment, but we end up regretting the rest of our lives because we realize all too late that there are better ways to accomplish the same goals. I just want to make sure you have taken a moment to step back and really examine all the consequences that would follow you two for the rest of your lives, both personally and as a couple. Death is a heavy burden to carry, even under the best of circumstances. It is never easy to live with killing even the worst of evil men."

"Professor, I was having the best morning I've had in weeks. Is there any way we could meet in your office later today and discuss all of this after I've enjoyed the morning with the person I love?"

"Of course Harry, of course. My apologies. Even these matters can be set aside in the name of love, otherwise, what are we fighting for. Come and see me when you boys have a free moment and please be sure that only you two are there." He slowly raised himself from the chair he'd settled into during their short talk and silently left the room, closing the door behind him.

"Now, I believe I was about to show you what I missed about having you in my bed with me at night." Draco pushed Harry backwards on to the bed and began crawling up him to kiss him slowly and passionately until they were both out of oxygen. "We have a lot of making up to do and you are wearing too many clothes for that to happen." His hands were already pulling Harry's flannel pants away and off of his body before finishing the sentence.

"You look just as over dressed as me, love." Harry sighed heavily with pleasure and lust when Draco brushed his thigh against his bare erection. "God, I've missed this."

"You'd better have." Draco smiled knowingly at the boy laying naked under him in bed. "And now I'm going to remind you of every reason why."

"Sweet Lord! Again?! Could you guys please move to the bed with curtains and close them tight, very, very tight."

"Sorry Seamus."

"Yeah, yeah. Guess it's what I get for being awake before breakfast." With that the boy returned under his covers and Draco and Harry quickly moved to the other bed and closed the curtains around them, placing every Silencing Charm they'd learned over the last few months on them just to be safe.

“You sure this is not moving too fast for you?” Harry asked before they continued.

“Harry, it’s been a few weeks already and I can’t spend the night laying beside you again without feeling your naked body against mine right now. I’m tired of getting out of this bed and crawling into that one every night as it is.”

“Well, as long as you’re sure. . .”

“Harry, do me a favor.”

“Anything.”

“Shut up and kiss me.”

“My pleasure.” Harry took Draco’s head in his hands and placed a deep kiss on his lips, allowing it to deepen with passion as their bodies began to receive what they had longed to feel for months.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Twenty Two - Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind

Harry gazed out over the field below him watching the new Gryffindor Quidditch team doing better than he would have ever imagined they could pull off. Not only were they winning, but the score was so high that even if the other team's seeker caught the snitch, Gryffindor would still be ahead by thirty points. It was times like these when Harry really enjoyed being Quidditch Captain.

At that second Harry caught a flicker of gold that he knew was the snitch and darted across the sky towards it. When he was about fifteen feet from the familiar tiny object, a blur cut right in front of him to grab it just before he could and nearly knock him from his broom. It would have been a bad day from then on for Harry, if the other team's seeker's plan had worked out perfectly, but since he only swatted the snitch instead of actually grabbing it, Harry's day was not ruined. He sped down ten feet and snatched up the stunned golden ball before it could do anything else and clutched it tightly, remembering how good it had felt the very first time he had caught this very same snitch in first year.

"Gryffindor wins!" Harry did not recognize the voice of the announcer, but knew someone had to have taken Lee Jordan's place, however those two words were all he cared about at the moment. Despite the fact that catching the snitch really hadn't mattered to the over all turn out of the game, Harry was glad he had still beaten the other seeker. It was good to know he could still play the game he loved, and play it better than most.

He glided down to the pitch with the snitch held high above his head and joined his fellow team mates in their moment of victory. "Well, I know I was surprised by that game. Who knew these little second years could pull out a win that huge? I've seen professional teams that were less brilliant!" Ron declared just before he was sucked back into the convulsing circle of red and black robed students.

Harry scanned the immediate area for Draco but did not see him. A small wave of concern pulsed through him until he felt a slight tap on his shoulder. Turning around he saw the single person he really cared about seeing right at the moment. "I guess you don't have to wait until next year for that amazing team after all. Not if they play like that against the other two houses anyway."

"I guess you, me, and Ron aren't too bad at this joint team captains thing after all. I take back what I said about missing Wood." Harry smiled and reached for Draco's hand to pull him into the group still celebrating beside them.

Draco stared at the hand, at what would be their first truly public display of their relationship, and finally took it. There was no need to pretend for anyone's sake anymore that he was not close to Harry. Voldemort and his father wanted him dead, those games were over now and had turned into something much more dangerous, and just as deadly as before. Sharing a smile, they walked into the mass of celebratory Gryffindors.

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Lucius stared unbelieving at the man before him. "You did what?!"

“I sent some assassins into Hogwarts to take care of Potter, Weasley’s boy and that muggle born filth, along with your son, Lucius. Some of us actually want to help the Dark Lord out and not just sit around pretending we’re useful. Once Potter and the rest are dead, Voldemort will see who his true followers are and just what the Crabbe family is capable of doing when properly motivated.”

“You fool! Do you have any idea how this will ruin all of our plans?! They’ll never let their guard down now, not after finding your assassins and dealing with them. Do you really think it’s as simple as all that? Potter would already be dead if it were.” The cold tone in Lucius voice tore straight through the brave facade the other man had been boasting behind.

“I assure you. . .it won’t. . .they’re the best and all. . .I didn’t know.” Crabbe senior was dissolving quickly under the new fear that his plans were going to turn out to have an opposite effect than he had planned.

“You think that will prevent Lord Voldemort from killing you the instant he discovers what you have done?” Lucius stood tall, towering above the bulk of his one time lackey. “This is why few are leaders and the rest are followers, you moron!”

When it came down to it, Lucius was more angry that his plans would crumble as quickly as Voldemort’s would if anything changed between now and the planned attack. He had spent the last month developing both plans so that both Harry and Draco would die, along with Voldemort, leaving him nearly unopposed to take control of the Wizarding world for himself.

“Who did you send in there anyway. I hope for your sake, that it was not one of the shrinking number of Death Eaters. We are going to need as many as possible when the Dark Lord launches his attack.” Lucius said coldly.

“They weren’t any of ours. They are mercenaries, work for whoever has the money to pay for them.” He started to look proud again, regaining confidence in the infallibility of his hired killers. “I believe one of them is a dementor, though I only met with the leader as a point of contact. He assured me he knew a secret way into the school that was unknown by anyone.”

“When are they to leave for the school, is there still time to call them off?”

“They left last night.”

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The rest of the Saturday afternoon was burnt up with a massive celebration in Gryffindor Tower. It was almost as if they had already won the House Cup and everything for the year, but none of the house prefects or Professor McGonagall seemed bothered enough to break up the celebration until it was time for evening meal in the Great Hall, not that any of the students were hungry.

“The way those first and second years were talking, you’d think they’d just won the Quidditch World Cup. I mean, honestly, it was only the Hufflepuff team. They aren’t exactly known for their Quidditch playing skills,” Ron said, once the Tower was cleared except for him and Hermione. “Plus they leave this mess behind, and who has to make sure that Gryffindor Tower always looks it’s best? The

prefects of course. Now we get stuck with cleaning everything up.”

“Oh, stuff it Ron. I know you were having just as much fun as anyone else not thirty minutes ago. You’re just mad about having to clean it all up.” Ron was going to argue, but he knew it was futile. Hermione knew him better than he even knew himself at times and she could see through any excuse to whine.

“Yeah, well, still. . .they could have cleaned up after themselves.” After another ten minutes and a few helpful charms, the room was as immaculate as ever. Ron and Hermione collapsed on one of the couches together, Ron watching her stare at the constantly burning fire. “You know, we’re actually alone for the first time since we snuck of into the woods at the Burrow over a month ago.”

Hermione looked sweetly into the suggestive grin beginning to etch itself across Ron’s face. “And that’s a good thing?”

“A very good thing,” He replied. He took her lips into a slow kiss, moving himself closer against her with every second that passed. With one hand on her back and one resting on her waist, Ron moved from her lips to her neck and kissed her soft skin, sucking lightly as he made his way down to the neckline of her school uniform.

The sound of a very stern voice clearing its throat froze Ron in his tracks and spun both of their heads towards the woman standing just inside the portrait. “While Dumbledore has decided to flout the school rules on sleeping arrangements and asked I turn a blind eye to it, I will not stand for such behavior in the common room. What would you have done if a first year had seen the two of you? This is hardly a situation that house prefects should be caught in.”

“Sorry Professor McGonagall, it won’t happen again,” both said in unison, equally turning red from the embarrassment of getting caught by the head of their house.

“Yes, well, just pay more attention to your surroundings from now on if you would.” They both nodded. She looked around the common room then up to the dorm they all shared before looking back to the two still sitting closely on the couch. “Have either of you seen Mr. Potter or Mr. Malfoy? Dumbledore was wanting to have a word with them about something and they were not in the Great Hall during the evening meal.”

“No professor, we’re the only ones in the Tower. We thought they had gone down to eat with the rest of the house. I’m not sure where they might be.” Ron looked as concerned as his voice sounded. While he had gotten used to Harry sneaking off to be alone over the years, it was always an unnerving thing to realize he did not know where his best friend was whenever there was the threat of Voldemort. And being that Voldemort was always a threat, Ron hated it when Harry did this.

“Calm down Mr. Weasley. There is no need to get worked up over anything. I am certain they will turn up.” Her face belied her words, but the worry that was clearly seen on it by both teens was quickly replaced by the constant stern expression that the woman was known for. “When they do turn up, please be sure to send them along to meet with Professor Dumbledore.”

“We will Professor. Was there anything else?” Hermione asked, after noticing the woman still nervously looking around the room.

“No, there’s nothing. I just keep getting the oddest feeling that I’m being watched.” Taking one last glance around the room, she spun sharply on one heel and left, muttering something about the terrible bother ghosts could be.

Ron and Hermione looked nervously around the room themselves, now getting the same feeling. “I don’t know if it’s all in my mind or what, but I swear I’m getting the same feeling right now. It’s like someone’s eyes are burning into my skin.”

“Yeah, me too Ron. Do . . .do you want to go join everyone else now?” Hermione slowly stood up, leaving the warmth of Ron’s body on the couch. He quickly stood up beside her and simply nodded in reply, grateful she had made the suggestion so he didn’t have to. Still glancing about nervously, they made their way to the door, now feeling an intense need to not be alone anymore.

Before they were close enough to the door for it to open for them, it swung open slowly, but no one entered or left that they could see. The eerie feeling intensified and it was all the two could not to just dash straight for the door like two young children running to their parents room after a nightmare.

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“So this is how you got out to the shrieking shack in third year. I knew there had to be some secret passage. Snape told me to stop making up reasons to lay the blame on you for being weak.”

With a smile, Harry remembered the time well and nodded. “You should have seen your face when my head popped out of thin air.” He started to laugh at the memory. “Snape really said that though? What’s wrong with that man, I swear he has to be bipolar.”

“First, what in the world is ‘bipolar’ and second, how would you have reacted if my head just all of the sudden popped out of thin air! I nearly pissed myself running back to Hogwarts.” Draco playfully punched Harry in the shoulder when he started laughing even more.

They were laying beside each other at the beginning of the tunnel, having dropped just below the statue and stopped. “It still makes for a nice place to slip away unnoticed though. I’ve spent hours just sitting here when I’ve needed to be alone and think about stuff.”

“Whoa, you actually think? About stuff?” Harry returned the punch to Draco’s arm and rolled his eyes, smiling at the boy beside him.

“I pull it off occasionally, but don’t do it too often to prevent anyone from developing expectations.”

“So you are sexy and a deep thinker. I guess I’m just lucky then.” Draco inched closer to Harry, feeling a sudden cool draft brush against his skin.

“I won’t argue with that.” Harry teased back.

“Did it suddenly get cold in here?”

Harry suddenly sat straight up, an eerily familiar sound reaching his ears from the darkness of the tunnel in front of them.

“What is it?” Draco was silenced from any other questions by Harry’s raised hand. Both stared into the darkness, a sense of unease rising in them both, but for different reasons.

“Lumos.” Harry whispered, the tip of his wand bursting into light and sending a soft glow twenty feet down the tunnel. Draco looked over, trying to figure out when Harry had pulled out his wand as he had not seen him move a single muscle after raising his arm.

Getting a really bad feeling in the pit of his stomach, Draco drew his own wand and pointed it in the direction of Harry’s but left it unlit. He glanced over at Harry, the harsh contrast of the light and shadow defining his face clearly. There was a determined glare set on the boy’s face as he peered into the part of the tunnel that remained shrouded in darkness.

After another minute, Harry lowered his wand, but kept the light on. “Sorry, I guess I’m a little jumpy. Maybe we should go though, it got too cold in here for my taste.”

“Yeah, I’m getting tired anyway and we don’t want anyone to get worried and start looking for us.” Draco was trying to make a joke, but with the only emotion in his voice making his words sound very uneasy, it worked about as well as Snape being nice for a day.

Before they climbed back out, Harry withdrew his map to make sure Filch or Snape were nowhere near the statue that was their entrance. He glanced quickly up and down the surrounding halls and saw no one. He was about to fold the map up when movement caught his eye in Gryffindor Tower. At first he relaxed when he read the names Ronald Weasley and Hermione Granger, but he nearly dropped the map in surprise when the other moving name on the map was labeled with a single word instead of a name. Harry doubted the label was just a knick name or that the blood red color it was in was a coincidence; and he was terrified to see that it was moving towards his two best friends.

“Oh, shit. We have to go, now!”

Draco looked at him confused, but asked no questions, just scrambled up ahead of Harry until he burst back into the halls of Hogwarts. He moved away from the opening to allow Harry plenty of room to get out and turned to ask him what was going on the minute he emerged. However, after thirty seconds had slipped by, Harry had yet to emerge from the opening. Draco was about to go back down and see what was holding Harry up when he felt a sudden blast of cold despair rip at him and he heard the unmistakable cry of Harry Potter.

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“My Lord?” Lucius softly called out as he opened the door to Voldemort’s private chamber.

“What is it Lucius?” The response was cold and harsh. “Is there nothing you can handle on your own? I need my rest! Are you sure this is something I must deal with at this exact moment?”

“I am afraid so. A rather large. . . complication to our plans has just been brought to my attention.” He held back as much despise for the creature he was talking to as possible. “It appears that the ever blundering Crabbe sent a small group of assassins into Hogwarts to dispatch with Potter and his friends.”

“Insolent fool! Where is he, I will kill him this very moment!” Lucius moved out of the way just in time to avoid being run into by the large reptilian man the came flying out the door. “How much ignorance can I ignore from one idiot?”

Lucius smiled internally. He could persuade Voldemort to spare the life of his current source of rage, but as Crabbe seemed intent on trying to show him up and destroy his plans, he allowed the rage to build inside the creature he called Lord. “He is in the planning room, master. He is awaiting your command and wishes to apologize.”

“Apologize? For being a complete moron who is constantly getting in my way? I think I shall hear him out. . . as he pleads for his life while it slips away.”

Lucius fell back a few steps, allowing Voldemort to enter the room alone. The screams that were soon coming from the room were all the confirmation he needed that the job was being done. Smiling to himself, Lucius imagined the coming day when he would hear the final cries of not only Voldemort, but also Harry Potter, just before killing his own son with his bare hands. There was something more satisfying about feeling the throat in his hands as opposed to casting the killing curse, and he wanted to enjoy every second of the boy’s death. It was a memory he was anxious to relive everyday for the rest of his life, once he was ruler over them all and had nothing better to do, that is.

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“Harry!” Without waiting for a reply, Draco dove head first into the dark opening and landed with a grunt on top of Harry who was slumped against the ground, looking terrified into the shadowy figure less than ten feet away from them. Draco jumped to his feet, pointing his wand at the floating, robed figure and shouted, “Riddikulus!” Other than a small bit of light bursting into existence, nothing happened at all.

“Draco, for crying out loud, it’s not a bogart! It’s an actual dementor!” Harry shouted from behind him, climbing to his feet by clinging onto Draco for support.

“Well, obviously! It’s not like I actually had time to think of what to say when I dropped down here to find it right on top of you!”

Harry raised his wand, standing freely on his own again and loudly cast the Patronus Charm. “Expecto patronum!” Instantly the small area was flooded with the most intense light Draco’s eyes had ever been forced to witness. He was sure he saw a brilliantly white stag leap from Harry’s wand and chase the dementor down the tunnel and away from them.

“How in the world did you cast a Patronus? That’s advanced magic, and very taxing.”

“Tell me about it.” Harry tried turning to run to Gryffindor Tower, but only succeeded in falling into

Draco's arms. "We have to get to Gryffindor Tower! There's something else up there and Ron and Hermione are in trouble."

"I can't very well carry you all that way and you are not about to run anywhere," Draco said helplessly. "Maybe I could levitate you or something. . .what do we do?!"

"You go and I'll catch up! Hurry, please!" Harry pleaded against the look on Draco's face in response to the idea of leaving Harry behind in the tunnel with a dementor still lurking around somewhere. "It's their only hope, Drac! Go, I promise I'll be okay."

Reluctantly Draco nodded and climbed back out of the tunnel and headed for Gryffindor Tower at full sprint. Somewhere along the way, he realized that for the first time in his life he was rushing head on into unknown danger. "Damn Gryffindors are rubbing off on me," he whispered under his labored breath with a small smirk.

He was running as fast as he could up the last flight of stairs, taking them three and four at a time, when he lost his footing and went sliding across the stone floor with his face. He looked up to find the Fat Lady looking down at him, very flustered.

"And I suppose you are going to barge straight in and not even bother asking how I am doing also?" Giving the woman a strange look, not knowing what she was going on about, Draco spoke the password and impatiently waited as the picture swung on it's hinges. He was about to push his way through when he was frozen to his spot by the last curse he'd ever expected to hear inside the walls of Hogwarts and they were confirmed by the flash of green light that exploded all around him.

"No!" He knew the voice was Harry's even before the boy finally made it up the stairs and pushed past him. Draco was still unable to move, the picture was open fully now and he could clearly see the crumbled up body laying at the feet of the one still holding his wand from casting the unforgivable curse.

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Ron and Hermione were almost to the door when they were spun around by a raspy voice calling from the thin air. "Going somewhere?"

"Who's there? What do you want?" Ron called defiantly, placing himself in front of Hermione in a protective manor.

"Ah, young sir, it's not what I want, but what my employer wants." There was a pause while the voice coughed. "And I'm afraid that what he wants, is you both dead!"

"Circumspecto!" Hermione screamed when the voice thundered from behind them, but the flash of whatever had been cast by the unseen person behind them flew over their heads and struck the owner of the raspy voice.

"Professor!" Ron chanced a glance behind him at Hermione's recognition. There stood Albus Dumbledore, wand drawn and held high, eyes still on the figure still coming in to view before them.

“Are you two alright? Where’s Harry and Draco?”

Ron heard Hermione offer an answer, but didn’t actually hear what the words were. He watched the gnarled face now revealed to him being twisted into a smirk and watched the twisted hand swinging up with the wand in hand. “Avad. . .”

Before the man could even breath another syllable his attention was pulled to the opening door. Ron pulled out his wand in the blink of an eye and flicked in the direction of the man, screaming the first curse that would come to mind.

“Avada Kedavra! Avada Kedavra!” The room was filled instantly with harsh green light and the gnarled man crumbled into an even more grotesque looking figure on the floor, crying out painfully.

“No!” Ron slowly turned to the source of the scream, knowing it as Harry’s voice. He stared straight into the eyes of the boy as he walked towards him numbly.

“Oh, Ron. . .what have you done?” Hermione’s voice cracked with tears and she collapsed into a sitting position on the floor, staring straight at the slumped form where it had fallen.

“Listen to me all of you. We have only a few minutes before we are swarmed with wizards from the Ministry of Magic.” Dumbledore waited until Draco had walked into the room and the door was closed behind him. When all four were in front of him he snapped his fingers to get their attention. “You must not tell a single soul that Ron was the one that cast this curse. Do you understand?!”

Eventually they all nodded, still in shock from what had just happened. “But I cast an unforgivable. . .I didn’t mean it. I didn’t even know it would work. I haven’t even practiced it or anything.”

“Ronald, listen to me. You were only protecting yourself and Hermione from a killer. Have no doubts that you two would not have left this room alive if it had been entirely up to that man. He was a hired assassin and a very good one to have gotten this far undetected.” Dumbledore moved closer to them all. “All of you go to my office. I will be there shortly after I take care of what needs to be handled here.”

When none of them had moved after a minute had passed, Dumbledore looked up from where he was kneeling beside the body and yelled, “GO!”

They numbly moved out of the Tower and down the halls to the Headmaster’s office. Once they had spoken the password and were inside, they all four collapsed into one of the chairs in front of Dumbledore’s desk. No one spoke or even looked up at anyone else, but they were all thinking the same thoughts. They were all wondering how anything could have possibly gotten worse than it had been.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Twenty-Three - Leaders Of Men

Ron stared at his hands and hoped the image of the man slumping lifelessly to the ground would stop playing over and over again inside his mind. Hermione's arms were around his shoulders and her head rested against his arms, but neither had said a word since leaving the Gryffindor common room. Harry was standing, his attention moving from his distraught friend to the pacing form of Draco. All four were silent and none of them seemed anywhere near the ability of finding the right words to form into sentences.

After an hour had passed, Albus Dumbledore and Arthur Weasley walked somberly into the headmaster's office and looked tiredly at the four waiting there.

"Ronald, I need you to go over exactly what happened in there tonight." Arthur looked sadly at his son, but still managed a supportive smile as he sat down across from him. Ron had just begun slowly recounting their tale when the office door flung open and Hagrid rushed in, followed closely by Mad-Eye Moody.

"Professor, you can't let them take away his wand! It was self defense!" Hagrid strode into the middle of the room as he screamed his outrage.

"Hagrid, I've told you the boy will be fine! If Arthur here can smooth things over for me when I get a bit carried away at times, there's no reason for alarm. Besides, I'd like to see Fudge try to take a wand away from any member of the Order of the Phoenix," Moody said with a smirk on his face, as if imagining the scene in his head and finding entertainment from the mere idea.

"Gentlemen, Arthur is currently hearing the story of what happened. If you are staying in this office, you are remaining quiet and keeping your speculations to yourselves." Dumbledore sat down behind his desk and waited for Ron to begin once Hagrid and Mad-Eye had found a place to sit.

When Ron had finished, Arthur looked up at Albus and sighed. "Well, thank Merlin Ron only knocked the man unconscious. Self defense should be more than enough of a reason, even if he tried casting an unforgivable." Arthur looked Ron straight in the eye before continuing. "I don't know where in the world you learned that, but if you know others you'd better start alleviating them from your memory. If you had cast that right you would be sitting in a cell facing charges of murder."

"Dad, I . . . I only read about some unforgivables so we wouldn't be easy targets if we ever fight Death Eaters again. I never actually used any of them, I panicked and just shouted the first thing I could think of."

"I don't care! Forget you ever knew them, do you understand?"

"Arthur, it's perfectly natural to be upset over the use of an unforgivable, especially when it is done by one of your children, but I believe Ron has taught himself that lesson already."

Arthur nodded his understanding to Dumbledore and took a few steps away from the chairs. "You're right, of course, Dumbledore. Above all, I'm glad to see you are all alive and all in one piece. Molly

will be relieved to hear that much, at least." He looked over at a disgruntled looking Moody and shook his head. "I just can't believe an assassin got into the school."

"I want to know how. Although I guess Sirius knew a few ways in, didn't he? So they must exist." Alastor jumped into the conversation, happy to be moving back to the matters of greater importance.

"Professor. . ."

"I've told you more times than I care to count that I was never your professor." The weathered, old face broke into a smile, a small one, but it was there.

"Right, sorry," Harry said, before continuing on. Remembering all of a sudden for the first time since walking in on Ron casting the killing curse that he and Draco had faced terrors of their own that night. "I know how they got in; we fought off a Dementor. . ."

Harry was interrupted again, but this time it was by everyone in the room except Draco jumping to their feet, his words acting as an alarm to them all. "Harry! Why didn't you say anything to Albus already?! There could be any number of people lurking around, and a Dementor on top of that?! What on earth were you thinking?"

Harry felt like a foolish child when he heard the tone in Arthur's voice. For a brief moment, he began to get annoyed, and then he was overcome with sadness at the thought that he had never been reprimanded by someone who actually loved him growing up. Finally, his emotions settled back on the urgency shared on Arthur's face.

"No time for talking now! The two of you come with me and we'll search the castle. If those boobs haven't already left for the Ministry, we'll get them to help too." Even though he had seemingly taken charge of the moment, Moody looked to Professor Dumbledore and awaited his okay. Once the elderly wizard had nodded his head slightly, Arthur, Hagrid and Mad-Eye quickly left the office.

"I think the four of you had better stay in this office. I assure you it is quite safe here. I must go and round up all the houses into the Great Hall so they are not causing a distraction or making an easy target for desperate assassins trying to get out of Hogwarts."

Once they had been left alone in the office again, Harry joined his three friends in a standing position. His body wanted to collapse back into the chair, but his brain knew there were more important things at the moment than resting to accomplish. "Draco, does this sound like something your father would do?"

Draco shook his head with a frown before answering, "No. He may not always lower himself to actually casting the killing curses himself, but he is always there to witness them. I can guarantee you that he would want to watch us both die bad enough that he would do it himself though. If Voldemort sent them, which I also doubt, then it would have been as a diversion."

"That or he's just really getting desperate." Ron looked like he wanted to believe that what he had said was the actual reason. If Voldemort was getting desperate, that meant he was almost done.

“Ron, think about it. If you had one enemy in the world that you hated more than anyone, would you let someone else kill them for you?” Draco looked into Ron’s face, waiting for an answer.

“No. I’d do the next best thing.” He looked between Harry and Draco. “I’d let them fall in love with my best friend so that their own father would want them dead and they’d have no choice but to trust me and stop being a pain in the ass.”

“I hardly see how this is a time for jokes.” Hermione’s voice was soft but still full of an emotion that could be described only as a mixture of fear and awe.

“My point, Weasley, is this: when you took out that man and you knew that you had saved Hermione and yourself, powerful emotions flowed through you. No?” Ron nodded slowly in reply, not sure of where Draco was going with his current train of thought. “For Voldemort and my father, the release of emotion is what they enjoy the best out of killing people; especially people who have betrayed them or hindered their rise to power at any time. It’s like tasting vengeance for them, and that is a powerfully addictive taste. It’s consumed them both to the point where the only thing they really care about is their plans of domination and their revenge on. . .”

“The two of us.” Harry’s words hung in the air as the four exchanged looks. It was what they were all thinking at that same moment, but the realization that it was not Voldemort or Lucius Malfoy left only questions.

“But, I would have to bet that some mid-level idiot thought he would make himself look good by taking care of the problem and hired the assassins. It is about the only thing that really makes sense here. Those imbeciles are always stepping on each other’s plans when they hatch some scheme of their own.” Draco took a seat, looking almost exhausted as they all felt. “We can only hope that Voldemort kills the person responsible himself. Otherwise the whole lot of them will try to do the same and we’d spend the rest of our lives looking over our shoulders, expecting the next attack.”

“You really do get used to it after awhile.” Harry squeezed himself into the chair next to Draco, ending up mostly sitting in the boy’s lap than anything else.

“I don’t think there are some things I will ever get used to.” What exactly Ron was referring to was not lost on a single person in the room. “I’d rather forget than get used to it.”

A silence fell over the room for a few seconds. Ron and Hermione resumed their sitting position from earlier and all four looked about ready to fall asleep where they were sitting when Harry jumped up suddenly.

“We can see exactly where everyone is at with the map! I can’t believe I’m letting this all slip my mind tonight!” As he spoke, he pulled the Marauder’s Map from his pocket and unfolded it. “I never even turned it off earlier.”

The other three stayed where they were at, but were much more alert. “Well, what does it say then?”

“We have to go.”

“What?” All three echoed the question at the same moment.

“There’s more than one Dementor gliding around the halls, and I’m not even sure what this other marking is.” Harry’s face drained of all color as he studied the map then looked up quickly. “We have to go. Now!”

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James Potter, in the body of Remus Lupin, stopped walking and turned his full attention to his straining ears. From his years spent living in the wildest places of the world, he had learned how to separate the sounds of many dangerous creatures from the normal noises that were always bombarding his senses. Standing in the completely quiet and dark hallway, however, made it impossible for even the unwary to miss the labored breathing coming from behind him. It was not the unexpected breathing that now froze his blood with remembered terrors, but the instant recognition of what sort of creature belonged to that type of breathing.

Keeping as still as possible, he slipped his hand into his robes and removed his wand. He had fought and killed numerous creatures like the one now drawing closer to him by the second, but it was never an easy task, or one he thought he would ever have to face doing again.

For a brief second he considered hiding and hoping the creature would just pass on by, but the realization that he was in a school full of students and teachers alike who had no idea how to actually deal with a horror such as this one left him with no other option but to handle the threat himself. Just before turning to face what he prayed was an unprepared enemy, James wondered how in the world something like this could have slipped into Hogwarts.

“Lumos!” He blinked in the instant light that flooded the hall and within seconds, the hideous form of what looked to be a very ancient hag came into focus. He made a small smirk before letting the words that had been so hard learned over the years slid off his tongue and down through his now glowing wand.

The crooked features of what could easily be mistaken as an elderly woman’s face, twisted into a snarl seconds before the spell collided with the head’s body. The long, dirty clumps of hair flew out wildly for a brief second before the hag collided with the floor.

“You’ll have to come up with better than that, wizard!” James jumped to the side, barely avoiding the leaping creature and the gnarled hands that reached for his throat. Before he could raise his wand and cast another defense charm, he felt the long nails of those hands tear into his ankles, leaving open flesh and blood behind them and dropping him to the floor.

His hand reached down for the source of pain in an automatic reaction, but the follow up blow to his face left him stunned. He watched the deceptively old looking body rise from the floor above him and take a step towards him. He started to raise his wand in a last desperate maneuver.

“Locomotor Mortis!” The hag fell face first into the floor, inches away from Professor Lupin’s still bleeding leg. He looked up into the faces of Harry, Draco, Ron, and Hermione; who was still holding her wand out from casting the leg locker curse.

“Petrificus Totalus!” James added, ensuring the hag was not going to be bothering him again.

“Dad!”

“Professor!”

The trio was kneeling next to the injured man in a flash, checking his visible wounds and asking if there were any more. After a few minutes, they were finally convinced he was okay and after a few healing charms had been spoken and the cuts on his ankle and face were no longer bleeding, they stood up.

Draco glanced at them over his shoulder, from where he had taken up a watch, for any more danger coming for them on the map.

“I think I missed something.” James let half a smile crept onto his face, but could tell by the looks on the teen’s faces that something big had actually happened. “What did I miss?”

“Long story short, a group of assassins got into Hogwarts and tried to kill the four of us and now they are roaming around the school apparently attacking anyone that moves.”

“Oh. Then why are you four wandering around alone?”

Harry took the map from Draco’s hands. “We saw that thing sneaking up on you along with a few other things roaming around that we figured would be easier to find if Dumbledore and Moody had this.”

“Mad Eye is here? What brought him around?”

“I nearly murdered someone.” James stared hard at Ron. He was hoping for a smile to break on those lips or for the boy to say he was joking, but he could tell from the way Ron kept his gaze turned to the floor that he was not joking. “He came with my dad and some Aurors from the ministry after I used an Unforgivable.”

“Who. . .what happened?”

“He did it in self-defense and saved our lives.” Hermione stepped in front of Ron as she spoke and took his shoulders into a firm grip. “Ronald Weasley, what you did had to be done. If you had not, we would both be dead, do you hear me?”

The three watching were not sure if Ron nodded yes or if his head was just being jostled about by Hermione shaking him roughly; but none of them felt the need to interfere. Hermione stared into Ron’s eyes for a few more moments letting the returning silence of Hogwarts after hours envelop them.

“Whatever happened, Ron, I’m sure you had no choice; though it is never an easy thing to take a life, or well, nearly take one, even when you have no other option.” No one asked if the man was speaking from personal experience or not, they could see in his eyes that there were more haunts in his life than the full moon.

“I don’t mean to be rude, but we are all standing in the open while Dementors and a few trained killers are stalking the halls. While I’m sure Dumbledore and that oaf. . .err, Hagrid are able to deal with the problem at hand, I prefer to not place myself in mortal danger more than three times a night.”

“Draco’s right. Wherever it was that Dumbledore left you, I suggest you get back there quickly.” Harry handed him the map, but he refused. “You will need that more than us. Just let me know where Dumbledore is at and I’ll head there.”

“But without the map how will you know. . .” Harry was cut off in mid sentence.

“Harry, there are many ways to see danger before it strikes and most of them are much more effective than a map developed twenty years ago by trouble-making students.” He smiled warmly at his son, and then looked anxiously up at them all. “Now go. Go back to where Dumbledore left you. The four of you have done more than enough in one night.”

“Don’t worry, Professor. I won’t try to kill anyone else tonight.”

James nodded sadly at the boy, unsure of what to say. Harry watched his father disappear into the complete darkness of the hallway before turning and walking back towards Dumbledore’s office.

Despite the many aches in his body that were begging for sleep and rest, Harry still felt a rising resentment at being sent off like a child again. Hadn’t they all promised after last year that they would stop keeping him out of the loop, stop trying to keep him over protected?

“What’s wrong?” Draco whispered in his ear.

“They’re doing it again--leaving me out of anything remotely dangerous like I am a child.” Harry’s reply was not a whisper, but was still said low enough that the two walking behind them did not hear what was being said when he leaned over closer to Draco’s face, but they could tell he was upset about something by the way his body was tensed.

Draco caught himself from replying, even though he wanted to badly. The memory of the last time he’d said something to Harry when the boy was upset and everything that had followed kept him silent though. After a minute of fighting with himself, Draco gave into the fears, too tired to really deal with anymore fighting--even if that fight was with Harry and not a deadly enemy.

When they were a hall way over from Dumbledore’s office, Harry stopped them all and pointed silently at the map. The name of the Minister of Magic was pacing back and forth across the small box designated as their destination.

“That’s it, I’m done for. He’s come to take me to Azkaban!”

“No one is taking you anywhere Weasley. I promise you that much. I have gotten too used to the idea of having a brother. Besides, you only tried to use an Unforgiveable, you weren't exactly succesful.” Draco turned back towards the office and strode proudly, the other three catching up to him quickly.

“So just what are you planning on doing?”

“Nothing. Unless Fudge makes me.” Harry raised his eyebrows in a question, but it went unanswered. They were soon standing outside the door to Dumbledore’s office and for a brief moment Draco seemed to falter.

“You don’t have to do anything, Drac. I can handle someone like Fudge.”

“It’s no problem. I just haven’t slipped on the arrogant Malfoy jackass suit in a while.” With a final grin to his friends, Draco opened the door and walked into the room standing severely upright.

“Prof. . .Where is Professor Dumbledore? And why are you walking freely about the castle, wand in hand.” He was pointing at Ron as he spoke the last. “Don’t look so surprised boy, even with Dumbledore reporting that there was no way to know for sure who had thrown the curse in the confusion, there are more than a few wards around the school that keep track of such things.”

“Father always said there were far more things watching us than was ever admitted to.” Draco spoke with the old sneer that the trio had not heard him use in months. “But even you know that you have to rely purely on a wizard’s testimony and not magic tricks when it comes to such serious charges. Professor Dumbledore’s version of the events and the accounts of Weasley and Granger are the only versions that can be presented in any trial by the ministry.” Harry stared at Draco, wondering when exactly Draco had learned so many of the laws that he could call the Minister of Magic on his threats.

The look on Fudge’s face was not something Harry thought was a good reaction. He could see more than anger building there and was about to raise his wand in a defensive position when Fudge snorted and collapsed into a chair behind him.

“You know the law very well, young Mr. Malfoy. It is rather sad that the Minister of Magic could be so easily defeated by a mere student.” He put his head into his hands, leaving the four teens standing in shock. Whatever they had expected from a confrontation, this was not it. “I am one blundering fool of a leader.”

“We all face times of doubt in our own abilities.” Every face in the room turned surprisedly towards the man standing in the doorway.

“Dumbledore, I need to know where we go on this. If it gets leaked to the Daily Prophet that Arthur Weasley’s son used the killing curse and was not punished then everyone will say I am but a puppet of yours.”

“I doubt very seriously that Voldemort or his followers will make any report of what happened since it will make them look very desperate and weak.” Dumbledore moved across the room and took his place behind his desk where he sat down slowly into his chair. “However, I think it would be very wise if we were to start taking very serious precautions with the safety of all four of them.”

“Do you think there will be another attack?”

“Not like this one. Whoever put this plan into motion did not think it out well, so I very much doubt it was Voldemort or Lucius. I would also suspect that the person responsible is dead now, if Voldemort was indeed not behind these attacks. We will know for certain in a day or two if a known death eater turns up dead. But to answer your question more fully, yes I do expect there will be another attack, but it will be much better planned out and deadly.”

The room remained silent until the sound of Ron’s snoring broke the few still awake out of their thoughts. Draco smiled down at Harry who was asleep on his shoulder and over at Ron whose head was resting in Hermione’s lap. She returned his smile when their eyes met. Minister Fudge stood and stretched from his seat. "You will of course, request that no one repeats anything that happened in this room, especially the stressed induced bumbblings of an over-worked Minister."

"Of course. Might I invite you to dinner tomorrow here at Hogwarts, along with a stay for the remainder of the weekend? It might be just the relaxing break an over-worked, stressed-out leader needs to catch his breath."

"Sounds wonderful, Headmaster. But of course, there is no time for such luxuries. Besides, I doubt I could tolerate teenagers that long." With his best politican smile, for added sincerity that was clearly not there, Cornelius Fudge made his exit.

“I am glad he did not stay long enough to see you return to your Dormitory. It would not do for him to see you all returning to the same beds, I would think.” He snapped his fingers and the sleeping bodies of Ron and Harry levitated into the air and drifted out the magically opened door. “Goodnight, you two. Tomorrow will no doubt be a very long and difficult one so I would urge you to use the last few hours of night to sleep.”

They nodded tiredly at the headmaster and followed their boyfriends through the halls and into their beds. It took less than a minute for them to surrender to sleep once they were under the blankets and cuddled up against the person they loved.

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“How are we going to proceed now, my Lord?” Lucius was sitting once again across from the creature he detested more then anything in the world, with the exception of his son and the boy’s lover. “Dumbledore has moved swiftly in the last week since that fool sent in those assassins. The mudblood’s parents have even been moved to the safety of the school. Every avenue we had plotted out has been blocked or removed entirely.”

“Yes, yes. I know all this! That fool’s death does not even begin to pay for all the trouble he has caused me. His family will also become an example of what being an insufferable idiot will gain you when I am your Lord.”

Lucius was smiling on the inside. The more and more Voldemort killed families, the more and more Death Eaters flocked to Lucius’ plans. Soon he would be able to overthrow the vile thing without Potter’s help. Even though he was still going to use the boy to kill the snake, it was nice to know he would soon not have to rely on that alone.

“But what of our plans? How can we possibly get to any of them over the holidays when they are all

tucked away safely inside the school?” Lucius knew there were still ways, and had worked out a few on his own, but it was best to play the part of the servant still needing direction at the moment. “Surely even Dumbledore will have closed off all the hidden tunnels into the school by now.”

“My dear Lucius, have no fear. I have a plan that will not only get us Potter and your son, but Dumbledore and his Order as well.” Lucius tried to join in with the cackling laughter that followed, rather than sneer in disgust at it.

However it was accomplished, Lucius was comforted by the simple thought that soon his son would repay his treachery, Potter would either be dead or a broken past time in a dungeon, and he would rule over both the Wizarding and the Muggle world. Soon the Muggles would have a new chapter to write in their history books and Lucius Malfoy would be the future of the entire world.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Twenty-Four - Semblance Of Normalcy

“Ron, calm down. It’s not as if you haven’t met them before. It’s just dinner with our parents. We ate lunch with them earlier, remember?” Hermione Granger smiled as she watched Ron nervously finish getting ready for their dinner. “We’re lucky in a way, we know our parents already get along great.”

“And that helps me not panic how again?” His voice cracked as it always did when he was nervous. “Lunch in the Great Hall, surrounded by every other student in the school, is nothing at all like going into Hogsmeade for dinner with our parents. I still can’t figure out why you ever suggested such a thing!”

Hermione glared at him, her smiling fading but she was still amused by his antics. “It’s called being polite, Ronald, but I would not expect you to know anything about that.”

“I can be polite, I just don’t jump at every opportunity to do so.” His voice was defensive, but neither were feeling cross with the other at all.

“You’re not wearing that I hope,” Draco said, walking in behind Harry. He gave Ron a once over and smirked. “Well, I suppose it does beat those formal robes you had in fourth year.”

“Stuff it, Malfoy. Stuff it up your . . .”

“No thanks, Weasel; I leave the stuffing to Harry.” Hermione rolled her eyes and Ron nearly doubled over with revulsion, while Draco laughed at his own joke. “That’s a better reaction than I had hoped for. I might have to start paying you for entertaining me, Ron, if you keep making me laugh so much.”

“Don’t you dare!” Harry gave Draco a look that made it quite clear he was tired of the joke.

“Okay, okay. I was just joking anyway. I don’t have that kind of money to throw around anymore, anyway.” He turned his attention back to Ron and stopped laughing. “But seriously, you are really planning on wearing that sweater to your couple/parents dinner in Hogsmeade?”

“And what’s wrong with this sweater? My mum made it for Harry last Christmas.”

“Hey, I’ve been looking for that!” Harry walked over to where the other three were standing. “How long have you been “borrowing” it?”

“It was in my trunk so I figured you’d gotten tired of it or it was too small or something. You should pay more attention to where you throw your clothes if you don’t want anyone else to wear them.” Ron was getting in a bad mood with the approaching dinner and Draco’s jokes, not to mention that he had really wanted the sweater he was wearing when Harry got it the year before and had thought Harry had given it to him.

“Calm down Weasley. I was the one that stuck that sweater in your trunk and got it out of Harry’s. Those colors just didn’t wear right on him and you have this ability to match any color together, no

matter how uncoordinated, so I figured you could make better use of it.”

Ron stared at Draco for a few moments, trying to figure out if the boy had just insulted him or given him a compliment. “I’m sure that was an insult somehow, but I’m going to say thanks anyway. Just my little way of being polite.” He looked at Hermione when he said the last sentence.

“Well, I guess I am rubbing off on you just as much as you are on me. I’ll make good little Slytherins of you all yet!” Hermione, Ron and Harry all laughed at the theatrics of their one time enemy.

“It’s too late for that Malfoy. You’ve already been turned into a Weasley and once they have you in a hug, they don’t let go.” Draco smiled at Hermione’s words and from the feeling inside as he remembered that week following the death of his mother and the way Arthur and Molly Weasley had taken him in as a son of their own.

“Well, there are some things worth changing for.” Draco let his smile return to a smirk and walked away from the other three to sit and stare out of the window. Three sets of eyes followed him and worried, but no one said anything out loud.

“It is good to see you four returning to a semblance of normalcy,” Dumbledore said as he entered the room. “The past week’s events, coupled with the previous months’, would have broken many more stronger wizards. I suspect this proves once again that there is no substitute for true friends and laughter to heal a wounded heart.”

“I just wish it would take away memories as well,” Ron said. He suddenly felt an urge to join Draco and stare at the horizon, letting his thoughts bounce around in silence.

Harry and Hermione sent concerned looks to both Ron and Draco before returning their attention to Dumbledore. Harry asked, “Was there anything you wanted in particular, Professor?”

“Actually, yes, there was.” He removed his sad gaze from the two sulking youths and returned Harry’s gaze. “But it can wait until tomorrow. I suspect Ms. Granger and Mr. Weasley had better hurry and get along to the entrance to the Great Hall where their parents are already waiting.”

Ron stood perfectly still, his eyes focused on nothing and everything at once. The view of the Castle and the grounds from the boys’ dormitory in Gryffindor Tower seemed to have enticed both him and Draco, as neither had looked away or acknowledged the other three in the room since gazing out the window.

Harry looked at Ron standing next to him and felt a chill run down his spine. He had the same expression on his face as a character on some show he had watched years ago at the Dursley’s, the man on the TV had been under a trance. Dumbledore too, looked closely at the two young men and felt that somehow, something was off.

“Mr. Weasley?” He reached out his hand and shook the boy gently, but got no reaction at all. “Ron!” He gave Ron a shove on his back that sent the teen sprawling to the bed where he looked around shaking his head, as if just waking up.

“What. . .”

“Draco!” Harry’s yell cut Ron off in mid sentence. Before anyone else could register what was happening over at the window, Harry had pulled Draco back inside the opened frame and was shaking him in his arms.

“Merlin, Harry! What’s wrong with you?” Draco looked up into the worried face and tried to figure out when Harry had grabbed him from his seat at the windowsill.

“Circumspecto AVOIDIUM!” All four teens watched a pinkish lightning dance around the window frame before jumping to do the same with every other window in the room. “That should be a sufficient counter spell, but I suggest you close those curtains and leave them that way.”

Without any other explanation of what in the world had just happened, Albus Dumbledore turned his aged body around and quickly left the dorm.

“What the bloody Hell was that all about?” Ron asked, not for the first time when it came to Dumbledore. “Honestly, he pushes me to the bed and then tells us to shut the curtains before running out of here?! I think he’s finally cracking.”

“Ron, stop talking.” Hermione held up her hand to emphasize her words.

“You two were acting weird, like you were in a trance or something. You were both just staring out the window, and then you tried to walk right out of the Tower by way of the ledge,” Harry said to Draco.

“I tried to. . .That would not have been a fun trip.”

“But did he have to push me to the bed?”

“You wouldn’t respond to anything else. It was almost like you two were under an Imperius Charm, but even worse. You just stood there, like you were frozen and stared straight ahead of you at nothing.” Hermione sat down on the bed next to Ron. “I don’t know what just happened, but it can’t be a good thing. Not with the way Dumbledore reacted.”

“Well obviously he knew what happened. You know I think he actually tells me less now that he doesn’t keep any secrets from me anymore.”

Draco reached his hand up and stroked Harry’s cheek. “Calm down, Harry. I’m sure Dumbledore will tell us what happened eventually. He most likely is going about the school casting the same spell he did on these windows and telling everyone to close the draperies and not to look or go out the windows.”

“I guess that means our dinner plans are ruined.”

“Really?” Ron responded with more enthusiasm than Hermione thought reasonable. “Well at least some good’s coming out of it.”

“Seriously, Ronald!” Before he could defend himself, Ron was pushed back onto the bed and

Hermione stormed out of the room.

“There’s that Ronald Weasley charm I hear so much about.” Draco smirked at the glare Ron threw him on his way out of the room to chase down Hermione.

“What happened to the overly nice Draco that didn’t insult my best friends?” Harry asked with a smile, placing a soft kiss on Draco’s cheek that was still cold from the opened window.

“Oh, he’s still here. He just can’t resist the urge to get under Ron’s skin anymore though when Weasel makes it so easy.” He returned the warm kiss on his cheek with a brush of his lips against Harry’s. “You know, I suspect that Dumbledore will be busy for a while with as many windows as there are in this castle, and Granger and Weasley are going to be working out their problems for at least a good twenty minutes.”

“Which means?” Harry liked the look in Draco’s eyes.

“Which means we could pick up where we left off over a week ago in that tunnel.” He leaned down and placed his lips against Harry’s neck, brushing his tongue along the warming skin.

“I like the way you think. . .” Harry trailed off as Draco moved around to his chin, leaving a trail with his tongue just barely brushing against Harry’s skin. “Hmm.”

Draco smiled at the sound of the soft moan leaving Harry’s lips and moved back down his neck to the top of his shirt. With one hand, he gently pushed the fabric down, allowing him more access to the skin underneath. When the elastic in the shirt resisted him moving any further, Draco pulled it up from the bottom and over Harry’s head, hungrily attacking the newly exposed flesh before the shirt had even found the floor.

His lips and tongue moved over Harry’s chest, lingering on each nipple just long enough to start driving Harry crazy with the near overload of sensations his body was trying to register at once. Along with his mouth, Draco was making good use of his hands, removing the rest of Harry’s clothes and blindly exploring every inch of the boy he could touch. He ran his fingers up Harry’s spine, causing him to gasp and shiver from the intense feelings pulsing through him now in response to Draco’s hands and lips.

“Drac. . .I. . .I want you in. . .side me.” Draco stopped what he was doing and looked up into the pleading, yet somewhat frightened eyes of the boy he loved. The yearning in those eyes was much more powerful than any uncertainty that laid there too, but still Draco himself wasn’t sure if he could. He knew he wanted to, badly, but deep in his mind there were still fears wrapped up in the actual act.

“I. . .I don’t think that I can.” Harry’s eyes fell in response to Draco’s admission, but only briefly, before they were staring intently back into his with all traces of fear and uncertainty removed.

“Drac, I need you inside me.” Harry’s eyes held even more desperation in them than his voice. Draco bit his lower lip, looking as if he was deciding a very tough decision, and finally he sighed and nodded his head.

“Well, if you’re going to beg. . .” He seized the naked Harry into his arms and began kissing him passionately while moving them in the direction of their bed. When Harry’s legs met with the mattress, he instantly let himself fall backwards and moved up on the bed to a more comfortable position.

“Not to question your methods or anything, but don’t you think it might be easier if you got naked too?” He smirked at Draco, who looked like he was just realizing the fact that he was still dressed. Before Harry could think of anything else to say though, Draco had solved the problem with a whispered spell and was drawing the curtains around the bed shut.

In the semi-darkness, the two looked each other over, deciding they both liked what they saw. Draco moved his now naked body against Harry’s and began to kiss him again with even more desperation than minutes before. The friction between their bodies was drawing moans from both of them and Draco nearly forgot about what Harry had asked for, until Harry reminded him with a simple plea.

“Draco, please?”

Moving in between his lover’s legs, Draco placed his shoulders underneath Harry’s knees and positioned himself to enter as easily as he could possibly manage. He grabbed his wand from the edge of the bed and cast a lubrication charm, a flash of remembrance of Harry neglecting to do the same tried to fill his mind, but Draco pushed it away with the longing look on the boy’s face now.

With one more look to ensure Harry really wanted this, Draco moved his body towards him, entering a very little bit at a time. After a few minutes, he was fully inside and moving very carefully, his eyes still staring into Harry’s; having never looked away the entire time.

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Ron stood at the top of the stairs and watched Hermione approach their parents. He had almost caught up with her but had not wanted to make a scene in front of the adults, he would much rather smooth everything over with Hermione without anyone else knowing he’d upset her.

“Where’s Ron, Dear?” Mrs. Weasley asked when Hermione reached them. “Is everything alright?” Ron groaned inside, his mum never missed the tell-tale marks of shed tears and he knew that Hermione had developed this annoying inability to not tell the woman anything she asked.

“It’s just Ron. . .he can be so thick headed sometimes.” Molly smiled at the girl and gave her a quick hug, understanding exactly how frustrating a Weasley Male could be at times.

“I’m sure he didn’t mean to upset you. You know how Ron can open his mouth without thinking sometimes.” The older woman comforted the girl she had come to consider a daughter. “I’m sure once he gets down here and we get to Hogsmeade, everything will work out fine.”

Ron jumped and caught himself just before falling down the stairs when Professor Dumbledore spoke from behind him at the top of the stairs. “I’m afraid that any plans of leaving the castle must be postponed. Arthur, if I could speak with you privately for a moment as well. . .” Arthur Weasley quickly climbed the stairs, passing Ron as he made his way down to join his girlfriend and the

remaining parents.

“What’s happening, Ron?” Mrs. Weasley asked. She sent a glance up at her husband’s back, able to tell something serious had or was happening by the way he kept nodding along to whatever Dumbledore was telling him.

“I don’t really know, Mum, but whatever it is, it’s not good. Something made me and Draco sort of freeze or something when we looked out the window.” Ron answered as best he could, but knowing so little of what actually happened, it was tough.

“Molly, I’m afraid I have to make a quick run to the Ministry. I’ll be back before you know I’m even gone.” Arthur walked down the stairs as he spoke to his wife. With a quick kiss on her cheek, he sped off to the first available fireplace.

Mr. and Mrs. Granger were looking more worried and out of place by the second, but rather than ask questions, they remained silent and observed everything going on around them. It had been a big adjustment to their lives when Hermione had received her Hogwarts Letter all those years ago, but that had been nothing compared to the task of pulling completely out of their known world with their younger daughter and fully immersing themselves in their eldest daughter’s world. It was one thing to be supportive; it was another to take part in what they were supporting.

Molly looked over at the couple and decided what she needed more than anything else was to get her mind off of her husband while he was off on another mission for Dumbledore. She knew that Albus would never ask her husband to do anything extremely dangerous, but she also knew that Arthur never had to be asked. He would whisk off to handle any problem without anyone asking, it was his way of keeping the Wizarding World safe for his family. That, Molly knew, was what made Arthur Weasley the good man that he was, and it was one of the reasons she loved him.

“Well, there’s no sense in letting all this ruin our plans to spend a meal together. I’ll just pop down to the kitchen and see what the House Elves can throw together for us.” She smiled warmly at the two couples standing there and sent a concerned glance up to Professor Dumbledore, who nodded his silent thanks in return.

Ron and Hermione lead her parents into the Great Hall holding hands, their spat of a few minutes ago completely forgotten.

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Harry softly caressed the head resting against his chest, combing the thin blonde hair to the side with his fingers. The soft regular breathing he had grown used to over the past few months was calming his worried mind. Whatever had happened earlier with the window still bothered him, and then there was the fact that anyone close to him, Hermione, or Ron were now guests in the castle. He knew that trouble was a constant threat the minute Voldemort had escaped at the end of last year, but now it seemed too real. Before he could almost pretend that nothing was really wrong in the world he lived in. The castle walls that surrounded him were good at lending false hopes that way, but Harry knew that pretending never changed anything.

His quieting mind drifted to the thoughts that had been weighing heavily on his mind for weeks now:

what to do with his newly discovered powers. He could not deny that the thought of destroying Voldemort and Lucius Malfoy with a single thought was a luring one, but he also could not deny that without knowing how it would affect Draco and himself that there was no chance he would use that power.

“Unless possibly dying seems like a better option.” At first, Harry lifted his head to see who had spoken, until he realized it had been him. With all of his heart, Harry hoped that he would never face such a horrible fate that death would seem like a better option.

“Harry?” Draco’s voice was soft, almost like a frightened child’s. “Where. . .where are you?” Harry looked down and saw that Draco’s eyes were still closed, but his face was not holding the elegance of peaceful sleep but a look of fear. His soft, even breathing also had been replaced by a rapid intake of short breaths, as if he were running and searching for someone. “Harry?!”

Taking the pale-skinned shoulder of his lover in hand, Harry gave him a gentle shake and whispered into his ear, “Draco, I’m right here. Wake up, you’re okay.” Draco’s head turned toward Harry’s voice, but still his eyes remained closed.

“Harry? What in the world are you doing over there?” Harry’s face mirrored the inquisitive look on Draco’s, wondering what the boy was seeing in his dream. He didn’t have to wait long though, before Draco’s next words answered his questions. “Is that. . .but Harry, you were only supposed to kill my father and old Voldie. Why did you kill them too? Harry?”

A sickening feeling was beginning to grow inside Harry’s stomach and he was very much done with listening in on Draco’s dreams. He wasn’t sure who was dead in the dream world, and he didn’t care to. Again, he tried to shake Draco awake and whispered in his ear, a little louder than before. Still Draco’s dream continued to play out for him through the boy’s increasingly tense sounding voice and quickening breathing.

“Wait, don’t. . .I thought you loved me. . .Harry, no! NO!” With a final scream, Draco jolted awake and scrambled out of the bed, planting a knee in Harry’s crotch and an elbow or two against his cheek and chin.

“Fuck, Draco! What are you trying to do?!” Harry had a hand on his face and one hovering over his throbbing and still naked scrotum.

“Huh?” Draco stood fully nude beside Harry’s bed, panting and looking more confused than Harry had ever seen him. He looked more lost really, than confused, Harry thought once the pain from Draco waking up was dulling enough for his mind to think. “What happened?”

“You were having a rather nasty dream and assaulted me for trying to wake you up.” Harry’s voice sound more cross than he really was, but still, getting knocked in certain areas always leaves a person in a bad mood.

“I’m. . .sorry. Did I hurt you?” Draco moved quickly back onto the bed and sat next to Harry, pulling his hand away from his face and wincing at the already visible marks he had inflicted. “What was that saying the Muggles have for when you get hurt?”

“You mean, ‘kiss it and make it all better?’”

“Yeah, that’s the one.” Without actually asking the question, Draco leaned over and brushed his lips against the small bruise on Harry’s chin and the one on his cheek. “Where else did I hit you?”

Harry blushed both from desire and a little bit of embarrassment as he pointed to his other injured spot. “You kneed me pretty good.”

With a small smirk and waggle of his eyebrows, Draco laid Harry back on the bed and got on his knees, moving his lips parallel to the quickly growing erection. “Where exactly. . .or did I get the whole area?”

Unable to answer with words, Harry just nodded, despite the fact that it had not been a yes or no question. Draco smirked again at the obvious reaction he was bringing out of Harry and stuck his tongue to run it along the smooth, stretched skin. Harry shivered from the sensation, which only caused Draco to want to do more to the erection against his mouth. He glanced up at Harry and then set to work.

A while later, when the two boys had been spent again, they were lying in the same position as before: Draco was on top of Harry, his head on his chest, with Harry stroking his hair. Only this time, they were both awake and thinking about various things all at once.

“Draco, you still awake?”

“Mmm,” Draco grunted in reply.

“Do you think we’ll get to stay like this forever once Voldemort and your father are dead?”

“Stay like what, in bed all the time and naked? I sure hope so,” Draco teased, even though he knew what Harry meant.

“Do you know how adorable you are when you tease me?” Harry didn’t wait for a response before continuing on. “I meant do you think we’ll stay together and live the rest of our lives together?”

“Oh, well the answer’s the same either way.” Draco really did hope that he and Harry would get the chance to try at forever, and that their forever would be longer than what remained of the year.

“Do you know why I love you?” Harry asked after a few more minutes had passed in silence.

“My amazingly gorgeous package?” Harry giggled in response and playfully slapped Draco on the back of the head.

“Okay, do you know the other reason I love you?”

“Harry, this could go on all day. Seeing as how there are millions of reasons for you to love me, why don’t you just tell me.” Draco smiled into Harry’s chest, placing a lopsided kiss on the warm skin.

“I love you because you are the only person I feel truly and completely safe with.” Draco looked up

into Harry's face, gauging his expression for a joke. Of all the things Harry could have said, that was the last reason Draco would have ever thought. It was also the same exact reason he had fallen in love with Harry to begin with.

"Really? I make you feel that safe?" His voice sounded unconvinced, like he couldn't believe that any would feel that way about him. Being protective of others had never been one of his character strengths, but obviously Harry trusted him enough with his life to feel safest around him.

"Yes, is it really that hard to believe?" Harry stroked the back of his hand along Draco's cheekbone.

"To tell the truth, yes. No one has ever told me they feel safer just having me around. I've been told the opposite plenty. . ." He trailed off into thought, but a few seconds later he looked back into Harry's eyes and whispered, "I feel the same way with you. Like nothing in this world can touch me as long as I have you with me. You're like my guardian angel or something."

They shared another kiss, which quickly deepened with the passions still raging inside them from revealing their love to each other. In a few moments, their bodies were rubbing against each other in rhythm to the kissing. Draco could feel his own reaction to the friction growing against Harry's. He moved down to Harry's neck and had just started kissing his Adam's apple when Harry screamed and clutched at his forehead.

"Harry! What's wrong, did I do something?"

"No, no. You didn't do anything, well anything that wasn't feeling amazing. It's my scar, it's burning." There was a pause and Harry's eyes looked like they were staring off into space for a moment. Harry suddenly flashed back to looking at Draco and climbed off the bed, grabbing what ever clothes were closest and throwing them on. ". . .oh shit."

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Twenty-Five - Setting Into Motion

Draco looked into Harry's eyes and knew that whatever passion they had found just a moment before was now gone, another victim of Voldemort's evil. "What is it, Harry?"

"I'm not sure; it doesn't make sense." Harry stood up and paced the room, a confused scowl on his face. "I saw Mr. Weasley. . .but it couldn't have actually been, he's right down by the Great Hall. Unless. . ."

Draco was getting frustrated with getting nothing but incomplete thoughts, even though a sinking feeling in his stomach told him that he had gotten the gist of what Harry was trying to think out in his mind. "Unless. . ." Draco waved his hand, urging Harry's brain to finish out the thought and confirm what he hoped it would not.

"Unless he's not in the castle and flooed somewhere in the last thirty minutes or so." Harry's words dropped in the silence that engulfed the room. Draco silently cursed the gods that seemed desperate to keep any good from being abundant in his life. Arthur and Molly Weasley had just taken him into their family, and he did not like the thought of that family already being lessened in number by Voldemort. There had to be a limit on the number of families someone could lose to Dark Magic.

"Like if Dumbledore asked him to take care of something while he was dealing with the window problem."

"Yeah, something like that." Harry looked into Draco's eyes. "I think we had better find out where everyone is at, because I just witnessed what looked like the actual death or the future death of someone I don't plan on losing just yet."

Harry and Draco quickly made their way out of Gryffindor Tower, in hopes of finding Professor Dumbledore and having him tell them everything was okay. Draco forgot any thoughts about what he had wanted to do with a naked Harry by the time they had reached the first flight of stairs.

"Gentlemen?" They came to a skidding halt by the familiar voice coming down a side passage. "Why is it that every time I see any of you four in a hurry, I worry about the few friends I have left." James had not asked a question, but stated an observation he had made recently. Harry and his friends were never running just for the hell of it, no, there was always some urgent reason for them dashing through the halls of Hogwarts.

"We have to find dad," Draco explained, catching the look of confusion on James' face. "Mr. Weasley, I mean, not my father. Harry had another one of those freaky Voldemort insights," Draco threw over his shoulder, not slowing down at all. The body of Remus J. Lupin was built for speed, so he had no trouble falling into pace with the running teens.

"Arthur again? How is it that one man has such a propensity for being in the wrong places at the worst times." Harry winced at the memory that his father's words brought to his mind. He just hoped that this time nothing turned out worse than it had before. Arthur had just barely survived that encounter and, somehow, Harry doubted Voldemort made a habit of not getting the job done

right by the second time.

“I just hope Voldemort’s as good at actually killing one of the Order as he is with rising back into power. With that we had at least three or four chances to stop him before he actually got it accomplished.” No one smiled at the joke, nor did they take Harry’s words as one. No more words were spoken as the three continued flying down the halls of Hogwarts towards the Great Hall.

The last staircase was barely even touched, taking three to four steps with each stride, they burst into the Great Hall, after not seeing anyone near the main doors.

“My goodness, Harry, what is it?”

“Molly, where’s Arthur?” James allowed a small bit of relief spread through him upon seeing Mrs. Weasley still in the castle. However, it was quickly dashed when she looked worriedly at him.

“Albus sent him off on some business for the Order, why. . .” The three sets of eyes that met her then, answered her fears with the pity and hopelessness she saw there. “What’s happened?”

“Harry saw him again, like the last time he nearly got himself killed.” The words hung in the air, sinking slowly into everyone’s mind. Molly’s hands went to her mouth and tears sprang to her eyes. Both Ron and Draco instantly took a comforting place at her side, showing her without words, that they were there for her. Draco wanted to tell her that everything would be alright soon, but he knew that it would sound as much like a lie to her as it felt to him.

Hermione sat down between her mother and father, letting them both embrace their now stunned looking daughter. For a brief moment, she thought about being strong, but she decided that she was tired of putting up a brave front for anyone or any reason. She was tired of not breaking down into tears the moment something went wrong, and so that was what she did. Burying her head into her mother’s shoulder, Hermione gave into the weeks of despair and pain, and just cried.

Harry and James Potter remained standing, watching the rest of the group dissolve under what appeared to be the breaking point for them all. After months of dealing bravely with the very real prospects of death and impending doom, even the strongest woman any of them knew was not much more than a bawling wreck in the arms of her son and ‘adopted’ son. Harry looked over at his father, as if asking permission to do the same as his friends. At that moment, Harry James Potter wanted nothing more than to hug his dad and cry into the man’s chest. Seeming to read Harry’s mind, James silently pulled him into an embrace and clutched his son firmly against him. For long minutes, everyone remained as they were: Hermione sandwiched between her parents, Ron and Draco draped around Mrs. Weasley, and James holding his shaking child in the exact position they had been standing in when their hug had begun.

Albus Dumbledore watched them all share a moment of grief from just outside the massive doors that lead into the Great Hall. He had heard James tell Molly what Harry had seen and had instantly conversed with the Order by way of handily placed portraits. Despite the fact that help was already on the way, the old wizard knew there was nothing good he could do by disturbing the fragile state his friends were in until he had definite news for them.

He quietly turned around and headed towards the dungeons. He still had some questions to work

out about the earlier incident by the window, and now suspected that it was no coincidence that Arthur had encountered trouble. He only hoped that he had not sent more friends into a trap and their deaths. He arrived in the Slytherin Common Room unnoticed and slipped into a corner to observe what he had unknowingly walked in on.

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“He is still too powerful, Lucius. I agree that he must be removed and done away with, and that you would be a much more effective leader; but I won’t risk my neck until I know I’ll get it back attached to my head. After what happened to Crabbe, you can not blame me for being extremely cautious.”

“I hate to point this out to you, again, but as far as our precious Lord knows, you are already dead.” Lucius sneered at the man’s head in the fire. “The time, Zabini, has already passed for idle talk and mindless worries. Voldemort has prevented me from claiming what should be mine for the last time. Just remember this: I will reward in the future in direct correlation to how much you give in the present.”

With a frown, the other man’s head disappeared, leaving a crackling fire in its place. The damp, cold stone that surrounded Lucius Malfoy on every side, seemed immune to any warmth at all. Their current headquarters was little more than a series of holes with tunnels connecting them underground. It had been the most miserable number of weeks Lucius had ever been forced to endure. Even his hatred for his son and the boy’s lover started to pale in comparison with his hatred for what literally amounted to a Hell hole.

Before he could sulk any further on the current state of things, and how unjust it was for him, Voldemort strode into the room with a disgustingly ugly grin on his face. “Lucius, I know how we are going to get them all. We will pull them out of their hiding places in small numbers.”

“We’ve tried that before, my Lord. It did not work. We only succeeded in getting them all united and safely together.” Lucius knew that he had not done well at keeping all the tired annoyance from his voice, but he was really getting to where he did not care much what the Dark Lord thought of his attitude.

“Careful, Lucius. I might start to think your hopes of ruling instead of me are leading you to out right rebellion.” The cold tone in which the words were spoken left no doubts in Lucius’ mind that Voldemort knew something of his plans, but years of practiced subterfuge allowed him to keep a straight face and not react in any outward way to what his master had just eluded.

“Your forgiveness, but I am just growing weary from being here and not being able to act upon our plans yet. I want Potter and my son dead as soon as possible, and it galls me to think of them in their comfortable castle while I suffer in this pit.”

“I understand, Lucius, I understand all too well.” Lucius hoped that what he understood had nothing to do with the plans to have him replaced. “But as I was saying. . .”

Lucius sat fully up in his seat and turned his full attention to the snake in robes standing next to him. “How do we get them separated and away from the castle.”

“We start causing small problems for Dumbledore, tying him up at Hogwarts while he sends that boob, Weasley, to the Ministry where we will be waiting for him to go and cry foul. Once we have Weasley, we can pick off their rescuers one at a time.”

To Lucius, it sounded a lot like the plan that had ended so badly less than half a year ago, but he nodded his head and pretended to think out the plan more thoroughly for a few moments. This would speed things up, and he was getting very impatient. Also, if they did manage to capture Arthur Weasley, then he would have a way to pass the time.

“May I be the one to bring in Weasley, my Lord?”

“Of course. But first you must create some sort of easily dealt with, yet time consuming, annoyance for Dumbledore.” It took less than a minute for Malfoy to come up with a brilliant plan, or so he thought.

“Already taken care of. When do we put this into action?”

“Immediately.”

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Arthur Weasley walked out of the Leaky Cauldron and apparated immediately. When he reappeared with a small pop outside of the phone booth that would let him in to the Ministry, he found that it was already occupied. He strode quickly up to it and knocked on the glass. “I don’t mean to be rude. . .”

“Looks as though my son taught you some manners, Arthur.” Before he could react to having Lucius turning to face him through the glass, he heard a curse being called out from behind him and he was staring at the empty sidewalk just before blacking out.

When he woke up, Arthur looked around the small room and slowly let memory fill in the holes for him. He reached out his hand to steady himself as he stood up and found that the walls were made completely out of dirt. He also noticed that there was no door anywhere in the room to have let him in, so his mind immediately pulled his head back so he could look up. He found the source of the light in the room and felt his hopes for an easy escape vanish when he figured the light fixture was a good thirty feet above him.

“Well, I’m sure others have been in worse and gotten out,” He mumbled to himself before sitting down to let the headache from being cursed wear off completely. A shadow fell over him and pulled his attention back up to the opening of his prison hole.

“Well, good morning, Arthur.” He was really starting to hate the way the other man said his name. “I have some company for you.” Lucius pushed a bundle at his feet into the pit and turned away without watching it fall. Arthur jumped up to try and catch the falling form before it hit the ground much harder than it needed to, but realized it was not needed when the body was slowed as it fell.

After the person had been placed roughly on the ground, he walked over to see who else was unfortunate enough to be here. The bundle grumbled and sat up, looking back at him with one eye.

“Moody?”

“Yep, it’s me. Bastards cursed me good and took my eye out. I knew they were always ‘fraid of it, but really, they could have left it in so I could see proper.”

Arthur helped him into a sitting position and sat next to him. “I didn’t think getting out of here would be too bad a problem, but whatever slowed you down and kept you from smacking this ground hard, will probably keep us from climbing very high.”

“Well, wouldn’t’ve helped too much anyhow. There’s more Death Eaters walking around up there than I could fight, even with my wand.”

They both fell into silence, trying to figure out just what they were going to do. Finally, Arthur looked over at Alastor and asked him something that had just occurred to him. “I thought you were supposed to be at headquarters; why are you here too?”

“Dumbledore sent a few of us to see if we could help you out any. But they were waiting for us too, just as I ‘spect they were for you.”

“How many others are here too?” Arthur did not like the idea that more of his friends were suffering this same experience simply because they had come to his aid.

“None.” By the sadness in the older man’s voice, Arthur knew the reason that only the two of them were in the pit, and that there were no other pits holding friends. At least not the type of pits that do not come equipped with a headstone.

“Who else?” He barely was able to choke the words out around a sudden wave of tears and nausea.

After a few moments he wondered if the other wizard had even heard his question, but the silence was broken a few seconds later with the list of the newly dead. “Did you ever meet those four Aurors who joined a few months back?”

Arthur vaguely remembered thinking they were younger than most of his children. “Fine group of youngsters, just graduated a few years ago. Same year as Percy, I believe.”

“Yeah, they were the ones. You know, they could out hex any Auror I ever knew, even me, but no one can fight that many Death Eaters at once. No one.” They were engulfed again in silence after Mad-Eye added, “At least I was dropped early and didn’t have to watch them die, I’ve got enough of those memories as it is.”

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“You honestly can’t expect us to just sit here and do absolutely nothing, do you?!”

“Calm down, James, I am suggesting that we take some time to organize a sizeable force before running in with wands blazing, so to speak. I have never left a friend, nor anyone for that matter, in danger without trying to offer help. We will not leave Arthur, Alastor, and those four others who went to help, in the hands of Voldemort.”

The Headmaster's office was filled with bodies, all standing as the chairs had to be removed for everyone to fit. Harry, Draco, Hermione, Ron and Mrs. Weasley were standing out of the way, watching as the crowded room debated over what to do next. Most of the actual talking was coming from Dumbledore, James, Sirius (who was hovering next to James and causing more than a few members of the Order to feel like they had been doused in cold water) and Snape.

"I hate to point this out, but Potter's vision did not lend to the hope of them being alive. I can not see the value of risking anyone until we know for certain there is someone to rescue." Snape's tone made it sound doubtful that he really had hated pointing that fact out to everyone present.

"Severus. . ."

"Wait, Professor, you just did something that sent chills all over my body." Everyone's attention was pulled to a shorter man standing in the middle of the group with graying hair and an oddly shaped mustache that nearly touched his chest it was so long. "You just slipped and called Remus, James. I understand the ease of such a thing as they were all so close, but on a night like tonight I could have done without remembering those already lost."

Snape snorted and rolled his eyes, but most of the other people in the room slowly turned their gaze towards the body of Remus Lupin, who was quickly turning very red and avoiding eye contact with any of the suspicious sets of eyes now staring at him. His eyes sadly moved to Harry's, as if apologizing, before he cleared his throat to speak.

"It was no slip. Without getting into details, because there is precious little time for it, Remus and I exchanged bodies the night Voldemort took away everything I was living for." He kept his eyes on Harry the entire time he'd spoke, knowing that there was no longer a chance of keeping Harry safe from having to use his power. Every single person in the room knew of it, and more than a few had supported the use of it.

"Then there's no problem at all is there? With you still alive, Harry can just will this all away and it's done with." The same wizard spoke up from the center of the room again.

"Such a thing is completely out of the question. It is for that exact reason that James remained hidden all these years in the body of his friend. No matter how alluring such a weapon is to have, the consequences are dreadful. Even in the hands of good men, and being used for just purposes, super weapons are not something to be used casually, nor often."

"Professor," Harry spoke for the first time and strode forward, moving his way through the crowd. "We were planning on working out the details for such an attack eventually, but now the need is even greater. I know of the consequences, and I also know of what the Runes promise. Arthur and Molly have been the parents I was deprived of from the minute I met them both, and I will do whatever I must to save him."

Dumbledore sighed heavily and sat down in his chair. He spoke in barely a whisper, but there was not a single sound in the room from anyone. "Harry, there still remain other means of saving our friends. I am awaiting word from one of our operatives on the condition of the captives and the location where they are being held."

Even Snape seemed taken aback by this revelation and the rest of the room felt their awe of the old wizard grow even more. Draco choose this moment to speak and walked to join Harry where he was standing.

“While that’s all well and good, we should seize this moment while we still can. The fact that Harry’s father is still alive will be common knowledge by the end of the week and we will have lost the greatest advantage we had - surprise.”

“Are you suggesting that there’s a leak in this room boy? That’s a fair thing for a Malfoy to say! I for one don’t remember voting on allowing you into any secret Order meetings anyway.” Harry turned quickly and sent a hard glare at the wizard who had just spoken.

“Well I don’t remember anyone asking to hear from any of you fools! Draco is here because I am here. You got a problem with that, then go!” Half the faces in the room looked quizzically over at the two boys who were now holding hands, and the other half already looked as if they’d made up their minds and were no fans of what they were seeing.

“Obviously he has been a good influence on you.”

“Obviously, the pros and cons of the relationship between Mr. Potter and Mr. Malfoy is not the reason we are all here tonight. I suggest we remain on topic and decide how we plan to proceed.” Snape looked about as happy to stand up for the boys as he would be to dance the Macarena during Potion’s class.

“Severus is right, even though I hate to say that,” Sirius spoke up. “Although, for the record, I can attest for young Mr. Malfoy here, and say that he is no leak or enemy.” He smiled over at Harry and Draco before continuing. “Now, if I know Professor Dumbledore at all, he is waiting patiently for the rest of us to shut the hell up so he can talk.”

“Thank you, Sirius, though that is not quite the way I would have put it.” His smile was warm and the faintest hint of the familiar twinkle flittered across his eyes. “While you were all debating, Professor Wonkleby arrived back in his frame with word from our operative.”

Everyone in the room began looking around at all the paintings in the room, searching for whoever in the world Professor Wonkleby was. When the man in the picture began talking, they allowed their ears to direct their eyes to a painting of an Irish looking man, who was bent over and clutching his knees, trying to catch his breath.

“Give me just a second more, fellows.” Harry was reminded of all the leprechauns he had ever seen on TV, not the actual ones he had seen the previous year at the Quidditch World Cup, although his accent was hardly distinguishable as he spoke. Harry supposed it was do to the fact that he was a Professor and not a fictional character. “According to my nephew, there are six of 'em being held in Voldemort’s underground lair, although four of 'em appear to be past the point of healing.” There were a few gasps in the room, and a loud sob from the corner where Molly was crying fresh tears into Ron’s shoulder.

“And just where is this lair?”

“Have patience my greasy-haired friend, I was getting to that. Takes awhile to catch my breath anymore, after such a good jog as that one.” Snape glared at the portrait, ignoring the snickers coming from Harry and Draco, along with a few others around the room. “He says that he can’t be exactly sure where the place is, due to the fact that he was apparated there, but he heard a fellow named Lucius Malfoy say in passing that ‘a Malfoy. . .’”

“Is never driven far from home,” Draco finished for the man.

“So you’ve heard it before, then? Seemed down right strange to me, talking about himself in the third person and all, but to each his own, I suppose. . .” The rest of what the portrait said was lost in the renewed arguments over what to do. Although now, most seemed keen on the prospect of having Harry waltz up to the door and wish all their enemies away.

After about an hour, most wizards in the room had been swayed to the idea of Harry leading their attack and using whatever powers he had to finish off the threat of Voldemort and his followers once and forever. A few hold outs, lead by Professor Snape and the newly revealed James Potter, watched their argument being lost as more and more members of the Order decided that a final, end all fight, was their best option.

“Everyone please listen!” The room fell instantly silent for Dumbledore to continue. “I will not stand in the way of Harry, if he chooses to go through with this course of action, but I will caution you all to think hard before you set these events into motion and there is no turning back. Voldemort was waiting for Arthur and the others we sent, it is very plausible he will be waiting with more traps for you once you arrive. There is also the possibility that whatever prevented him from dying before could still be a lingering problem. There are still too many unknowns for this to be the best course of action. ”

“We understand, Albus, and we don’t like the idea of placing Harry in this situation. He will suffer the worst out of us all, and that I would wish upon no one. To have the faces of those killed forever ingrained on his memory is a horrible price to pay, no one’s arguing with that.”

“But we are all tired of remembering our loved ones, and not living with them.” The two wizards looked as beaten and tired with fighting as their words had sounded. There was something in what the second one had said that did not sit well with Draco though, something that began to nag him and forced all of his concentration away from those around him.

After a few more minutes, the realization of what it was sunk deep into his stomach and caused him to swallow against the desire to vomit right where he stood. He’d heard that exact phrase before, spoken in the same exact voice. He desperately searched his mind to try and remember just where it had been, but it was all blurry as if it had been in a dream.

Draco gasped and grabbed Harry’s arm. “Harry! We. . .we can’t. . .it’s just like in my dream!”

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Twenty-Six - Resolution And Revolt

Harry stood inches from the old wooden door which Draco recognized instantly from years spent exploring the Manor and all the lands surrounding it. He looked over into his lover's eyes and silently asked a question for reassurance.

"I'm sure this is the place, Harry. There are all kinds of store rooms and connecting tunnels that run underneath where we are standing even. Father told me they were once used, generations ago, by some uncle of mine for some reason or another." Harry smirked slightly at him. "Details aren't important at the moment, the point is : I'm sure they've buried themselves down there."

"We are all tired of remembering our loved ones, and not living with them. Let's end this once and for all." The eyes that fixed on the wizard who spoke were devoid of the love they had held just seconds before. A cold determination settled into Harry and he turned to embrace the destiny that seemed so willing to dance.

Harry brushed the back of his hand across Draco's cheek and slipped the door open, sliding through before Draco had drawn a shaky, passion-filled breath. Fifteen or so steps in and the door was closed behind them, plunging them and the rest of their advance group into a near total darkness.

"Bloody Hell, it's dark in here. Can anyone actually see where they're walking, cause I can't." Harry shushed his best friend and Draco held back a snicker at Ron's unending ability to be belligerently entertaining, no matter what the surroundings. He reached out into the darkness and took Harry's hand.

"Don't you dare try to lose me in here, Potter. I do not like wandering alone in the dark." Draco knew there was a small smile spreading across the face in front of him, even though darkness prevented him from seeing it.

"Now why on earth would anyone want to lose you?" Draco smiled at the whispered reply, but made no other response. After a few minutes of walking slowly, to avoid running into anything head on, Harry stopped walking and squeezed Draco's hand in his. "I've found another door."

"Let us hope that Death Eaters use lights at least somewhere down here. It's not bad enough we've all come under ground to hunt a snake, but we can't see a damned thing." Draco was not sure who had spoken, but he found himself hoping the same.

Harry pulled at the door, but after a few unsuccessful pulls, he sighed and turned his face into Draco's and whispered against the boy's cheek. "I think I'll need both hands for this." Draco realized how tightly he had been gripping Harry's hand and released while placing a soft kiss on Harry's cheek.

He heard the sound of Harry pulling on the handle again and felt the rush of cold air that poured through as the door swung open, as silent as the darkness around them. He waited a few breaths for Harry to retake his hand, but was only rewarded with the sound of footsteps on hard stone

flooring. Rolling his eyes, Draco followed Harry through the door, aware of the sounds of Ron, Hermione, and the others following in his steps.

He reached out his hand in hopes of finding Harry again and walked twenty or so paces before being filled with the fear that he was lost. There were no longer any sounds of walking echoing off the walls, and as Draco's ears strained for any noise at all, his beating heart was all that was audible. He slowly spun in circles, arms outstretched, desperate to find anyone at all, but wishing for all the world it was Harry his fingers were brushing against instead of the cold air. "Harry. . .where, where are you?"

He was spun to a stand still, staring into the darkness by a quick flash of light. Before he could wonder what it had been and if it had really been there, a bright flash lit the room again, like lightning when a storm is approaching. He began to cautiously walk towards the origin of the flash and was brought into as fast a run as the darkness allowed by the images the next flash drilled into his light deprived eyes.

"Harry?!"

Just before skidding to a stop in front of the scene before him, Draco could not shake the feeling that he had already played through this scene. But his mind was silenced from thinking about anything else the minute his eyes fell upon the worst image imaginable: Harry, standing over the twitching bodies of his two best friends.

"Is that. . .but Harry, you were only supposed to kill my father and old Voldie. Why did you kill them too? Harry?" He found that he was able to see quite easily all of a sudden, but the look in the eyes of the boy he loved drove any such thoughts from his mind and he did not even question how such a thing was possible.

Draco returned the evil glare with a look of confusion as he watched Harry's outstretched arm turn from his friends and onto Draco. "Wait, don't. . .I thought you loved me. . .Harry, no! NO!"

Draco opened his eyes to find himself standing next to Harry's bed and was lost and confused for a few moments until Harry's voice brought recognition and memory flooding back into his mind.

"You had the same dream again." It was not a question, and Draco did not answer. He only walked across the cold floor and crawled back into bed. "That's twice in a row. As much crap as I think Divination is, there is something definitely not good about you having the same dream just before we actually go and place ourselves where the dream takes place."

"You really think Divination is crap? Even after all that happened last year at the Ministry and everything?" Draco choose to avoid talking about the dream in any way for as long as he could. "Voldemort sure puts a lot of trust in it."

"And that's all the reason I need to keep clear of it." Harry wanted to ask more about the dream, but let Draco dodge the subject for the moment.

"What a horribly ignorant reason. Voldemort likes a lot of things, are you going to hate them all for that reason alone? He always loved talking about Quidditch, I suppose you would never give that up

for any reason.”

“Hey, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to offend you or anything. Merlin, the way you reacted there might make someone think you have a thing for Professor Trewellany.” Harry sent a playful grin with his words and barely managed to dodge the pillow that swung at his head. Draco pushed him to the bed and pinned him, placing all of his weight on Harry.

“That is the most. . .I can’t even think of a word to describe how disgusting that is.” He lowered his face to within inches of Harry’s. “Take it back, or else.”

“I think I’ll see what ‘else’ will get me.” Draco rolled his eyes and scoffed flirtingly at Harry, before closing the last few inches and taking Harry’s lips into a desperate, passionate kiss. Harry returned the kiss almost instantly and began rising from the bed to move on top of Draco instead of how it was at the moment.

“Don’t even think about it.” Draco pinned Harry’s shoulders back to the bed and kissed him hard on the lips to stop any objections Harry may have had. “We are doing this my way, in my time. Got that?” Harry smiled, but nodded submissively to the blonde forcing him against the bed.

“Not to interrupt this wonderfully, sexually frustrated moment, but. . .curtains are a roommates best friend.”

Harry giggled and Draco smirked over at the bunk beds. “Did you get off already, Seamus? I would have thought it would take longer than that to be bored with watching us.”

“Well, not all of us get the regular pleasure of a boy toy.” Seamus paced across the room and pulled the curtains shut himself. Just before shutting them completely, he stuck his wand in between the fabric and muttered a charm.

He heard the muffled curses until he cast the silence charms and the locking charms. If Draco wanted revenge for having a cold shower in bed, he would have to wait until morning when Seamus released the charm himself.

“Goodnight, sex fanatics,” he mumbled under his breath as he crawled back up into bed. Despite the worries of what was to come tomorrow when they set their newly developed plans into motion, Seamus found it more than easy to fall asleep. Even the deepest worries can not keep an exhausted mind from greedily finding sleep after it’s been denied rest for a few days.

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James Potter paced back and forth across the floor of his office, clearly upset over the night’s events. Not only was his stride angry, but his words were none too kind either, especially in regards to a few certain members of the Order of the Phoenix.

“Did you hear those bastards? Don’t even say welcome back or anything, nope, first thing out of their mouths is to state the fact that now we can use Harry as the weapon he was born to be.” He looked over at his slightly glowing companion and best friend, Sirius Black. “Thank you for sticking by me, by the way. But tell me, am I wrong to be against this?”

“James. . .” The ghost sighed heavily and thought about his answer. Truth was, he was not completely sure who was right in this matter, but if James was only against it for the safety of his son, then that was reason enough for him to oppose nearly anything. “I just don’t know, honestly. What I do know, as well as you, is that regardless of our feelings, or anyone else’s, Harry is going to do what he feels is the right thing to do.”

“And he thinks killing Voldemort and Malfoy is the answer to all our problems.” James stared at the wall for a moment. “I don’t suppose this would be the ideal time to start grounding him, huh?”

Sirius grinned at his friend. “Only if you want him to sneak off with his dorm mates and try to do this on his own. I would recommend against that, seeing as how it turned out so nicely before.”

“That’s my boy.” James sat down defeated in his chair and turned his gaze out the window to watch the start of a beautiful dawn, bringing in what could possibly be the last day he had to spend with his son. “I just wish he’d taken more after Lily than me.”

“And you think she wouldn’t take every opportunity to destroy Voldemort? James, we both loved her and knew her well enough to know that is not the way she would have handled anything. When did Lilly Evans ever back away from what she knew to be the just and right thing? Harry took after her more than you are willing to see.” Sirius had risen into the air while he had been talking. Even without the obvious signs of strong emotions, James would never have disagreed with his friend, especially when he was only repeating some of the things that his own mind was throwing around.

“Sirius, how could I ever make it without you to make me think straight?”

“I suspect you’d end up wandering the Wizarding world alone, much like the last time you had to face life without me.” Sirius smiled again at his friend, thankful to see him somewhat joking again.

“So I guess it’s time for the Potters to save the world, again.”

“Naturally. But first I would say today would be a great one to spend with your son.” James nodded his agreement and stood up from behind his desk. It was the perfect day for just such a thing. What else, other than impending battle, ever gave a father a good excuse to spend quality time with his newly reunited son.

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Arthur gazed back into the cold gray stare that was trying to bore into the depths of his mind. “Sorry, Malfoy, but it’s like I told you to begin with: I don’t sell out my friends for anything, even life.”

“Especially when that means we’d only have to look at your ugly face for longer than we’ve already had to endure. Are you really so short-handed that you couldn’t let a more agreeable looking minion torture us endlessly?” Arthur began laughing out loud as Moody spoke, making it clear that neither had been brought anywhere near a breaking point, at least not the point Lucius was hoping for.

Lucius Malfoy hid his extreme anger behind a smirk, the type of smirk that seems to say ‘I know something you do not’. “Very well, I see that you fools prefer to do things the hard way. Fortunately,

we have more than enough means at our disposal to make this as hard and painful as possible. We will see who is laughing in the end!”

With a quick kick at Mad-Eye’s already severely wounded chest, Lucius Malfoy strode from the room with his head held at a slant, apparently for the sole purpose of raising his nose into the air. “Someday I’m going to knock that cocky little strut of his clean out of him, and I’m going to do it with my bare hands.” Moody grinned at the look he received from Arthur. “That way I can enjoy it more.”

After a few moments passed and it appeared they would be alone for at least a while, Arthur turned again to face Moody. “Well, at least we are out of that hole in the ground. Granted this entire place seems to be underground, but it’s definitely nice to have an actual chair to sit in for awhile.”

“There’s the spirit. No point in finding anything but the positive in a completely hopeless situation as this.” Arthur was not sure if the older man was being sarcastic or not, so let the silence settle back down on them for a long stretch of time. Eventually the silence was broken, but only by Mad-Eye’s snoring.

Hours stretched for what seemed like days until finally Lucius Malfoy returned to the room. This time, however, he was not alone. Any emotions left inside of Arthur were brought to a boiling point in a quick flash as soon as he registered what he was seeing.

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Harry laid in bed, staring out the window as the sun broke over the horizon. He absent mindedly stroked the soft blonde hair on his chest, barely even aware that Draco was asleep on top of him. As the sun crept higher into the sky, Harry’s anxiety and fear began to overwhelm him, like a returning tide.

“Where’s your mind, mate?” Harry looked over at Ron, who was holding Hermione in a similar position as he was Draco in the bed next to his. “You looked about a thousand miles away.”

“I wish I was. I wish we all were, really.” Harry returned his gaze out the window. “Then we would never have to worry about Dark Wizards or any of their plays for power.”

“You really think it would be that easy?” Harry jumped slightly to hear Draco speak. “They would hunt us down, no matter where we went, you know that.”

“Yeah, but it was nice to pretend for a few seconds.” Harry let silence blanket the room, not really in the mood to get into an argument or even a simple discussion. Draco’s breathing even backed out after a while and Harry felt himself beginning to drift back into a restless sleep.

“Harry? You asleep?”

“Almost, Ron.” Harry knew that would be heard as only a simple yes by his best friend and waited for him to continue with what he was thinking about.

“Do you really think that we can end this whole war just by killing Vol. . .Vol. . .You know who? I mean, it didn’t help before when he was defeated, people were still using dark magic in his name.”

“I really don’t know, Ron, but a world without Voldemort or Lucius Malfoy is a better one. That I do know for sure.” Harry could feel the resolution building inside him, along with his anxiety and fear. A few minutes passed again in silence before Ron asked another question, the one question Harry was not sure he wanted to answer.

“Are you scared?” Harry let the words fade into the crushing silence before opening his mouth a few times to try to answer. “Don’t answer that Harry, I’m scared out of my mind, so I’ll just keep with the thought that I’m not the only one.”

Harry smiled over at his friend and laughed silently. In that moment Harry Potter knew that even with all the fears welling up inside him, it would be nothing when faced with the united courage of him and his friends, even if they were all scared senseless by the thought of what they were going to attempt that night. He also realized what it was he was fighting for: moments like this. Simple moments spent talking with a friend, moments spent holding the person you loved, moments spent dreaming of a life without war, without pain, without loss. All these moments and dreams were worth fighting for, at least Harry decided so laying underneath the boy he loved, talking to his best friend.

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Albus Dumbledore paced his office, thinking heavily upon the decisions that had been made in his office. Not just those in the last few hours, but every single decision made over the years. He still remembered easily the moment James and Lily came asking for his help, the time Severus confessed to being an agent of Voldemort and offering his services against him. So many life changing decisions had been made by so many people. There were countless other memories floating through the old wizard’s brain at that moment, but the three that kept haunting him involved one person, or rather affected him directly.

Harry James Potter’s life had been shaped by many decisions made while pacing the same route Dumbledore was following around his office. The three that stood out the most prominent were the reason they were all standing in the positions they were now. He had decided to confront James about using Harry’s powers, forcing James to hide for years after Voldemort tried to kill his entire family. It was he who had decided to keep Harry protected from any involvement in the Wizarding world, allowing Harry to grow up more altruistic than any young man Albus had ever met. It had been he that encouraged Harry over the years to fight Voldemort, and now Harry had decided to do just that very thing.

Professor Dumbledore felt the warm tear slide down his cheek to be absorbed by his beard. He had spent too many hours mourning in this office as well, it was not something he wanted to do anymore. Albus Dumbledore, the greatest wizard of his age, made another possible life altering decision in that moment. He would not allow Harry to weigh his mind down further with any memories of the dead, he would kill Voldemort himself or die trying, the time was long over due.

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“Dobby, are you out of your mind? House elves do not do battle with wizards, no matter what the reason.”

“Dobby knows this, but Lucius Malfoy deserves death for all he has done to Dobby and his friends. Harry Potter never hurt a soul, not a single one, but he has been made to suffer. It is time one of us reminded these dark wizards just how much magic house elves don't use on their families. Perhaps Dobby could even start a House Elf war against the terrible things these bad wizards make happen.”

Dobby smiled warmly at his fellow house elves before turning on his heel and snapping his fingers to disappear from the kitchen and reappear outside of the statue that led to Dumbledore's office. He felt years of vicious treatment building inside him to form a very resolute desire for vengeance.

“Harry Potter has helped Dobby many times, so now Dobby will help him. Dobby will kill Lucius Malfoy. Dobby will do it for Harry Potter, and for every house elf that has been hurt by him and his Dark Lord. Dobby will do this because Dobby is free!”

VvVvV

“Albus, I don't even know where to begin to point out all of the things wrong with this idea.” James shook his head, having just heard Dumbledore's plans to rid the world of Voldemort himself. “But, the easiest one is the prophecy. Harry's whole life, and the hope of everyone frightened by the name Voldemort, has been built on the idea that he alone can fulfill it.”

“That is my point exactly, my old friend. It is this damned prophecy that has prevented Voldemort from meeting his end sooner.” James, having never heard Dumbledore swear, was shocked into silently listening. “When Voldemort and myself were dueling in the Ministry of Magic, I hesitated for a fraction of a second from finishing him, simply because my brain asked about the fulfillment of the prophecy. If I killed Voldemort, how in the world was Harry ever going to do what was foretold? It was that brief pause that allowed Lord Voldemort to escape. I can not let any such thinking allow him to survive any longer.”

The room drifted in to silence that remained unbroken for several minutes, until Professor McGonagall spoke quietly from her seat next to James. “What exactly do you plan to do, Albus? Knock politely on Voldemort's door and curse him to next year when he answers?”

A small amount of twinkle flared in his eyes in response, it was the only hint of amusement though, for his voice held nothing but determined sadness when he answered her question. “I'm not sure, but I do know that I am getting far too old for wars and Dark Lords and the worry of my friends dying for a cause and not because they lived full lives and were simply ready to take on the next adventure.” Dumbledore looked up into his friends' eyes and smiled at the concern and understanding he found coming from them both. “But don't worry, I'm not going to go in search of trouble, for I fear that it will come knocking before I have a chance anyway.”

“Do you think Voldemort will risk any more attacks on the school? His assassins worked out so well.” Despite his sarcasm, James Potter was very unnerved by the idea of being attacked before they were ready. “Speaking of which, how can we be sure that we closed every opening into the school. Between the Marauder's Map and the Weasley twins, we only knew of a total of five. And there have to be others, just think of what Harry found in his second year. If an entire chamber like that could remain hidden, there's bound to be many other secrets to this castle.”

“I have no doubts that if we fail to kill Voldemort in our attack tonight, that we will be sparking full on war between the Death Eaters and the Order of the Phoenix. I only hope the ministry is quick to act with us.” Dumbledore steepled his fingers and rested his forehead on the highest point. He had yet to have slept since the meetings for the night before and it clearly showed on his face. “And yes, there are still many secrets to this castle, but I am confident that no one in recent history knew it as well as you or Fred and George. If they could not find it, I doubt seriously anyone else would even know where to begin searching.”

“Albus, you should rest. You will only cause me to worry more for you if you go out to fight and you are already exhausted. Especially since you have decided to take on the only wizard you have ever conceded the possibility of losing to.”

The old wizard nodded wearily to the severe expression on the witch's face. “I am going to rest shortly, once I have received word from our contacts in the Ministry and know how much support to count on being offered by them tonight.”

“I honestly still think it is a bad idea. Suppose you get too close to Voldemort for Harry to use his powers on him without hurting you. Suppose he accidentally kills you in the process, unknowingly. Do you think Harry's mental state would be any better if he loses you in the process of killing Voldemort?” Dumbledore saw very easily the fear that resided in the mind of his friend for his son. He also knew first hand the passion the man would protect the child with, it was no easy thing to walk away from the only living connection to the past.

“James, I did not expect you to like this idea, only to support me in it. When it comes to the battle tonight, I need you to try and at least allow me the chance at Voldemort. I, like the rest of the Wizarding world, have spent too many years waiting on prophecies, and not near enough of those years taking action against the evil that has risen.” The two men locked eyes and seemed to share an argument of wills, rather than waste time with more words that would only say the same things.

“Fine, if that's what you are sure you want, then I know I could never stop you from it anyway. It's not like anyone ever makes it a habit of listening to me. Why would you be the one to start?” James threw his hands in to the air in defeat. “Now, if that's all, I plan on wasting the entire day with my son and his boyfriend.”

James stood up and nodded his farewells to the two others in the room and left promptly. “You know he will never let you out of his sight and that he will do his best to ensure Harry's given a chance to rid us of these blasted dark times. His love for the boy is the only thing stronger than his respect and admiration for you, but given the circumstances, he can not help but be more confident in his chances of getting Harry back, as opposed to you, in a fight with Voldemort.”

Dumbledore nodded his agreement with his old friend. “Yes, but I am counting on his instinct over powering his strategic thinking. He spent fifteen years struggling to survive, just to allow Harry a chance at living. I do not think he will easily let his son take on the burden the boy seems so willing to carry on his own. However it works out, let us hope that tonight is the last any of us have to spend in fear.”

“Just be careful, Albus. If something were to happen to you or Harry, or even both, I doubt even having the threat of Voldemort gone would seem worth the price.” Minerva returned the gaze,

without offering a single flinch. “You know my fears are well grounded. We still do not know what will happen if and when Harry uses his added powers. You can not blame me for worrying.”

“No, I can not. But I can be grateful in the knowledge that someone is always looking out for my well-being.” He smiled this time as the familiar twinkle lit up his gaze. He even somehow managed to keep the smile on his face until Professor McGonagall had left his office, leaving him alone once more with his thoughts.

He had just decided to rest and learn of the Ministries willingness, or lack there of, when he woke later, when his door was flung opened by the huge form of Hagrid walking swiftly inside.

“Sorry ‘bout that. Door’s always been too easy ta open.” He did not say anything else until after he had sat down in a chair, ignoring it’s squeaks of protest, and caught his breath. “Professor, the Ministry says they can’t afford not ta help out since it is four of their people that’s been caught an’ all, what with the way the Daily Prophet’s been slamming them. Course, they wasn’t countin’ Moody officially, so they do know there are five of ‘em that was caught and not just four.”

“Thank you, Hagrid. I always know I can count on you for anything.” Dumbledore worked the smile back on to his weary cheeks as he stood up from his chair. “Now, I do believe I am late for an appointment with my bed, so if you will excuse me. . .”

“O course, Professor. I’ll see you later tonight, then.” Hagrid turned and walked from the office, causing the slightest of trembles to pass through the floorboards. “A nap doesn’t sound like too bad an idea, tell the truth.”

VvVV

Harry woke slowly, enjoying the warm sensation making it’s way down his stomach and towards his waist. In an instant, his arousal was obvious, which got an approving moan from the source of his pleasure. Harry opened his eyes to find Draco staring up at him from his waist, his delicate tongue working itself over Harry’s skin. With a seductive wag of his eyebrows, Draco moved level with his ultimate goal and ran his tongue over the top of it.

“Oh, damn, Draco.” Harry shivered from the feeling that ripped through him as the blonde worked his tongue down on side and up the other before wrapping his mouth fully around and taking Harry into his mouth. A few minutes later, Harry was clenching his sheets from the building pressure inside of him. Any second he knew he was going to give in to the desire to find release and wanted to warn Draco, not sure what the boy had in mind. More than once he had made Harry wait when he got him this close, but Draco always made it worth the wait, and Harry would not mind getting as much time out of this as possible.

“Are you close?” Harry nodded to answer Draco’s question, unable to actually speak. “Well. try to stop flailing against the curtains or there is no need to go through the hassle of silencing charms.”

“Try to stop getting distracted and using your mouth for talking.” Harry was way past the point of worrying if anyone knew what was going on behind the closed, and silenced, curtains that draped his bed. He would be shy about it when his boyfriend was not in the middle of driving him insane with pleasure.

With a smirk, Draco returned to his task, bringing Harry over the edge in under a minute. He moved his face away and replaced his mouth with his hand just in time to be able to look fully into Harry's eyes while he came on their bodies.

"Now, why don't you wake me up like that every morning?" Harry asked, after regaining the ability to think and speak straight. "I could get used to that."

"I bet you could." Draco laid his head on Harry's shoulder and curled into him. Their bodies were soon both responding to the touch of naked flesh to naked flesh, and Harry closed his eyes and sighed longingly when he felt Draco push against him.

"Will you get inside me already?" Draco snorted and rolled his eyes, moving to lay on top of Harry.

"I thought you'd never ask." His breath brushed against Harry's neck, followed by tender kisses that trailed their way to his chin and then to his lips. Draco again took complete control of the moment, and Harry gladly gave in to the gorgeous blonde's needs. With a reassuring, piercing gaze, Draco entered both Harry's mind and body. Before long, they both felt the entire world and all its worries of death and war drifting further and further away.

Harry could tell Draco was close and was trying his best to help him fall over the same edge he had driven Harry off just moments before, when he heard a simple question being asked from outside his bed. He was not sure why at that second, but he knew that the voice asking did not belong in the moment he was sharing with Draco. At the same instant that Draco began filling Harry with his own release, Harry found himself gazing into the very embarrassed and whitening face of his father.

"Oh, fuck!" It seemed all Harry could come up with to say.

Without saying a word, James pulled himself away from the curtains and closed them tightly together. He stumbled backwards until he sat numbly on to Ron's bed and just stared blankly ahead of him.

Inside the closed curtains, Draco lay breathing heavily on top of Harry, still unaware anything had happened. "I don't think I ever got that exact reaction from you before. You should have seen how adorable you were when you turned all red and looked like you had been caught doing something naughty or something."

"Um, Drac, that's because I did. Well, in a way." Draco lifted his head and looked questioningly into Harry's eyes, but in the same second it dawned on him for some reason that he had only silenced the curtains, not closed them with any magic at all.

"Oh, fuck!" He grinned for a brief second at unintentionally repeating Harry's exclamation, but then asked what he really doubted he wanted to know. "Who. . ."

Harry looked away and bit his lip before whispering his answer, too low for Draco to hear.

"Who? Harry, I could not hear you at all."

“My. . .Professor. . .it was my dad.” They stared horrified at each other for a few seconds before Draco dropped back on top of Harry and started laughing. “I don’t really see how this is that funny at all.”

But even as he tried to pout, Harry began to laugh along with Draco. He knew it was more in response to the shaking form on top of him, than him actually finding the whole situation amusing in any way. Still, it felt great to just laugh until his sides started hurting for no real reason.

“I can not believe your father just walked in on us having sex. That is definitely not on my list of ways to impress him and prove my love for you to him.”

“Well just imagine how he must feel, thinking he’s going to wake his peacefully sleeping son, but then finding him getting. . .” Draco kept Harry from saying anything else with a passionate kiss. When he pulled away in search of his pajama pants, he just grinned seductively at Harry. “What was that about?”

“Just couldn’t help myself. You were looking way too sexy from laughing so hard.”

Once they both were at least partially dressed, Harry moved to the edge of the bed and gripped the opening to his curtains. “Well, if things weren’t awkward before, they sure as hell are going to be now.”

Draco rolled his eyes and followed Harry out of the warm protectiveness of their bed and on to the cold stone floor and the shocked gaze of his lover’s father.

“Um, Harry. . .” James wondered where all the words running around in his head just moments before had gone, he could not help but think the moment required more than simply saying the boys name. Harry knew who he was after all, and did not need to be reminded. “What I mean to say is. . .”

“Professor, why don’t we just try doing what I was always taught to do in embarrassing situations.” When both Potters looked at him with questions on their faces, Draco continued, as if it were the most logical thing in the world. “Pretend it did not happen and never think about it again.”

“I think that would be the easiest.” James still looked like he was feeling very uncomfortable and Harry was as deep red as Draco thought was possible. Draco smirked at the look of thanks on Harry’s face and shrugged slightly.

“My father is a complete arse, and deserves to die, but sometimes, his screwed up advice on how to deal with the world can be useful.” Still very much aware of the tension in the room, the three of them started talking about nothing important, trying to get their minds on to something else other than the awkwardness.

“If neither of you will miss me too much, I’m going to get a shower,” Draco said after a few minutes. He still had remains of the mornings activities on him, underneath his pajamas, and it was really starting to bother him. It was one thing to talk to your lover after having just shagged him, it was something completely different when you threw your lover’s father into the after-sex conversation.

“I think I’ll survive, Harry?” James smiled at the small remaining blush on Harry’s cheeks.

“Yeah, I made it through fifteen years alone, I guess I’m capable of a few more minutes. Just don’t take forever, you aren’t the only one needing to wash off.” Harry blushed even more with his words and Draco only smiled menacingly while shrugging his shoulders.

“I don’t know, Potter. Some of us take longer than others, I mean, I don’t just wake up this sexy.” Harry had a few responses for Draco, but was very aware of the fact that his father was sitting across from him, watching their flirtatious banter and kept them inside his head. He felt he was blushing far too much as it was without giving himself more reasons.

Once they were in the room alone, Harry wondered briefly where all his dorm mates had run off to so quickly. His questions were answered by the next sentence James choose to use and break the ice with. “I guess I should have realized there was a good reason everyone else was in the common room, still in their pajamas. Well, except Hermione, of course. She was already dressed.”

“Ron and I had a theory for the longest time that she slept in her robes, but he was happy to report to me that she doesn’t after the first night they. . .” Harry suddenly realized he was saying way too much and blushed even more, as impossible as he figured it was. “Sorry, I ramble when I’m nervous.”

“Ah, well sorry about that. I guess you get that from me.” Harry smiled widely, more than happy to have another attribute he could add to the list of things that made him like his parents. The room was returned to silence for a few minutes, before Harry decided to ask a few questions that he had never gotten around to during their earlier conversations as father and son. “Dad, did you about these powers and all this crap before I was born, or did it all come up just before everything happened the way it did?”

“I wish I could say that it was all a surprise to me, Harry, but that would be a lie. I’ve often wondered if it was selfish of me to go ahead and have a child with the state everything was in, knowing that if you were born with the powers you have, you would be hunted as a weapon and a threat by both sides.” James looked back into Harry’s gaze with sad eyes.

“And what did you decide?” The older man took a deep steadying breath and stared silently at his son for a second, thinking of his answer and wondering if it was what Harry was hoping to hear, but he had promised himself the time for lies and incomplete truths was past.

“To be honest Harry, most times I regret not waiting. I can’t help but think that if you had been born a few years later that you would have had both your parents and could have grown up far away from the Dursley’s and all the pain you’ve been made to suffer through since.” He watched a silent tear fall from Harry’s cheek to his folded hands. There was so much more he wanted to say, so much to explain what he had just admitted to his only son. So many butts to his admission, they were all frozen in his mind by two things that happened at once.

First Harry stood up and asked him with a shout, “Then why the hell didn’t you?!” and second, the entire room seemed to shake with a muffled explosion. The room began filling with smoke and in the following confusion, James was unable to answer Harry’s question with all the reasons he was glad he and Lily had not waited.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Twenty-Seven - Switch

Arthur Weasley could not decide if he was crying, screaming, or just finally losing his mind, but to be honest he really did not care one way or the other. Seeing who had followed Lucius Malfoy into the room was much more than he was ready to handle. Torture him to death, cast all the Unforgivables known to Wizarding kind, do all the worst things you could come up with and he would stand strong and laugh at you. But walk into his prison cell, followed by his middle son, and you will have broken him in more ways than any torture could do.

Arthur Weasley's heart was shattered.

"I always knew you were a good for nothing slimy little. . ." Mad-eye's words were cut off by a hard smack to his face.

"Shut up you miserable old fool! You really think I want to hear your insufferable mouth after all the years having to put up with father bringing you around so you weren't lonely?"

"Now, now, Percy. They may be muggle-loving-filth, but those of us in higher classes must not lower ourselves to petty name calling. If you find them bothersome, you simply curse them until they become more agreeable." Lucius sneered at the two Order members, relishing the look of complete betrayal on Arthur's face. "Come now, Arthur. You did not really expect your son to be content with coming from nothing and being nothing, did you?"

"Percy?" Arthur looked into the eyes of his son. The eyes he had gazed into lovingly as they grew up. His son's name was the only word that made it out of his constricting throat.

"Yes, father, it is me."

"But. . .how? Why?"

"You dare even bother asking those questions? Do you really have no idea why I could have possibly come to be in the service of my Lord Voldemort?" Arthur shook his head no, which seemed to irritate his son further. "Merlin, you really are the most thickheaded of them all, aren't you? Dumbledore's got you all so tied up in his little world that you have all missed reality completely."

Placing a hand on Percy's shoulder, Lucius directed the boy behind him again and took over the conversation. "You see Arthur, there are those of us who think the time has come for old wizards to move out of the way with their tired ways of thought. There are those of us who are sick of following one ego-filled maniac after the other. Your son had the foresight to see that Dumbledore's time was coming to an end and joined sides with the clear victor."

"You're forgetting one thing Lucius, old boy." Steel gray eyes flicked to Moody in the chair next to Arthur.

"And just what would that be, Moody?"

"Let me guess, Harry Potter?" Percy stepped around Lucius again and leaned down until he was inches from the one-eyed, gnarled face. "He is nothing. Sick little freak's a fag to top it all off. Not only have we set him up to be betrayed, but we will see to it he faces Voldemort alone, after watching all of his friends die."

"Blah, blah, blah. We've heard it all before. Only this time, I ain't buying none of it. First off, Lucius, that son of yours is not about to betray Harry for nothing. I've seen his heart, literally you know, and the only hatred that kid holds is for you." He coughed, trying his best to hit Percy with the mixture of blood and spit that came out, before continuing. "Second, those friends of Harry's are no pushovers. In fact, I believe they handled you quite well last year, didn't they Lucius?"

After receiving another vicious blow to the jaw, the haggard wizard glared death back into the youngest face in the room. "I think I've had about all I can stand of you." He raised his wand and pointed it directly at Mad-eye's remaining eye.

"Before you finish him off completely, I want you to show them just exactly how Potter and his friends will be easily dealt with." Percy grinned over his shoulder at Lucius and nodded his head.

"It would be my pleasure." When he turned back to his father and Moody, the grinning face of Percy Weasley had been replaced by that of Harry Potter.

"Son of a..."

"No! You can not do this to your own family!"

"Harry is not my family! Even if you and mom fuss over him more, it means nothing! He is an orphan, he has no one. But my own family loved him more than me. I will help anyway I can in his death."

"Weasley, I never knew anyone in your family could possess such talent as your son, but it turns out he is quite gifted in glamour charms. I personally have only seen the like with Polyjuice potion." Lucius was enjoying every single second he could get out of this moment.

"Fred and George are not the only clever ones in the family. While they were wasting their time on jokes, I was working on getting myself away from the filth you forced all of us to live in." Percy looked away from his father and back down the tip of his wand. "See how you like some of my other inventions."

Lucius Malfoy watched on with pure enjoyment as Percy drew screams from the men like none he had ever been witness to. He thought more than a few times to himself over the next few hours how much he would give for his son to have turned out as well as the young man standing next to him.

VvVv

"Ron?" When the redhead turned to look into the eyes calling for his attention, he was sad to see pain and fear in them.

"Yeah, Herm?"

"Everything's going to be okay, right? I mean, Harry's always been able to keep us safe before, this time's no different is it?" Ron did not wonder when Hermione had begun placing such irrational hope in Harry. He did not have to, he knew well when it had happened, the same moment in first year when he had started to truly believe all the hype around The-Boy-Who-Lived. After first year, and all the adventures that had followed, it seemed to make perfect sense that Harry was invincible, along with his friends and anyone he wanted to keep safe. The fact that there were more than a few loved ones of the great Harry Potter that were dead did not factor in to the reasoning behind their hope in Harry. It was, after all, irrational.

"Of course, Herm. It always is."

She nodded and rested her head on his shoulder, both returning to gazing at the dancing flames in the common room fire place. After what could have easily been hours, but was probably only minutes, spent wandering through their thoughts, Hermione looked up at Ron again.

Smiling down at the beautiful face looking inquisitively back at him, Ron saved her the trouble of speaking to get his attention again. "What is it?"

"I just...I'm glad you did not kill that man."

"Me too, Herm. Me too." She looked like there was a lot more waiting to be said, but before either of them said anything else, a muffled explosion shook the entire room, followed quickly by a flood of smoke pouring into the room from the boy's stairs.

Without thinking twice, both were on their feet and slipping into Prefect mode instantly, sharing a terrified thought and look before wading through the crowd of students and sending them back from what they hoped with all their lives was just a prank gone bad. The thought of it being anything more serious was just too much to handle at the moment.

VvVv

Harry coughed all the smoke he could out of his lungs as he continued to make his way through the thick fog of debris that now blanketed the boy's showers. His eyes stung and his feet and legs burned from numerous small cuts, but he pressed on with his arms outstretched in front of him.

"Draco!" His throat protested being used under such conditions, but he ignored the scratching pain and called out again. "Draco!"

Another few inches and Harry was beginning to feel an overwhelming fear that Draco was never going to answer, that he could no longer respond. That the one person he had dared to truly love had paid the ultimate price for returning that love. He was becoming so consumed with his fear that he did not even recognize the pitiful looking body huddled up inside itself on the floor of what had once been the last shower stall, until it spoke to him.

"Drop below the smoke you idiot, or they're going to have to come rescue you before they can get to me."

Harry dropped to his knees with relief, but not because of what Draco had said, but purely because Draco had spoke at all. The mere sound of his voice had released all the fears that had mounted up over the seconds it had taken to move from Harry's bed to the showers. "Thank God, you're alive!"

Rolling his eyes, Draco gratefully allowed himself to be taken into Harry's arms and held tighter than should have been physically allowed. "Of course I'm alive. It takes a lot more than some amateur exploding jinx to kill a Malf...well, me at least. It was hardly much of a threat."

Neither seemed to care to draw attention to the fact that the "amateur, hardly much of a threat" explosion had removed the boy's showers of nearly all dividing walls. It hardly seemed very important at the time as Harry rocked the still shaken Draco in his arms.

From behind them they heard the distinct sound of someone speaking spells and noticed the smoke clearing from the air around them, but paid little attention as they were quickly locked in a desperate, relieving, "I-thought-you-were-dead-but-thank-God-you're-alive kiss.

"Draco, you may want to cover up with this. Seeing you kissing my son while naked twice in one day is more than enough for me." Both gave a blush in response while Draco wrapped the towel around him that James had thrown over.

"Thanks."

Giving a nod and a smirk, James walked back into the hallway to head off anyone else coming to see what had happened and to relieve the obvious worries of the two Gryffindor Prefects still standing anxiously in the hall.

"I'm guessing either Voldemort's really just getting pathetically desperate, or some moronic student thought this would be a great way of getting themselves into the Death Eaters."

"I'm guessing that right now it doesn't matter, Draco." Harry kissed him again before helping him to his feet and walking with him out of the demolished showers. "I'm taking you to Madame Pomfrey and then..."

"For Merlin's sake, Harry! What is it with you Gryffindor's and running to the infirmary every time you get a scratch. I'm fine, okay?"

"Draco, I want to make sure. Just humor me." Harry turned his best pleading face towards Draco, but got an arm crossed pout in reply.

"Don't you even dare, Potter. Just try and see who can throw the biggest fit. I promise you, I will win."

Rolling his eyes, Harry conceded, but only after asking one reassuring question. "How do you know for sure that nothing happened to you."

"As any good Slytherin could tell you, explosive jinxes like that one give off a small warning when they're triggered, just incase you set it off on yourself. When I heard it I reacted out of habit and put up a basic defense shield around myself."

They were walking back towards the sixth year dorms, ignoring the shocked and worried looks being thrown at them from the other students on the stairwell.

"Draco, excuse me for listening in, but did you just say you can cast a protection spell around yourself? One that was strong enough to repel all that?" James was clearly impressed by the overheard omission. "That's no small bit of magic. There had to be all kinds of stuff flying around in there."

"I knew it was worse than you were making it out to be! We're going to Pomfrey."

"Harry, don't be foolish. I already told you I am fine." He placed his finger on Harry's lips to silence anymore protests and turned to answer James who was walking behind them. "To answer your question, Professor, yes I can cast a protection spell completely around myself, but only for so long. I just barely held it long enough in there to avoid getting hit by anything large and deadly."

"If you don't mind my asking.."

"Sir, in the world I grew up in, not knowing a few good protection spells meant being hurt, a lot."

James gave a silent nod of understanding and all three remained silent for the remainder of the walk up the stairs and into the bedroom.

"Well, I guess we can forget about a quiet afternoon with no worries. The entire lot of the castles libel to be here in a few seconds." James massaged the bridge of his nose before walking back to the dormitory door. "I'll go answer everyone's questions and assure them no one was injured."

"Thanks, sir." James winced and Draco gave Harry a confused look at the use of the word sir.

"Harry. . .I. . ." James leaned heavily against the door, allowing the weight of his world finally take a noticeable toll on him. "I did not get to explain myself."

"I think you said more than enough." Draco gave Harry an openly questioning look, wondering just what in the world he had missed in the time after he had left the room earlier.

"I'm sorry, son."

"Just go, okay. We'll talk about it all some other time. Right now I'm too worn out to bother with it."

Giving another silent nod of understanding, James slipped out of the room, casting one last sad look in Harry's direction.

"Just what in the hell was that all about?" Draco asked the minute they were alone again. "What could have possibly happened in the five minutes I left the two of you alone?"

"Drop it, Draco. I'm not in the mood to deal with it." Draco opened his mouth to let Harry know just what the chances were of simply dropping the subject, when he was brought up short again by lingering fears as Harry looked sternly into his eyes and repeated, "Drop it, Draco."

Draco looked away and let silence be his answer. He swallowed around the fear in his throat and gut and decided to forget about what had happened. There was precious little time left before they went off to face the worst evil of their time, face to face. And Draco swore to himself that nothing would get in the way of them spending that time together, not even his fears of what Harry might have done if he had provoked him any further.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Twenty-Eight - Fighting The Approaching Darkness

A/N - I just want to warn you all that this chapter contains enough fluff to choke a mule.

VvVvV

"Are you sure you don't need to see Madame Pomfrey?" Draco shook his head in answer. He was getting tired of responding to that question and doubted he would react well if Harry asked it one more time. "You've just been acting really weird since we got back up here. The whole time Dumbledore and everyone else was in here you didn't even speak at all. It just freaks me out and makes me worried that something's wrong."

"Merlin, Harry! Do you always have to grab on to one stupid little thing and drive me insane over it? I'm fine, I told you a hundred times, and you asking me again is not going to change that. I cast a protection charm, a damn good one by the way, and I'm fine." Draco moved away from where he had been laying next to Harry and stood up. "Maybe if you would stop getting so pissed off about anything and everything your dad said or did, it would be easier to be around you and not be 'acting really weird'!"

Draco remained facing away from Harry, feeling anxiety rise in his stomach and wishing he had just kept silent. They were literally facing the last few hours together before possibly dying, and he doubted Harry's reaction to what he'd just brought up was going to make those moments very pleasant. What he had not even considered fearing was his own reaction to Harry's response.

"Draco, just shut up about things you don't understand." Before Draco could argue with himself, he had spun around and placed himself inches from Harry's face.

"And just exactly what is it you think I don't understand?" Harry was obviously as surprised as Draco was at what was coming out of his mouth, but something inside Draco had quite literally had more than enough.

"I didn't..."

"You didn't what? Mean what you said? Maybe you didn't think before you opened your mouth? Maybe you didn't realize that every time you get pissed it scares the fuck out of me because I don't know how to keep you from..."

He stopped screaming then, silenced by a choking sob, the unspoken words filling the room and leaving both in complete shock. It was not really something they really talked about. They had never pretended it had not happened, and there was no way they could have forgotten everything, but they had simply just not talked about it beyond what they had been forced to get beyond to allow Harry back in to Draco's life.

"I didn't realize that."

"Well, now you do." Draco stood straight again, crossing his arms over his chest and watching

Harry's every move with eyes full of tears of fear, dread, anger, concern, and overwhelming love.

"I know sorry doesn't really say enough, but..."

"How do you know? You haven't even tried it." The whispered words held so much desperation and need that Harry felt his own tears rise to blur his vision, as he saw the unmistakable rise of love in Draco's expression beginning to clear away the fear in his eyes. When Draco flinched a little at Harry's slightest movement, Harry lost control over the emotions he had grown so good at keeping guarded.

He stood up in front of Draco and took his trembling hands into his own. Leaning forward, he placed a soft kiss on each of the now crying eyes, tracing each trail of tears with his lips, he placed a salty whisper of a kiss on the lips they both led to.

"I'm sorry." It was barely audible. It was no more than the sound of an exhaled breath. It was filled with more emotion than voice.

It was exactly what Draco had been needing to hear. The actual words were meaningless, the emotions behind the breath that brushed past his lips spoke more about what Harry was wanting to tell him than any simple words could have ever done.

"I know." It was all the response he could handle, and it was all the response that was required. Slowly Harry raised his arms around Draco and pulled him gently into a desperate embrace. Their lips came together again as their bodies melded into one inseparable being. In all the time spent together before and after what Harry had done, it was the closest they had ever been to each other. Never in all those months had their souls really given in along with their bodies to join such an amazing connection as they were both experiencing in that moment.

With eyes closed, and all of their senses focused completely on nothing other than each other, neither noticed the intense light building around them or the trembling wave of energy that shot out in all directions from them.

VvVv

Neville stared in to the frightened eyes of the girl he loved more than anything in his world. The winter sun was bright, but the warmth spreading through him as they stood on the pier by the lake came solely from Ginny Weasley.

"Don't worry, Gin." He voice sounded flat and helpless even to him.

"How can I not? Honestly?" Their hands clasp tighter and their bodies inched closer. "How can anyone do anything but worry?"

"I don't know, but we have to try. We are alone for the first time since your mum and my Gran came to live in Hogwarts, and we're about to follow Harry off on another crazy charge into possible death, and your father is being held prisoner by that fucking lunatic of a snake, and I want to kiss you so badly right now I can almost hear my lips begging me to stop talking and just do it already."

"Sounds easy enough, I guess. Will it really work?" With a very Malfoyish wiggle of his eyebrows, Neville leaned in closer until he could feel her breath on his lips.

"Let's find out."

The moment their lips touched they both felt a deep feeling of love resonate through their bodies and all the world around them was hidden behind a flash of light. When they pulled away from the kiss, they looked amazed at each other, neither sure what had just happened. "Did you...feel that?"

With a slight nod, Ginny smiled adoringly into Neville's eyes. "That definitely helped with the worrying." Neville returned the smile and was about to lean in for another earth shattering kiss when out of the corner of his eye, he caught what looked like a shockwave moving across the lake.

"What the bloody hell was that?" Following his eyes, Ginny caught sight of the anomaly too.

With a simple shrug of her shoulders she turned Neville's attention back to her with a simple peck on his chin. "As long as it chases away the darkness for a little while, who cares?"

If Neville's heart had a vocal box, it would have sung right then. "Why am I wasting time not kissing you?"

"I was trying to figure that out myself." Their lips joined again and they remained undistracted from their kisses for a long stretch of time. They only separated long enough to breathe and to let the other know just how much they were loved.

VvVv

"I still can't believe Malfoy is as much a part of my family as Harry is now. I mean, honestly, who ever saw that one coming?" Ron gazed up into Hermione's face from where his head was resting in her lap. They were resting on a rather plush sofa in the Room of Requirement, having turned to it's services while looking for a quiet place to escape everyone else.

"Even I didn't see it coming, I have to admit."

Ron was too busy focusing on the fingers playing with his hair to respond for a while. In the silence, they both wandered through the events of the last number of months. It seemed like much more time had to have passed than what actually had.

"I never thought, when this term started, that we would have this final battle before the Christmas holidays."

"Me either, Ron." There was silence, not uncomfortable, but still unwelcomed. "Ron, can we try to think about something else."

"Yeah, sorry."

Silence again.

With a loud sigh, Hermione maneuvered her way out of her seat. "I just can't stand this! What are we doing, I mean, honestly! We are about to charge into Voldemort's underground lair, and don't you dare cringe at that name, following Harry and Draco, hoping like hell that this power of his, which has never actually been tested, will be strengthened by Draco and that Harry will very easily kill Voldemort just by looking at him. Am I the only one that thinks this is completely insane?!"

"Actually, I did too, but figured I had just missed something." Ron earned himself an appreciative smile from Hermione.

"Ron...Damn it I hate this. Why does it have to be us every time? Haven't we stared death in the face more than enough times for one life time? At least last year we thought we had a good plan worked out, this time we really are charging in blind."

"I guess He-who..." Hermione reached out and playfully slapped his hand, "Oh, fine! I guess V...Voldemort isn't the only one who's getting desperate."

Hermione pulled Ron up from the sofa and flung herself into his arms. "What have I told you about letting your deep side show around me?" Ron was confused momentarily by the quick change in subject, but quickly recovered when he saw the desires raging in Hermione's gaze.

"I don't really remember, but I think it involved something about you getting really turned on or something." Hermione grinned, her bottom lip slowly pulling itself free from her biting teeth. She stared up into his glazing eyes and let the desire and love she found in them chase away all thoughts and fears of what lay ahead of them in the near future. When he leaned his head down and took her lips into a needy kiss, there was nothing left to think on except each other.

For the next hour and a half neither was bothered at all by what the coming night was bringing them. They were only distracted briefly by a blinding flash of light and an intense need to feel each other even more. Even thoughts of what the flash could have been were chased from their minds as they became lost in each other again.

VvVv

"What in the love of Merlin was that?" James stumbled to the nearest wall in the hall way and braced himself against it. He looked carefully around him but could not see a source for the blinding light that had just surrounded and coursed through him. He was immediately hit with the most overwhelming peace he had ever known since the loss of his wife. He even glanced around to make sure she was not actually beside him holding his hand. He had only ever felt this loved and cared for when Lilly would hold his hand and whisper reassurances in his ear.

He strained to hear her whisper, but the only sounds he heard were the few remembered songs she had always loved to sing.

He leaned heavily against the wall, eventually slipping down into a sitting position, running his hands over his face, trying to keep the falling tears from turning him into a complete wreck.

"I'm sorry, Lilly. I failed you, I failed you both. Now the very things we forfeited our lives for could very well be lost forever. I should have stayed hidden."

"You don't think she'd have understood? Please, Potter. If anyone else on this forsaken planet would have understood you wanting to let your son know you are alive, it would have been Lily." James looked up at the floating figure of his best friend.

"You know, it is rather annoying, this habit you've developed of floating through walls and listening in on private conversations."

Sirius smiled and drifted down to eye level with James, assuming an awkward looking sitting position. "Then I'm doing you a favor, mate. If someone had come along and found you having a private conversation with yourself, they'd have thought you'd lost it."

James shook his head and laughed lightly. "What would I ever do without you, Sirius?"

"I don't know, but I'm sure it would be something very unpleasant."

Laughing together, the two friends stood up and walked on down the hall, allowing thoughts of impending wars and doom flutter away from their minds, if only briefly.

VvVvV

Dobby shook the helpless house elf by the shoulders without concern for the well being of his fellow creature. Time was running out, he could feel something approaching in the very magic that he consisted of, and he knew he had to hurry.

"Tell Dobby where the evil men have gone. Tell Dobby where is Lucius Malfoy. Dobby must know."

"Please, Fincster can not tell you where Master has gone to hide. Fincster can not speak of the hidden places. Fincster was never told and was never shown them. Please!"

Dobby squinted his eyes and looked closely at the house elf. "Dobby knows where you speak of. If Lucius Malfoy and the evil ones have hidden there, then Dobby knows were to find them all!"

Forgetting in his glee that he was in a hurry, Dobby took a few moments to dance happily around the room with the distraught looking Fincster being flung around like a child's doll.

As soon as he paused for breath, Dobby remembered the importance of his mission and released the other house elf, turning towards the door and vanishing with a quick pop.

"Fincster liked things so much better when Master was here and had his protections in place. Then Fincster was not attacked and beaten unless Fincster had done something against Master."

VvVvV

"Albus, I just don't see how sending these children, my children, into abandoned tunnels is going to do anything but bring me more grief."

"Molly, rest assured that I am not simply charging blindly into dark paths without some light to guide

me. Harry must be physically present for the magic to have a chance. But if you can somehow find a way of convincing your other 'children' from following him in, then by all means you are welcome to it." Headmaster Dumbledore peered over his glasses at the fidgeting woman sitting before him, smiling his understanding. "However, Ron, Hermione and Draco have made it perfectly clear that I, nor anyone from the order is going to keep them from doing just that. Where Harry goes, they all go, and I can not say I do not find that at least somewhat comforting."

"Don't forget Ginny and the rest of the sixth year boys, Albus. They are just as adamant, if not more so." McGonagall pressed her lips severely together, despite the swelling of pride coursing through her at the bravery of her students. That of course did not mean she was not as worried as Mrs. Weasley. If she was not so self controlled, Minerva was sure she too would be fidgeting in her chair.

"Just...bring them all home to me this time, Albus. Please." Old tired eyes, meet eyes that were every bit as tired and worn, despite the difference of age between them.

With a small nod Albus rose from his seat and took a large steadying breath. "I will do everything I possibly can, my dear."

He walked around his desk, placed a comforting hand on both woman's shoulders and started for the door. "The hour has arrived. Let us all hope it is the final hour." The entire room was engulfed in an intense light, leaving the three adults with confused looks and very comforting emotions coursing through their bodies as the brightness faded.

"My goodness! Perhaps there is hope for this being the last of this war after all." Dumbledore smiled warmly at McGonagall's words and made his exit from his office without a single spoken word.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Twenty-nine - When Everything Falls Apart

DISCLAIMER-J.K. Rowling owns the characters, I own nothing found in canon and make nothing from playing with J.K.R.'s world from time to time.

Harry stood inches from the old wooden door which Draco recognized instantly from years spent exploring the Manor and all the lands surrounding it. He looked over into his lover's eyes and silently asked a question for reassurance.

"I'm sure this is the place, Harry. There are all kinds of store rooms and connecting tunnels that run underneath where we are standing even. Father told me they were once used, generations ago, by some uncle of mine for some reason or another." Harry smirked slightly at him. "Details aren't important at the moment, the point is : I'm sure they've buried themselves down there."

"We are all tired of remembering our loved ones, and not living with them. Let's end this once and for all." The eyes that fixed on the wizard who spoke were devoid of the love they had held just seconds before. A cold determination settled into Harry and he turned to embrace the destiny that seemed so willing to dance.

"Harry, everything's just..."

"It's okay, Draco. We won't let it end the same, I promise." Harry brushed the back of his hand across Draco's cheek and slipped the door open, sliding through before Draco had drawn a shaky, passion-filled breath. Fifteen or so steps in and the door was closed behind them, plunging them and the rest of their advance group into a near total darkness.

"Bloody Hell, it's dark in here. Can anyone actually see where they're walking, cause I can't." Harry shushed his best friend and Draco held back a snicker at Ron's unending ability to be belligerently entertaining, no matter what the surroundings. He reached out into the darkness and took Harry's hand.

"Don't you dare try to lose me in here, Potter. I do not like wandering alone in the dark." Draco knew there was a small smile spreading across the face in front of him, even though darkness prevented him from seeing it.

"Now why on earth would anyone want to lose you?" Draco smiled at the whispered reply, but made no other response. After a few minutes of walking slowly, to avoid running into anything head on, Harry stopped walking and squeezed Draco's hand in his. "I've found another door."

"Let us hope that Death Eaters use lights at least somewhere down here. It's not bad enough we've all come under ground to hunt a snake, but we can't see a damned thing." Draco was not sure who had spoken, but he found himself hoping the same.

Harry pulled at the door, but after a few unsuccessful pulls, he sighed and turned his face into Draco's and whispered against the boy's cheek. "I think I'll need both hands for this." Draco realized how tightly he had been gripping Harry's hand and released while placing a soft kiss on Harry's

cheek.

He heard the sound of Harry pulling on the handle again and felt the rush of cold air that poured through as the door swung open, as silent as the darkness around them. He waited a few breaths for Harry to retake his hand, but was only rewarded with the sound of footsteps on hard stone flooring. Rolling his eyes, Draco followed Harry through the door, aware of the sounds of Ron, Hermione, and the others following in his steps.

He reached out his hand in hopes of finding Harry again and walked twenty or so paces before being filled with the fear that he was lost. There were no longer any sounds of walking echoing off the walls, and as Draco's ears strained for any noise at all, his beating heart was all that was audible. He slowly spun in circles, arms outstretched, desperate to find anyone at all, but wishing for all the world it was Harry his fingers were brushing against instead of the cold air. "Harry. . .where, where are you?"

Draco cursed himself for letting everything from his dream happen exactly so far. He squeezed his eyes shut and gripped his head in his hands, hoping to stimulate some plan of action. He started running all of the details from the last few minutes through his head and realized rather quickly that something was completely out of place.

"Why can't I hear anyone at all? Someone should have walked into me by now. Something is definitely wrong." He clenched his fists in frustration before stretching them out in front of him and starting to walk in what he hoped was the right direction.

He was spun to a stand still by a quick flash of light that left him staring into the once again complete darkness. Before he could wonder what it had been and if it had really been there, a bright flash lit the room again, like lightning when a storm is approaching. He began to cautiously walk towards the origin of the flash and was brought into as fast a run as the darkness allowed by the images the next flash drilled into his light deprived eyes.

"Harry?!"

Just before skidding to a stop in front of the scene before him, Draco could not shake the nausea rising from the knot in his stomach. He knew how this scene played out and he was not looking forward to living it for real. But his mind was silenced from thinking about anything else the minute his eyes fell upon the worst image imaginable: Harry, standing over the twitching bodies of his two best friends.

"Right, well I'm tired of playing along with this." Draco found himself staring down a wand. "I guess I can't just go and sit this one out?"

"Silence, fool! You live only because my master commands it! He wants the pleasure of killing you himself!"

"Your master?" Draco raised an eyebrow at the wizard in front of him. "Yeah, that is so not anything Harry would ever say, not to mention the whole structure of that sentence. I mean, really, who talks that awkwardly? Not my Harry, I can tell you that. It's really a miracle I was able to understand you at all."

Draco hoped his natural sarcasm knew what it was doing, because he really could not see how really pissing off his would-be-killer was going to help the situation.

“Your Harry? Merlin, do you have any idea how completely disgusting that is to hear? Do you have any idea how much of a sick freak the two of you are?”

“The two of us? What in the world...”

Draco caught movement in the corner of his eye and glanced to the floor just behind who he was becoming quite sure was not Harry. Ron was biting his lip, obviously working through intense pain just to reach his wand and raise his arm at his attacker.

“Just shut up! Damn it, I’m so tired of hearing you talk. Do you ever not have some smart ass thing to say? No wonder Ron always hated you so much.”

At these words, Draco saw the pain on Ron’s face be replaced with first confusion, then what could only be described as a sickening realization. His eyelids closed slowly and sadly, but when they reopened, Draco could not mistake the look of determination in them. It was a sad determination, but Draco knew enough to get clear of whatever was about to happen.

“See, how hard was it to talk like a normal wizard?” Draco had to try hard to keep from flinching at the look on Harry’s face. The memories brought to mind by seeing anger on those features were nothing he wanted to relive at that moment, or ever for that matter. “Right, well I could always just run away now, then you wouldn’t have to hear me anymore.” Before any response was made, Draco dove as hard as he could to his left, in what he hoped was the opposite direction of any of Ron’s magic that might not hit its target.

“Avad...”

“We’ll have none of that from you, not this time anyway!” The rest of Ron’s words were rendered into nothing more than screams of agony when his target grabbed his wand hand and turned it quickly, drawing a few snaps. Draco swung his wand around to take advantage of the moment but was brought up short by a kicking foot that found his head and then stepped on his wrist.

“Now, now, Draco. Play nice.” The blood pounding through his veins turned as ice cold as the voice speaking those words. He did not need to look up into the face of his father to know who was standing on him, but he brought his face up to glare at him anyway.

“Let me go and I will kill you quickly. I know how much you hate to have things drawn out.” Draco dug deep into his Malfoy training to keep his face calm and his words firm. The fact that he wanted to hide and cry, was not helping that be very effective.

“Strong words, unfortunate I can see right through them.”

“Yeah, well, had to try something, right?” Draco was jerked to his feet by a hand on the back of his neck, the instant his wrist was released. “Please refrain from doing that again. You know exactly how much I hate it when you do that.”

“It seems we have found something else to agree on.” Lucius looked at the Harry still standing over an unconscious Hermione and a glowering Ron, who was holding his hand against his chest. “He definitely uses his mouth much too often.”

More than a few words to respond with came to Draco’s mind, but all were rendered silent by a quick flick of his father’s wand. “Silencio.” Draco squinted, hoping to at least convey some of his thoughts to his father. “Oh please, pouting never worked when you were a child, why would it do anything now?”

Draco balled his hands into a fist and drew his arm back, but multiple bright flashes of light prevented him from seeing anything until he opened his eyes and found himself staring up out of a pit.

“Well, it’s not exactly like the dream, at least.” He briefly considered moving, but the tell-tale lingerings of Crucio kept him on his back. After a few more minutes, unconsciousness had reclaimed him.

VvVvV

“I knew this was a bad idea. I told everyone, this is not going to work. Draco even had dreams about everything going straight to hell, but no, why would we ever heed a warning and not charge into danger. I knew this...”

“Was a bad idea. Yeah, we all get it. Try not talking for just a moment would you?”

Hermione Granger sent a glare to where she thought Ron was in the darkness, but stopped talking none the less. She added a little pressure to the hand she held and took all the reassurance she could from the returning squeeze.

"I can't hear anyone else at all, or anything for that matter. It's like we all walked into different rooms or something." Ron bit his lower lip in concentration, straining his ears as much as he could, hoping to hear something other than himself or Hermione.

"But how can that be? We followed Harry through that door as quickly as possible and we haven't walked through any others."

"As far as we know. I can't see a bleeding thing in here. I'm not even sure what exactly here is either. We could have walked straight down a tunnel and never even known."

Hermione moved closer to Ron, resting her forehead on his shoulder to both think for a second and to feel his comforting warmth in the cold darkness. "We haven't been down here that long. Something has to be up, there's no way we all got separated that quickly."

"Very good, Hermione." Both turned to face the familiar voice, closing their eyes to the brightness of the wand tip that was being held in their faces.

"All right, Harry?" Ron's eyes had adjusted enough to allow him to make out the form of his best

friend. "Drop that a little, mate, I can't see with it in my face."

"Nox." They were plunged into darkness again.

"Harry, why did you turn it off again? My eyes had just adjusted to the light." Hermione did not even try to keep the annoyance out of her voice. It really was rather rude to blind someone and then turn the lights out again.

"It really is quite simple." Ron thought for a second on how odd Harry sounded, talking much more proper than he ever had before, but his ponderings were brought to an end by a warning squeeze of the hand from Hermione. "You see, I am unable to cast any Unforgivables while the tip of my wand is lit."

"Harry, you can't...they're addicting. I thought you were going to use your power, to kill Voldemort and Lucius, especially now that you and Draco bonded."

Both Hermione and Ron were dropped to the ground by a red flash of light and intense pain. "My dear Hermione, ever the clever fool. Why would I ever do anything against my Lord?"

Ron watched Hermione's body go limp and prayed she had just passed out, as he fought to remain conscious. He was just about to lose when the curse was brought to an end by the arrival of another familiar voice. "Harry?! Right, well I'm tired of playing along with this."

The majority of what happened next was a blur to him, but a few of the words Harry said finally started to not only set off alarms, but bells started ringing, bringing recognition. At least, Ron hoped the bells ringing in his head were just figurative, even though he was positive his brain was ringing with sensory overload from the Crucio he'd just endured. A sadness settled in him as he realized what he had to do.

Ron Weasley was going to have to kill his brother. There was no mistaking what was going on now, even if Ron was unable to explain how at the moment, he knew that the person standing over him and Hermione was not Harry, but his brother Percy. Only Percy was enough of a prick to use words the way he was while talking to Draco.

He closed his eyes and took as calming a breath as he could. When he reopened them he caught Draco's eyes with his own and conveyed as much of his plan and determination to the other boy as possible. He then raised his wand and spoke the words he had hoped never to say again.

"Avad..."

"We'll have none of that from you, not this time anyway!" Ron was unable to do anything other than scream as his wand hand was wrenched almost completely around, snapping numerous bones in his hand.

Just before passing out himself, Ron watched Draco being hexed by both Lucius Malfoy and Percy. "I'm sorry Harry, I let him get hurt and caught." Ron hoped he would get the chance to apologize in person, if not make up for the guilty feelings filling his gut.

VvVv

"Draco, you alive?"

"No, leave me alone." He tried to brush away the offending hand that was gently shaking him, but had little success.

"Come on, I'm pretty sure they've rounded everyone up that isn't dead already so we'll be sitting here for a while." After a few moments of silence, Draco was shook with a little more force. "Get up, I'm lonely."

"Alright, alright. Just stop touching me, you're filthy Finnegan."

"I hate to point out that you are in even worse shape than me, not to mention you smell like you died down here." Seamus stood up and walked the few steps to the other side of their hole. "Pretty quick thinking, sticking us down in pits. As long as none of us can climb, that is."

Draco watched Seamus dig out a few hand and foot holds and start pulling himself up the wall. He thought about letting the annoying boy find out for himself that the pit was likely charmed closed, but decided that as annoying as Seamus was to begin with, he would be much worse if he were crying over a broken limb.

"You'll want to stop."

"Why on earth..."

Draco picked up some dirt from the floor and hurled it straight up above their heads. When it reached about half way up, an invisible barrier knocked it back down with more force than it had been thrown with. He let his raised eyebrows state the obvious.

"I guess that should have been rather blatant."

Draco could not resist a small chuckle at Seamus' response. "Well, they aren't the brightest bunch of Wizards, but they do know how to build a good dungeon."

Seamus slumped against the wall, leaning his head back and resting it on the dirt. "So what do we do now?"

"Why are you asking me? I'm not the Gryffindor here. Shouldn't you be courageously working us away out of here?"

"I tried that, remember? I almost got my head bashed in. Besides, you're the Slytherin. Shouldn't you have some overly complicated, devious plan working us out of here?"

Draco groaned into his hands, propping himself against the wall and facing Seamus. "Looks like everything turned out according to plan, so far." He felt his chest shaking with a laughter born of despair. "Anything else goes as perfect as breaking in did, we're all going to be heroes."

"Yeah, but the wrong kind. I plan on being alive when I get my fancy medals. I don't do the martyr thing well."

"Let's hope it doesn't come to that, shall we?" Draco said after a couple of minutes had passed in silence.

"Let's." Both were lost to exhaustion by the time a small elf popped into the cell with them. After doing his best to clean away the blood and filth covering the boys, the creature bowed his head sadly in Draco's direction.

"Dobby is sorry to be late. But Dobby promises Harry Potter and Harry Potter's Draco will not die here. Dobby will do what Dobby can." Draco smiled slightly in response to the calloused, gnarled hand that was stroking his cheek comfortingly. "Please be strong Master Draco, Dobby will find a way to save those Dobby calls friends."

He gave each boy another sad look and stepped away from Draco. With a snap of his fingers, Dobby vanished from the room.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Thirty - Fighting Time

His eyes opened to find everything around him a blur. He tried to sit up, but quickly found that laying still was a much better option, especially when his blurry vision threatened to black out again.

"So, our esteemed hero awakes."

"You couldn't have just taken the extra time to actually kill me, could you? At least then I wouldn't be waking up with the worst headache of my life and I wouldn't have to hear you again. I'd rather gotten used to you not being around." The only response he received was a hard kick to his side.

"Right, so I'll just stay quiet then and you can do the whole 'I'm evil and here's how I can prove it by telling you my overly complicated, easily stopped, stupid arse, don't make any sense to anyone with a brain, plan!'"

"Merlin, you know Harry, of all the sick freaks to let fuck you, you could have chosen one that would not leave you so annoying when he rubbed off on you." Harry grinned at the obvious frustration in Percy's voice and mannerisms, at least he was telling his face to grin, whether or not those muscles were actually working at the moment, he couldn't tell. But whether he was smiling or not, the next voice to speak would have wiped it from his face.

"Now, now, Percy. What have I told you about losing ones temper." Percy glared daggers of fire down at Harry, but remained silent, stepping behind Lucius Malfoy as the blonde's gloved hand was directing him. "Mr. Potter, you will find no appreciation of your wit here. You would be better off speaking only when you are asked a question."

Harry sent a glare of his own, hoping he was staring Lucius in the eye, but really unable to focus that well without his glasses. "Malfoy, the jokes on you. I'm not alone and any moment..."

"I do hope you are not counting on that back up you left waiting outside. They all met with unfortunate ends. And as far as you not being alone, I hate to inform you that you most definitely are. Well, I do not actually hate to inform, I enjoyed every second of the anguish flashing across your face just now."

Harry's chest felt nearly heavy enough to cave in. He could not be alone, there was no way. "I don't believe you." But even as he said the words, he remembered walking in the silence and the darkness. There had been no sound of anyone, no one had stumbled into him, he had never found Draco's hand again. He had been alone.

"No one is coming for you, Potter. You will die and you will die alone." Harry looked up from his thoughts to find Lucius just exiting the room, leaving Percy and him alone. As soon as the door closed fully, Percy's tone changed dramatically.

"Harry, I'm so sorry. I did not mean any of those things I said or did. You have to understand, I am undercover, for the Order."

As Harry tried to process everything he was being told, Percy helped him to his feet. "There that's much better. Here." Harry took the glasses being offered him and placed them on his face, finding little hope in the scene that came in to focus. He was in a cell, a dirt prison that amounted to little more than a hole in the ground. When he looked above him, he found that it was indeed a hole. "Look, I do not have much time. I will try to get your wand, but all I can promise is that the Order is trying to come up with something to get you out of here."

"But, I don't understand. How did this happen, when...?"

"Harry, there is no time for that! Just..." Percy took a slow, deep breath. "I will not let them kill you like all of the others, okay? That is all I can say for now." Harry barely had time to lean against the wall for support when Percy abruptly turned and walked out of a door that appeared out of the dirt, vanishing as soon as Harry was alone again.

"I will not let them kill you like all of the others?" Harry gave in to the exhaustion gripping his body and lowered himself back to the floor, propping himself against the dirt wall. "All?"

VvVvV

"Anyone else conscious yet?"

"Still trying to decide. Is there anything worth being alive for?"

"Not as far as I can see, but I am laying on my back, staring up out of a hole. It is nice to hear the sound of other peoples voices though."

"Bloody hell! Some of us in this pit have been living through days of some powerful hexes. So if the three of you don't mind, I could deal with some silence."

"Moody?" Five voices said the name at once, followed by numerous groans of pain as most sat up and looked around them. Ginny was spitting mud out of her mouth, having been left face down in the dirt.

"Where's dad?" Mad-eye looked over at Ron with a sad look in his good eye, sighing heavily. All six occupants found a place against the wall and leaned back, most closing their eyes to ease the screaming in their brains.

Before anyone else could say or ask anything, a door appeared just next to Neville and Arthur was drug in between two stocky, robed and masked figures. "Oh, what a disappointment. Here I had hoped to avoid having to hear you miserable rats shooting off your mouths with some ridiculously stupid comment about how you are going to be saved or 'how could you, Percy, we're family'." Arthur was dropped roughly in the middle of the room and the goons exited, leaving Percy with the captives.

"Do not bother saying anything, you do not matter at all and are therefore not going to waste my time beyond this moment." He looked around the room, sneering in response to the looks he received from his siblings. "You are all going to die soon enough. My Lord needs worthless scum to test the loyalty of some newer recruits, and you are the scum. No one is coming for you, Harry and

everyone else are dead already. You have lost everything.”

Without further word, Percy turned and strode from the room. The despair he left behind was making it hard for them all to breathe. It was only when Arthur Weasley stirred in the middle of them all, that their concentration was torn away from the torment of what they had just learned.

“Don’t believe a single word that lying, worthless sack of…”

“Moody, language. The children are in the room.”

“Dad!” Ron and Ginny were on their knees and moving next to their father in seconds, followed quickly by Neville and Hermione. “You’re alive!”

“Glad you’re so surprised, son.” His battered face smiled through the bruises and cuts still bleeding. “Moody’s right. About the don’t believe Percy stuff. I heard them talking when they thought I had passed out. Lucius Malfoy and Percy are up to something.”

“You mean other than trying to kill us and Harry and bring Voldemort to power?”

Arthur laughed at his friends unending wit, stopping when he started to cough. There was no need to spit blood all over everyone in the room, after all. They would worry more about his health than getting out of there. He took a few breaths and only chanced talking when the metallic taste in his mouth had lessened.

“Yes, something other than that.” He allowed himself to be moved against the wall before continuing with a grunt. “They are planning on having Harry kill Voldemort so he’s out of their way. Lucius has claimed the lives of Harry and Draco as his own. He didn’t say for what, but I doubt it’s anything we want them to experience.”

“Then why bother keeping all of us alive?”

“Percy was telling the truth about that. The only reason we are still in this cell is Voldemort.”

“There’s irony for ya.” Everyone looked over to Dean, who had yet to speak since asking if anyone else was alive. “The only thing keeping us alive is that Voldemort wants us to die.” Dean’s small laughter quickly turned into body shaking coughs. He was not able to prevent the blood from splattering on his shirt and running down his chin.

“Oh my God, Dean.” Hermione was doing her best to get over to her friend. Ginny was the first to reach him, having been sitting beside him. She reached out her hand and hesitated, unsure what to do.

“Don’t worry about me, there’s no time. I’ll be alright.” No one in the room looked very convinced at his reassurance. “There’s nothing any of us can do about it anyway, just…” His throat filled with blood again, cutting off his words in favor of more coughing. This time, Ginny and Hermione held him until the blood was clear of his throat and on his clothes. Neither were able to see clearly through the tears in their eyes, but there was no missing just how much blood there was caking Dean’s shirt to his chest and stomach. Hermione wiped his chin off with her own shirt, fighting more

tears rising at her inability to do anymore.

“Dean...” Ron was prevented from saying anything more by a small pop and the appearance of an elf in the room. “Dobby?”

“Yes, Master Ronickens, it is Dobby.” Taking a quick bow and a glance around the room Dobby stopped suddenly when his eyes fell on Dean. Lowering his head slightly, he turned back to Ron. “Dobby has come to help. Masters Malfoy and Finnegan are well.”

“Dobby, can you do anything for him?”

Dobby looked back over to Ginny, then sadly let his eyes return to Dean. “Dobby is sorry, but only a Madame Pomfrey could hope to fix those injuries.” Both Ginny and Hermione were prevented from asking what ‘those injuries’ were by another coughing fit.

“What do you need us to do, Dobby?”

“Just be ready.” He sent another pain-filled gaze to Dean, then raised his fingers, repeating, “Just be ready” as he vanished with a snap from the room.

VvVv

"Seamus." Draco shook the shoulder of the other boy harder than he thought healthy. "Listen here, Finnegan! There's no time for going in to shock." Seamus looked slowly back at Draco, making eye contact for the first time since hearing Dobby's report of everyone else's conditions.

"But, he said Dean doesn't have a..."

"Stop it! Don't say anything else. Our only chance, Dean's only chance, is to get out of here as soon as possible. You're no good to anyone freaking out on me here, got it?" Draco held tightly to Seamus' arms, forcing him to pay attention and not slip back into his prior non-responsive state.

"Yeah...got it. I'm sorry." Seamus squeezed his eyes and his fists shut, letting what amounted to a guttural roar sound from his throat. "Dean dies, I'm killing everyone of these bastards myself."

Draco nodded his understanding, rising from his crouching position to talk to Dobby and finalize some plans.

"Dobby, I can't tell you how grateful I am for all your help so far, but now comes the hard part. Are you sure you're ready for this?" Draco was taken a little of guard by the smirk that spread over Dobby's face as the little elf nodded.

"Dobby knows what must be done and Dobby is ready, sir."

"First we have to figure out how to get out of these cells." Draco began pacing near the dirt wall, touching it at random places as he let his brain wander through possibilities. "They have to be opening that door somehow, if only I could find..."

"There are easier ways, at least Dobby thinks so." Draco looked over to the elf expectantly, raising his eye brow in question. "Dobby could open the door from the outside."

Seamus began laughing when Draco rolled his eyes at the obviousness of it all. "He could have popped in and out of here for days and I would have never thought to have him pop to the other side of the door and just open it."

Draco shook his head in amusement and joined Seamus in a few moments of laughter. "Is it really all that simple?"

"Simple? No, sir. Dobby will have to be very careful and quiet."

"And be sure there are no extra security precautions cast on the door." Draco reminded the elf, patting him on the shoulder. "Be quick and safe."

Dobby simply nodded solemnly before vanishing from the room again. "That little elf is insane." Draco nodded his agreement with Seamus. "Has Harry ever told you about all the times Dobby tried to 'save' him in second year?"

Draco could not keep the smile from returning to his face at the memory of those tales. "What Harry hasn't, Ron's been sure to over exaggerate for me."

"I doubt he exaggerated any of it. I'm telling you that little elf is insane."

Silence settled over the room, both boys straining their ears for any sound that something was happening, good or bad. After what seemed an eternity of seconds, they heard a soft sound of moving dirt, followed quickly by an opening across the cell from them.

Both let out the breathes they had been holding with relief when Dobby's smiling head peeked around the edge of the door. "Hurry, Dobby can only hold the door for so long."

Without any words beyond simple thanks, both Draco and Seamus squeezed through the opening being held open by the scrawny, goofy looking house elf.

VvVv

"Harry Potter." The snake like body of Voldemort glided into the cell to stop only when he was towering over the still sitting teen. "You know, I find it rather foolish that you would remain in such an indefensible position in my presence."

"What, and give you the idea that you're worth the effort of standing up? Don't hold your breath. Or better yet, do so we can get the inevitable over with and I can just go home." Harry wished his mouth was not completely dry. Voldemort was close enough to spit on and he really wanted to add some dramatic effect to his words.

Voldemort leaned down and laughed, the stench of his breath rolling over Harry and making him sick to his stomach. "Such bravado. Or maybe it's just the sheer stupidity that comes from following that dithering old fool without question."

“Or maybe it’s my inner Gryffindor rearing it’s head again. Of course, it could just be the fact that I’m really, really sure I’m going to watch you die while I choke that disgusting scaley neck of yours.” Harry stared back into the red, burning eyes flashing their hatred for him. Both held the glare refusing to look away, sending the room into an icy silence.

“My lord...” His eyes squinting at the disruption, Voldemort stood straight and broke the eye contact.

“There are two things keeping you alive, my young captive. One is the simple fact that I will enjoy killing you so much more while Dumbledore watches than in a hole with no audience. The other...well it’s a special surprise just for you and I would not want you to miss out on it.”

With one last cruel laugh, Voldemort turned and walked out of the room. Harry could feel some of the tension in his body loosen along with the evil wizard’s departure. He nearly missed the fact that a masked Death Eater lingered just long enough to ensure he was alone with Harry and casually fling a small wrapped bundle into the room as he exited.

Harry tried to keep the hope from rising to quickly in his chest as he crawled over to the item. His heart was pounding in his ears as he peeled back a few layers of filthy cloth to reveal first the tip and then the entire length of his wand. He felt like crying and dancing all at once, doing his best to keep from being overwhelmed by the relief and hope finally allowed to course through him.

He stood and took a few steps towards where he thought the door was but stopped when he noticed writing on one of the scraps of old clothing that had covered his wand.

‘Harry, don’t just burst your way out to save your friends. I told you, there is no one to save. Please, just be patient and keep your wand hidden. When Voldemort brings you to the audience chamber, he will not be expecting you to have your wand. This may very well be the only chance you get to actually end this horrid war. Do not let everyone’s deaths be for nothing. Wait for your chance and do not do this on your own. Percy.’

Harry grinded his teeth in frustration and anguish. He could simply not believe everyone else was dead. He just knew that somehow, whatever Voldemort was preparing for this ‘special surprise’ it involved those people Harry held dear to him. Whether or not that meant that Percy was lying to him, or that he really thought everyone else was dead, Harry really couldn’t tell. He did know that he did not trust the Weasley further than he could throw him, but there were few other options open to him at the moment.

“Please, Draco. Hold on. Please don’t be dead.” Harry punched the nearest wall but hid his wand as best he could in his clothes and sat down to wait for the right moment. “Please, Draco...”

VvVv

Mad-eye Moody nudged Arthur Weasley awake when the door to their cell appeared again. "Arthur, look sharp. We're getting more visitors." Both men sat up as best they could while still leaning heavily on the dirt behind their backs.

The two stocky Death Eaters that had drug Arthur in walked silently over to the unconscious body of Dean and each grabbed him under an arm, lifting him off the ground and dragging him out of the room.

"Just a bloody damned min..." Moody's protests were silenced when he was knocked hard in the chest by a hex from one of the goons. He knew for sure that any ribs that had somehow remained whole so far were now broken. With the air having been removed from his lungs quite harshly, and the fact that everyone else in the room was either too weak to move or out of it completely, Dean Thomas was taken away in silence.

"Alastor..."

"I know Arthur." Moody looked over to his friend. "Let's just hope that loopy old elf can get something done and soon. At least soon enough that we're actually able to do something about it when he does."

Arthur nodded, sharing a look with his son and wishing that there was some way to remove the fear and hopelessness he saw flash in them before being covered with a stubborn conviction. No one seemed daring enough to break the silence that settled over the room, even as they woke, one by one, to find Dean gone. One panicked look into the faces of their cell mates, and they knew everything they needed to know: Time was running out, for all of them.

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Thirty-one - Tonight, Tonight

A/N - A huge thank you to C Dumbledore for taking time to show me my mistakes and make this chapter everything it should have been.

"Albus..." James Potter looked over to the still panting, bearded wizard lying next to him on the small hill. "Headmaster, we can't just..."

"I know James, I know. There is very little time for sitting still at the moment. However, it is quite obvious that Voldemort is more than ready to handle any of us going in there through that entrance." Albus Dumbledore kept his tired eyes trained on the door he had barely made it back through when he and James had realized something had gone terribly wrong with their plans. He had hoped to find more than just the two of them returning to the regroup point.

"We left him in there! Merlin knows what's happening to him. We have to go back and..."

"And what? We barely made it out the first time! Use your head James, and stop letting your emotions rule your actions." Dumbledore let the exhaustion that was draining him, bleed into his usual control of his emotions.

"He's my son!"

"And I know that!" Dumbledore sighed, allowing his head to rest briefly on the ground. Even lying on the cold ground on his stomach was serving as a constant reminder how tired he actually was. He took a deep, steadying breath before speaking again. "Listen, I am sorry. I know you are worried, my friend. All we can do for Harry is think our next course of action out thoroughly. It would not do for us to also get caught or killed."

James nodded his understanding, but found actually agreeing with the old, tired-looking, wizard beside him to be impossible. He returned his gaze and concentration to the still unguarded door and his son and his friends that, hopefully, lay behind it. He knew that whatever they were going to come up with, they would have to decide quickly, or there would be no need to ever worry about his son being used as a weapon.

It was hard to expect a dead teenager to save the world, after all.

"We will get him, and the rest of them out, James. I promise you that I will do everything I possibly can to insure it." Tired eyes met anxious eyes before James closed his in frustration.

"Albus, this is hardly the time to bring up the whole 'saving Harry from some damned prophecy' plan of attack. We still have to get in there and I don't see that happening any time soon, without us actually being captured willingly, of course."

Dumbledore smiled over at his friend before standing very carefully to his feet. "You are right. I feel rather foolish that I had not thought of it sooner."

“What are you...wait, you can’t possibly mean for us to just walk up there and allow them to capture us.” James felt his anxiety rise in his gut. This was not the plan he had been hoping for Dumbledore to come up with. There had to be a better way to save his son from the fate that was rushing to meet them all.

“That is precisely what I mean, although I intend for you to stay where you are. As far as I have been able to understand, you do not have to physically be near to Harry for him to draw on your power to kill Voldemort, most certainly not with the powers doubled thanks to Draco.”

“Doubled? What in the world does Draco have to do with anything?” James Potter looked quizzically up at the now standing Dumbledore, only seconds before surprise replaced the confusion on his face when he found Dumbledore’s wand pointing his direction.

“Forgive me, my friend, but at least one of us has to survive in case Harry makes it through the night alive. Let us hope he will not be the one forced to sacrifice everything. If we are lucky, Harry will not even need to call on his powers.” Before James Potter could do anything, Dumbledore flicked his wand the slightest bit and James was completely frozen in place. “And I’m afraid I’ll have to borrow your wand. It will be much easier facing Tom if I am still in possession of my own.” Dumbledore bent down and gently plucked the wand from James’ still hand. Whispering a concealment charm on his friend, Dumbledore set off down the other side of the small hill. James was only able to stare at Dumbledore as the man stood straight and walked out of sight.

VvVvV

“Damn it all to Hell! I’m really getting tired of that damned door appearing out of nowhere and allowing them in here again. You’d think they’d get tired of going on and on about how we’re all going to die.” Despite themselves and their situation, more than a few of the others in the cell with Moody laughed.

“Well, I don’t know about any of that, but I’d like to think you would be happier to see your rescue party. Especially when it includes someone as sexy as myself.” Seamus made a theatrical bow into the room, only to be almost knocked to the floor by Draco.

“Merlin, Finnegan. You really don’t know when to quit.” Draco felt some of his hope fade as he got a good look at everyone in the room. It was quite obvious that he and Seamus had not been tortured anywhere near as badly as any of the bruised, dirt covered faces looking up at him from the floor. He was not sure all of them would be able to actually walk out of the cell, let alone escape. Especially if they ended up having to fight their way out.

“I was just about to say I rather enjoyed the boy’s entrance, but everyone’s a critic I guess...” Mad-eye was attempting to stand as he spoke, but only succeeded due to the help of an already shakily standing Arthur.

“Well, boys, I must say it is nice to see a friendly face, or two. Do we have Dobby to thank for this?” Draco and Seamus nodded their distracted answers to Arthur, both just having finished their head counts and coming to the same realization that not everyone was in the room. Draco felt his eyes close briefly when he realized just exactly who was missing.

“Where’s Dean?” No one seemed eager to answer Seamus' question as he took another worried, panicked look around the room, just to be sure he actually had not seen his friend.

“Seamus...” Draco reached over and placed a hand on his friend's shoulder, hoping to steady him against the emotional reaction he was sure was coming.

“No...no, don't.” He shrugged Draco off, and took a step away, turning around to get a look at everyone's expressions before facing Draco and stopping. “He has to be okay, nobody dies on these things. We beat back Voldemort and all go back to Hogwarts. All of us.”

“Seamus...” Draco tried reaching out again, taking a few small steps until he was standing directly in front of Seamus.

“No! Oh, God.” Draco pulled the boy into a hug, seeing that any breakdown he had been able to put off in their cell had finally hit and Seamus was falling apart right there in their friends' cell. It did not matter that they were close to escape. It did not matter that they were in more and more danger the longer they waited. It only mattered that the boy's world was falling apart and he could no longer do anything to fight the despair and hopelessness ripping through him.

Draco looked up at Hermione and Ron, hoping he would not regret asking this question once he got their answers. “What happened to Dean? Dobby told us he wasn't doing very well, but...”

“Seamus, listen! He's not dead. They just dragged him off for some reason. There's still time and we have to move now!” Neville stepped up next to the two boys, determination evident, even beneath the massive amount of grime and blood on his face and in his hair. “Seamus Finnegan!” Neville grabbed him roughly from Draco's arms and forced him to look into his eyes when he got no reaction from him at all.

“Listen to me! We have to go now and help Dean. He's not in good shape, but he is still alive!” Seamus began shaking in Neville's grip. “Snap the hell out of it!”

Neville slapped his friend across the face, desperate to bring the crumbling boy out of his shock. He watched as the fear clouded eyes began to clear and caught Seamus when he went limp. Neville lowered him back to the floor, far too weak to actually support the other boy's weight.

“Merlin, Neville!” Seamus sat up and rubbed his cheek. “You smack like a bloody girl, and we all know how much girls can hurt!”

With Neville's help, Seamus stood back up, his pale face a fairly stark contrast to the grime covered faces of most everyone else.

“Well, now that we've got that taken care of, I suggest we get this party on the road.” Moody limped as quickly as he could out into the hall and checked to make sure all was still clear. “Anyone actually have a plan, or are we just going to do our best to find a way out?”

“We can't leave, not without Harry and Dean.”

Moody rolled his remaining eye at Hermione's statement and nodded his head. “I thought that part

was assumed, of course. What I meant was, can everyone actually move enough that we can get out of here.”

It took a few minutes but eventually, everyone was on their feet. Most were leaning heavily on the wall or a friend, but they were all wearing looks of complete determination. Moody looked them over and nodded satisfactorily, giving them all gentle taps of encouragement as they walked by him for their willingness to ignore their pain and do what had to be done.

When Draco reached the door, Moody whispered in his ear so no one else could hear. "Any idea if Potter's okay?"

Draco only looked into the old man's weary eye and sighed softly while shaking his head.

“If everyone would please remain quiet and follow Dobby, the plan should work.” Everyone besides Draco, who had seen the small creature pop into the hall right behind them, jumped in response to his loud voice, obviously meant to be a whisper. “Follow this tunnel until where it turns sharply. Dobby has cleared that much and will meet you there.”

“Hermione, remind me to join S.P.E.W. when we get home. I’ll make sure every single house elf alive comes to understand how great freedom is, after what Dobby’s done tonight, or today, or whatever time it is.”

Hermione took enough time to send a smile and a nod to Ron, before returning her efforts to walking.

They began working their way slowly down the hall, most needing support from the wall just to be able to stay on their feet. Draco brought up the rear, being about the only one able to be much use as a guard from a rear attack. He seriously doubted if anyone else, other than Moody who was in front, would be able to even see someone walking towards them until they were staring down a wand. He really hoped they were not the only ones coming to the rescue.

VvVvV

Albus Dumbledore walked into Voldemort's lair as if it were an everyday occurrence for him to be seen there. He looked so sure of where he was going that he had nearly reached the two Death Eaters watching the entrance before they realized that he was very out of place.

“Wa...wait right there, um...Professor?” Dumbledore continued walking until he was directly in front of the two men, acting as if he did not even notice that their drawn wands were pointed at his chest.

“Ah, it is so nice to see you again Mr. Parkinson. I was just telling Pansy the other day that you and your wife should come around the school more often.” Dumbledore continued smiling, looking for all the world like making small talk with the two Death Eaters in an underground tunnel was completely natural.

"I must, however, insist you not wear that dreadful outfit. It would most likely frighten more than a few of the children, you know." Parkinson continued to stand frozen, unsure of what was going on. Dumbledore smiled briefly thinking how confused the man must look under his mask.

"Parkinson! Have you lost it completely?!" The other Death Eater swung his free hand into Parkinson's gut and shook him out of his befuddlement. "Albus bloody Dumbledore is standing right here without a wand! Think how happy Lord Voldemort will be with us for capturing this old fool for him."

"I'm sorry boys, but I'm afraid no one is capturing me tonight." Finally both tensed, hearing the threat in those words and working their way thru the confusion of seeing one of their leader's greatest enemies stroll unarmed into their headquarters.

"Don't try anything, Dumbledore. It's two against one, and you have no wand."

"Once again, you make the error of thinking that numbers and power win a war." Dumbledore stared down at the two men, giving them both the feeling of receiving a lecture. "I was, however, only speaking of the fact that you can not capture me when I have already turned myself over to you. I trust you understand the important difference."

"However you want to look at it, we're taking you to Lord Voldemort." The Death Eater Dumbledore did not know gave him a look, making it clear he thought he was on to whatever mind games Albus had been trying to play. "I'm sure he'll be more than happy to wipe the damned smirk off your face."

Nodding his head Dumbledore allowed the men to bind him with their wands. "Not that I'm questioning your training, but should you not check me for my wand? I mean, it would be rather foolish of me to stroll into enemy territory unarmed." Both sets of eyes looked startled that they had not thought of that fact themselves. Parkinson did such a quick pat down of the old wizard's robes that one would think they were made out of fire.

"Ha! Got it. That was a really stupid thing to do Dumbledore." Nodding his head slightly, Albus kept the smirk from reaching his lips.

"Let's just get him to Voldemort before he does anything to get us killed."

The two Death Eaters took places at the front and back of their captive and began leading him deeper into the tunnels. Dumbledore ran his thumb over the smooth wood of his wand, taking comfort from the fact that his plan had worked. He only hoped he would get the chance to return James' wand to him when this was all over with.

VvVv

"Where the bloody Hell did that elf get to?" Mad-Eye Moody grumbled, more to himself than any of his fellow escapees. He was less than surprised when none of the teenagers bothered to even attempt some smart-assed comment, even though it would have been heartening to hear that at least one of them still had the strength to be annoying.

They had been moving through the tunnels for nearly twenty minutes and had just made it past the first dead end. Dobby had given them the all clear for the next stretch of tunnel, giving them looks that clearly begged them to hurry and showed that he was worried about their current progress.

Alastor was all too aware of the fact that they were moving much too slowly to have much chance of actually getting away, let alone actually get to where ever Dean Thomas was being held before he was dead. In all his years of tracking dark wizards and hunting down evil creatures for the Ministry, he had never felt so sure that he was near the end of his life. He was also sure, after all those years of leading people in to and out of dangerous and sometimes hopeless situations, that the last thing the brave, young wizards behind him needed was to see him showing anything but a fearless tenacity to press on. And that was what he was determined to show them now.

His old, weathered body wanted to do nothing else but lie down, give up and wait for the end. He was in pain, he was out of hope, and he was ready to see if Dumbledore was right about death being the next big adventure. But despite all that, he forced himself to turn around and take the time to give each and every person behind him a look in the eye.

“You’re not going to let an old man beat you out of these tunnels are you? Especially one as...impaired...as myself?” He would have liked to have received more smiles than he did, but everyone at least got their heads to shake. “Good. Now let’s keep moving before one of those damned, good for nothing, pieces of...”

Pulling himself to a stop the minute he turned back around, Mad-Eye cursed himself for not watching their front better. Holding up his hand to signal the others to stop and get up against the wall, he did the same, using a slight curve in the tunnel to block him from the view of the two Death Eaters he had caught sight of rounding another corner. Arthur moved next to his friend and took a peak around the bend, all but flinging himself back against the wall when he saw the reason for their stopping.

“What are we going to do now?”

“Not much we can do, is there? We can’t run back the way we came, Hell, we can’t run period. We’re barely limping along as it is.” He took another peak to see if they were actually coming their direction or if they had gone somewhere else. What he saw filled him with hope while also turning his blood to ice.

Albus Dumbledore was bound and being led by a group of what looked like five Death Eaters. There were two leading the way while two others walked on each side of the curiously smiling wizard, with one bringing up the rear. Moody swore under his breath, knowing that even if there were only those five, it really did not matter much. They were in the open and could not make it to any cover before the group of Death Eaters and their captive caught up with them, and there was no way in Heaven or Hell they could take them out without wands. Even if they could somehow have taken them by surprise, most of his escape party would hardly be worth much in a fist fight.

“They’ve got Albus.”

Arthur’s eyes bulged with surprise, but he quickly turned his attention to what they could possibly do for anyone now. “Right. Shall we make our last stand then?”

“We can sure give it one Hell of a try.” Both men turned back to the waiting teens, doing their best to keep any fear from their expressions.

“Okay, new plan, kids. I need you all to make a line across the tunnel and look as imposing as possible. There’s a group of Death Eaters coming...” He was interrupted by a few gasps, a few more curses, and a group of faces trying to cover their fears with determination. “Now, now. You didn’t let me tell you the best part.”

“They’re going to kill us quickly so we won’t have to suffer too long?” Mad-Eye rolled his eye, wondering why he had actually wished for a sarcastic reply only a few minutes ago.

“No, young Mr. Malfoy. If you had let him finish, Arthur was going to say that Albus is with them.”

Arthur smiled as big a smile as he could manage and said, "And if I know Dumbledore like I think I do, he's got something up his sleeve. They wouldn't've caught him unless he wanted to be caught. He's got a plan, so we'll just hope we can fit in to it."

Everyone nodded and began forming a line across the tunnel, blocking the path of the Death Eaters who had just come in to view and had already raised their wands.

VvVv

Albus looked closely at the curve in the wall, sure he had caught a blur of movement as he had rounded the corner with his escorts. The bright red flare of color left only a few options open for who it could have been. Closing his eyes briefly, he hoped he would not have to tip his hand before getting close to Voldemort.

When they caught up to the place he had seen the still unidentified Weasley, he was a little unprepared for the sight that met his eyes. Arthur Weasley and Alastor Moody were standing on either side of a row of his students. He looked over them from left to right : Arthur, Draco, Neville, Ginny, Ron, Hermione, Seamus, and Mad-Eye. First he noticed their appearance and fought the complete rage that roared inside of him. They had obviously been tortured horribly over the last few hours. Draco and Seamus looked the better off physically, though it was with that thought that Dumbledore realized their group was missing more than just Harry. Dean was not standing with his friends, and Seamus was making it very obvious there was a painful reason for this fact.

He nodded very slightly to Arthur, who only caught the nod as he was looking for any sign from Albus. Gripping his wand in his hand, where it had been resting against his crossed arms inside his oversized sleeves, Albus prepared to begin throwing as many binding charms as he could get out in a single breath. Just as he began withdrawing his arm, chaos erupted down the passageway, behind the Order of the Phoenix members.

Cursing the worsening odds, he watched as seven more Death Eaters sprinted up to the escaped prisoners, wands drawn and ready for use, of course. Deciding there was little to do, other than see how things went, Albus relaxed his grip on his wand. He shared a sorrowful smile with Arthur, shaking his head in answer to the questions in the man's eyes. It appeared that his plan had backfired. Being alone, he could risk his life easily, if it meant ending Voldemort for good. But the same decision was much more difficult if he was forced to factor in eight more people. Possibly ten, depending on where Dean and Harry were.

Taking deep breaths against the rage still burning in his chest, Albus hoped this was not the end of

them all.

VvVv

"Well, well, well. Harry Potter!" Harry sent a glare towards Voldemort, who was seated on what was obviously meant to be a throne. The chair looked far too old to actually support any weight at all, and the man seated on it was wearing clothing that was every bit as ragged looking. The attempted raising of the seat by placing it atop a small mound of dirt to raise Voldemort to eye level when sitting, only added to the ridiculousness of it all.

"Hello, Tom. What's with the dirt hole and the ratty clothes? I do hope those aren't you're best robes. After all, you've waited all this time to kill me, I figured you'd make a production out of it. I have to say, this is a bit of a let down."

Hatred flared up in Voldemort's eyes as he rose from his seat. "Silence!" He quickly strode across the room to Harry and wrapped his fingers around the boy's neck. "You will only use this to speak, when I allow it."

With a gasp, Harry fell to the floor when Voldemort released him, trying to ignore the pounding of his temples. He took advantage of the few moments he was given when Lucius strode over to his Master and whispered in his ear. When Harry saw the look in their eyes, he doubted he would find the news anywhere near as pleasurable as Voldemort obviously was.

"Excellent! Despite your terrible attitude, Mr. Potter, I have a surprise for you." Voldemort walked leisurely back to his throne, arms stretched out and taking deep breaths as if he were strolling through a beautiful landscape and enjoying the fresh air. "Allow me the opportunity to show how very generous I am with those who pledge their lives to me."

Harry felt his stomach twist into even more knots as he followed Voldemort's gaze to a darkened doorway in the far corner of the room. "Bring him in!"

Harry felt his entire body go limp and numb as he registered two things before completely losing the ability to say or do anything. First he saw the unmistakable blonde head of Draco Malfoy being drug into the room between two of Voldemort's goons, and second he heard a harsh voice scream as if everything the person had lived for had just been taken away from them. He was too focused on the still form of Draco being deposited at Voldemort's feet to realize the scream had come from him.

"I see you know our young traitor." Harry refused to look away from the body lying on it's back, he was staring at Draco's torso, hoping for any movement at all. "Oh, he's not dead...yet. Lucius, my worthy servant, come claim what is yours!"

Harry growled in the back of his throat, beginning to reach for his wand, when he was stopped by the small shake of Percy Weasley's head. He was following closely behind Lucius, as the older walked with his head down towards Voldemort.

"Thank you my Lord, I have been looking forward to this for months."

Harry watched as Lucius raised his wand and pointed it at the body laying before him. Before he could say anything, the boy sat up and looked around the room like a lost child. His eyes fell on Harry and his arm reached out shakily for him. "Help?" It was just above a whisper, but it echoed around the chamber for a few seconds, only to be followed by a flash of green light and the booming voice of Lucius Malfoy as he finally spoke his curse.

"Avada Kedavra!"

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Thirty-Two - What It All Comes Down To

A/N-Much thanks and love to CDumbledore for his Beta work!

Seconds before Albus Dumbledore rounded the corner to find his friends stretched across a dirt hallway in Voldemort's underground lair, Alastor Moody turned to the teenagers between Arthur Weasley and himself and said one thing. "Constant vigilance!"

He was glad to see a few of their heads raise a little higher. It was still nowhere near enough to get them out of their current situation alive, but it was something.

When Albus and his Death Eater escort reached them, Moody tried not to think too long on the look that flashed across Dumbledore's face. It was only there for a brief moment, before being covered up by the usual look of complete control, but it was enough for Moody to know that whatever plans Albus may have had were now going to need some serious modifications.

He watched the small nod to Arthur and prepared himself for action, only to curse their fate when he heard more Death Eaters rushing up behind them. "Well, I wondered how long it'd take them to realize we'd escaped." He looked over at the nearest masked figure and frowned in mock disappointment. "I think Old Voldemort needs to set up some sort of testing to keep you all more on your toes. Apparently, you have grown quite complacent in the daily torture regimen."

Albus smiled in spite of himself at Moody's unending ability to make sarcastic remarks to infuriate his enemies. They both hoped silently that it would work and buy them a few seconds of time to think while one or more of the Death Eaters rose to the bait. They were not disappointed.

Raising his wand, the Death Eater who had just been spoken to, stepped within inches of Moody's face. "What is it about you fools that prevents you from knowing when to close your damned mouths?" He pressed his wand into the old wizard's neck, forcing Moody to stumble backwards a step. "Crucio!"

Instantly Mad-Eye dropped to the dirt floor, writhing uncontrollably from the intense pain jabbing into every nerve. His vision blacked over, but unconsciousness was prevented by the ending of the hex. Using the brief, silent pause that followed, he began taking a few very labored breaths, fearing that his broken ribs had punctured at least one of his lungs.

His vision returned, providing enough of a fuzzy blur for him to see Draco Malfoy leaning over him with a very worried look on his face. Moody accepted the help when Draco grasped his hand and gently pulled him back to what resembled a standing position.

Before moving away from the half embrace he had used to pull Moody up, Draco whispered very quietly in his ear, "Dobby."

Unable to actually waste air on speaking, Moody nodded and clapped Draco on the shoulder, squeezing his thanks and understanding before dropping his arm and turning to face the same Death Eater again.

Watching all of this happen to his dear friend, Dumbledore nearly missed the silent appearance of a house-elf behind the seven masked men opposite him. He wanted to laugh out loud when he realized it was the crazy little creature Harry had freed and was currently employed at Hogwarts. It certainly answered his questions of how everyone had made it out of their cells, though raised a few more of just how this particular elf was able to breach wards that even he had been befuddled by.

“I do think they have all had more than enough of that!” Dumbledore did not care if his anger tinted his voice, in fact he hoped it would. He was a man of second chances, and he wanted to make sure that all twelve of the masked men surrounding him and his friends knew they were pushing him way beyond his limits. He thought it only fair they be given a chance to rethink their actions and run away quickly.

Unfortunately, it appeared that none of them was going to make anything easier on him.

“They’ve had enough when I say so!”

Dumbledore felt a pang in his heart at the recognition of the young man’s voice. He had heard rumors that this former student, having moved on from Hogwarts just two years prior, had joined Lord Voldemort. It still hurt to have those suspicions confirmed, regardless of how well he had personally known the boy, regardless of how many different times it had happened over the years.

“How unfortunate for you to believe so. You should have taken the time to listen during your stay at Hogwarts. I know you did not learn your hatred and blind ignorance there.” Dumbledore continued to talk, all the while keeping eye contact with the still unnoticed house elf. It was still going to be an uphill struggle, but now that he was not the only one with the ability to use magic, he felt the odds improving, if only slightly.

“Silence!” One of the Death Eaters with the group of seven was holding up his hand, giving a very exasperated look at the younger man. “I know that I have had enough of hearing an old coot playing games with a young moron. We were sent to retrieve these prisoners by the Dark Lord. I think we have kept him waiting long enough, though I’m sure the addition of the great Albus Dumbledore to the guest list will buy us some leniency.”

The man beside him pointed to the Death Eaters on either side of Dumbledore. “Where is his wand, you did take it from him, didn’t you?”

“Of course we did!” Parkinson moved forward, holding out the wand he had taken from Dumbledore.

“Good. He just has that smug look of his, as if he knows something we don’t. Just wanted to make sure he wasn’t about to pull his wand out and start flinging hexes.”

“What makes you think that I do not know something that you have yet to be made aware of?” Dumbledore prepared himself to move quickly, hoping with everything inside his old body that Dobby would not be long in following him into action once the elf saw him pull his wand. “For instance, while you were all enjoying that display of torture, a few Ministry Aurors could have snuck up behind you.”

When half of them spun around out of paranoia to check their unprotected backs, Dumbledore leapt into action. Pulling his wand from his sleeve, he had four of his guards dropped to the floor before they realized what was going on.

Moody brought his fist around and connected with Parkinson's face, causing the man to drop his wand and grab for his nose. Moody then snatched the wand from the floor and had Parkinson out of the fight with a well placed hex of his own. He fired off a dizzying barrage of spells as he tried to place himself between the Death Eaters and everyone else. The remaining seven were proving to be more of a threat than the five surrounding Dumbledore had been. That is until one of them backed into, and tripped over, Dobby.

As Arthur and Draco scrambled to grab wands from the fallen Death Eaters, Dobby raised his hands and moved to stand between his friends and his enemies.

"You will not harm them!"

Despite the threatening tone in his voice, the look of pure anger on his face, and the growing surge of energy in his hands, all seven remaining Death Eaters laughed at the tiny creature. They obviously did not consider him much of a threat, pushing him out of the way and walking past him as they began firing hexes, forcing Dumbledore and Moody to begin retreating backwards as fast as their group could move.

As the hexes began flying down the hallway from both sides, it was pretty obvious who had the upper hand. Even though Draco and Arthur had been able to find wands, they were having trouble doing anything overly effective with them.

Draco was doing his best to keep low, while also keeping his friends out of the line of fire. He was becoming more and more appreciative of the reasons for everyone having their own wands. It was obvious to him that the wands must really choose their wizards and witches, as the piece of wood he held was only allowing him to cast at about a first year level.

Moving down the hall, they were glad to find a doorway deep enough that the unarmed could all huddle in, out of direct line of fire. "Malfoy! Stay with them, you aren't doing anything but getting in the damned way!"

Draco wanted to protest, but couldn't disagree with Moody's words, not with his current wand situation. He still didn't have to be happy about it though, and glared over at the man as he started to make his way back to his friends.

"Keep an eye on our backs, would ya, Draco?" Arthur Weasley added quickly, knowing the look Draco was giving Alastor. You do not raise six sons and not know how to get someone out of the way, while still making them feel useful. "And make sure everyone's ready to move quickly, as soon as we need them to." Draco nodded, sending a quick smile of thanks.

Just as he reached the corner and turned to check on everyone, one of the Death Eaters shouted down the hall, "Hey, blood traitor!" Draco's attention snapped fully to the masked face in the middle, recognizing him as the same younger one from earlier. "Send my regards to your mother."

The last was said with such cruelty and coldness it seemed to freeze time, in the same way it froze Draco's blood with his anger. He listened as the wizard cast a curse, he watched the green colored light come out of the wand, and he found it impossible to do anything other than watch his own death come speeding down the hall towards him.

At the last second Draco was wrenched off his feet and to the safety around the corner, but not before he watched Moody leap out in front of him and take the curse to the chest. Before he could register too much more, he ended up in a pile of limbs with Ron on the floor. "What the bloody Hell were you thinking?"

Rather than respond, Draco hurriedly fought his way back to his feet and rushed around the corner. His eyes met Dumbledore's and he felt his stomach knot up in reaction to the sadness he found in them. As his muscles continued to tighten into a ball, he felt an intense anger flowing through him, and he gave in to its desire to see all the Death Eaters dead.

Stepping over to where Moody had fallen, Draco picked up the wand from his hand, having dropped his other somewhere in being tackled to the floor by Ron.

"You fucking Bastards!" Draco raised his newly acquired wand, ignoring the way it was shaking in his grip and took two more steps forward before the Death Eaters started to cast various hexes. In the instant it took them to say the well practiced words, Dobby stepped out from behind them and got directly in Draco's path.

As the seven curses leapt from their wands, Dobby threw a glowing ball of bright bluish light into the air, effectively absorbing all the energy that came in contact with it.

"Dobby has warned the evil men. Dobby will not be ignored again!"

Before any of them could get another spell off their lips, Dobby raised his right hand into the air, palm up as if holding something heavy, then drew it back to his shoulder and pushed with all his might into the open air.

Draco watched in complete awe as the seven Death Eaters were physically lifted and thrown a hundred yards before being stopped by a turn further down the hall. Even at that distance, there was no mistaking the sounds of shattering bones and ripping flesh. The simple fact that no cries of pain were heard at all, made the fates of all seven obvious.

Dumbledore placed a hand on Draco's shoulder, startling him out of his thoughts. "Draco..." Slowly, he turned to look at Dumbledore's face, unsure of what to do now. "Go back to your friends." Nodding numbly, Draco turned around and began walking back to the corner, feeling a fresh round of grief filling him at the sight of Moody still laying where he had fallen.

Behind him, he heard Dumbledore begin comforting the house-elf, but was too focused on the body laying on its side in the middle of the tunnel to really pay attention to what was being said. When he was a few feet away, he froze, sucking in a shocked breath of air. He stared intently at the slumped shoulders again, sure he saw them move and hoping he was not just going insane.

After what seemed an eternity, he was about to decide he had actually lost his mind, when they rose and fell again, as if Moody were taking shallow breaths.

"Arth...Mr. Weasl...um..." He took a cautious step forward, eyes glued to the back facing him. He glanced up to see Arthur standing a few steps away, also staring intently at Moody. "Is...is he..."

"It's not possible...no one survives that..." Arthur looked up into the watering, cautiously hopeful eyes of Draco with a similar look in his own. Any further speculation was brought to a halt when against all logic and possibility, Mad-Eye Moody coughed.

"Bloody Hell!" Both cursed as they took the last few steps and dropped to their knees next to him. Arthur gently laid him over onto his back and nearly jumped out of his skin when Moody looked him in the eye.

"How..."

"Nothing to it other than that little bastard's probably never even cast the killing curse before, let alone actually meaning it enough to kill." Moody began coughing again, managing to keep his mouth closed to prevent from spraying blood. He swallowed as much as he could around the bile in his throat before talking again. "Forty years ago, I'd've brushed that right off and taken him without breaking a sweat."

"I have no doubt, my old friend." Draco was again startled out of his thoughts by Dumbledore coming up behind him and placing a hand on his shoulder. He was also surprised to see that everyone else was standing again and had circled around Moody. "Alas, it seems that age has a way of allowing our luck to catch up with us."

Rolling his eye, Moody smirked up at Dumbledore. "As usual, I have no idea what the bleeding hell you are getting at, old man." He laughed lightly, mindful to keep it from turning into a cough. "Just tell me one thing, Albus. Will I have anywhere near as much fun in the next adventure as I did in this one?"

With a smile, Dumbledore said, "I, for one, hope to find things a bit more...peaceful."

"I guess I could do with a bit of a rest, myself. If just for a little while."

Draco felt the grip Mad-Eye had on his hand begin to loosen, but rather than wonder just when it was he had taken the older wizard's hand to begin with, he squeezed back harder. "Wait, that's it? You're just laying down and giving up!"

"Malfoy..."

"NO! I haven't even thanked you for saving my life!" Draco could feel his desperation rising as the hand grew weaker and weaker. "...owe you a life debt, you can't..."

"Malfoy..." Moody looked up into the slightly bemused face of Dumbledore, then to Arthur's for help, but neither seemed able to offer any assistance. "Malfoy!" Draco's hand and jaw were beginning to shake, as Moody moved his tired eye from one face to another, finding nothing but a look of heart-

broken confusion in everyone's expressions. "DRACO!"

Finally getting his attention, Moody lifted his free hand and pulled Draco closer to his face. "Just make sure Potter kills that bastard and lives to talk about it for a long time, and we're even. Deal?" He waited until Draco nodded yes, then continued, "Now, stop crying over an old man who's reached his end and get going. Death is never easy to see first-hand, but you have to put it aside until there's time to deal with it properly. Now is not that time. Go, and don't look back."

Getting up, Draco allowed his friends to begin leading him down the hall. He noticed a very sullen looking Dobby taking point and wondered if the house-elf had ever had to kill before, or if it had ever had to be so violent. He heard Dumbledore saying an incantation and then heard the sound of flames, but never gave in to the desire to look back even as the soft blue light from behind them began to fade.

Within a few more yards, Dumbledore and Arthur had caught back up to the group, but nothing was said by anyone for a good ten minutes, other than to pass on directions from Dobby.

Draco spent most of the silence wondering why Moody's death was affecting him so much. It wasn't as if he'd really known the man, but did that matter at all when someone died saving another's life? He wondered if he would have been as upset if Moody had not jumped in front of the curse to save him, but had just fallen in battle. If he did not feel mostly responsible for the fact that Moody made the decision to sacrifice his own life to save Draco's, he doubted he would have had the same reaction.

Draco wondered how it was that Harry had lived with these questions about so many people, for so many years. But then that was the end of his train of self-pitying thoughts. Not only because his thoughts of Harry reminded him just what it was that did matter, but also because Dobby had stopped them all at what appeared to be a dead end.

"Master Dumbledore, Dobby is sure the evil mens is on the other side of this wall."

"Thank you Dobby, you have done wonderfully tonight. I'm don't know what..." The rest of Dumbledore's words were cut short by a echoing scream coming through the wall in front of them. It was full of despair and loss, but at the same time leaving no doubts to the rage that was building inside the person.

Draco knew that voice. Draco lived for that voice, and it was killing him to hear the complete desperation in it. Without a further thought, he rushed to the wall and began searching for a way through. Finding no obvious door, his hands began tearing at the dirt, ripping away the wall, layer by layer.

Harry stopped screaming, plunging everything into complete silence in the tunnel. Draco pressed his head against the dirt, desperate to hear what was going on behind the barrier. The pounding of his heart was making it nearly impossible to hear anything else.

After a few seconds, they all heard two more words spoken loudly and clearly.

"Avada Kedavra!"

The words echoed through Draco's head, much in the same way they echoed through the tunnel, then everything was once again returned to a complete and total silence. Draco stared blankly at the wall before him, straining for any sound, any sound at all that would tell him that the worst had not just happened.

“Harry!”

VvVv

James Potter was still laying where Dumbledore had left him, cursing the old man with everything he could think of. Not only had he been left out of what promised to be the final battle, but he was being prevented from protecting his son. Not to mention the fact that the old loon had actually taken his wand. To say James Potter was livid, was the understatement of the decade. That is until he was distracted by approaching voices, then he was both livid and a little worried he would be found alone and unarmed by some young Death Eater with a desire to rise in the ranks quickly. Nothing promised a promotion like finding and killing James Potter. He never had a chance to work around the thought and realize that not many people actually knew he was even alive, before the voices became distinct enough for him to recognize them.

With that recognition came a rush of relief. Turning his eyes as far to the side as he could, he was able to make out the unmistakable mass that was Hagrid. Trying his best not to laugh out loud at the ridiculous scene of the half-giant trying to sneak somewhere, James waited for them to see him. He doubted that startling a group of wizards and witches with wands drawn in the dead of night was wise. When Hagrid was a few steps away, and had still yet to notice him laying there, James suddenly remembered Dumbledore throwing a concealment charm on him.

The ground underneath him shook with Hagrid's stride and for a horrifying moment James thought he was going to be crushed underneath the large feet of the Hogwarts groundskeeper.

“No, no, wait! Look out!” Being unable to curl into a ball and hide his eyes, James was forced to lay flat on his back and watch as Hagrid stepped over him, just missing his limbs. The half-giant nearly lost his balance when James had cried out from right beneath him.

“Finite Incantatem!” The instant James felt control over his muscles return, he was rolling out from underneath Hagrid and back on his feet in seconds. He was not taking any chances with the huge man still swaggering a little on the hillside.

“May I presume that Albus left you in such a state, having decided to charge in and save us all?”

James sent a sad smile to Minerva McGonagall. “You know how those Gryffindors can be.”

“It's a wonder any of ya live long enough ta do somethin' good with all that brav'ry.” James took a look around him at the few faces now standing in a loose circle. Hagrid, McGonagall, and Snape were the only three of the five that he knew by name. The other two he had seen around the Order's Headquarters, knowing only that they were Aurors, very young Aurors.

“I'm guessing that when everything hit the fan, you went to round up some sort of cavalry?” James

asked Snape.

“I would never have put it in such a crude or Muggle fashion, but yes. When I returned here, there was no one else. Apparently I should have waited a little longer, then Dumbledore would not have gone back in alone.”

James briefly thought about rising to the bait in the man’s words, but bit his lip and moved on. “And this is everyone you could get? No offense to you all, but we went in with nearly twenty and were easily dealt with.”

“That may be so, sir, but half of those twenty were still kids...”

Before James could respond, he was surprised to hear Snape give his response to the Aurors thoughts. “Everyone of those ‘kids’ have not only been trained to a level higher than you achieved while in school, but have fought Voldemort at least once already. How many damned times have you faced Voldemort face to face?”

When the only reply was a very sheepish look, Snape rolled his eyes and snorted his obviously high opinion of the young woman. “Well, I think that settles that issue. Gentlemen, we are going in.”

Not waiting for a reply or argument, Minerva began walking over the hill with a very purposeful stride. As James followed, he could not shake the idea that the witch looked as if she were just going to deal with some unruly students. Of course, having been on the receiving end of her lectures more than a few times in his life, he wondered how quick he would be to stand up to her when she came charging into a room with wand drawn.

When they reached the door, Hagrid walked up to it first, more than too large to ever fit through. “I guess you’ll just have to...” Before James finished his sentence, Hagrid had reached forward and seemed to have taken the doorway into a bear hug. They rest of them had just enough time to realize what he was planning and get out of the way.

Hagrid made a half growling, half roaring sound and lifted the entire door, along with two feet of earth on either side of it, and tossed it to the side. Throwing a big grin over his shoulder, Hagrid charged into the underground lair, ready to absorb any hexes thrown by anyone unlucky enough to be waiting just inside the doorway.

“Well, that’s certainly one way of getting in,” The second Auror said.

“If one wants to announce to all and sundry that they have arrived, then yes, it most definitely works,” Snape sneered, then walked through the gaping hole that had once been a door.

“Don’t mind him, he gets cranky when he misses his nap.” James smirked at the two Aurors and followed Snape into the tunnels. He hoped this time turned out a hell of a lot better than the previous attempt. He was not sure how much time had passed since their initial attack, but he knew that it had been far too many hours for them to be able to try a third time.

VvVV

Harry stood completely still, watching the now still body falling over and over in his mind. He had watched the light fade out of those eyes just moments before. He had watched the body of Draco Malfoy collapse at his father's feet. But he knew something that he was sure Voldemort and all his Death Eaters thought he was unaware of.

It had all been in those eyes that had looked over at him, asking for help. Those eyes had broken his heart, made him now wish he had taken some action instead of allowing Percy to cause him to hesitate. It had been those eyes that had told him something was very wrong with what he was seeing.

Those eyes had been a very deep brown, filled with pain and determination. They had not been Draco's. They had been Dean's.

Harry felt rage boiling up in his throat like a burning bile. He felt his nails pierce into his palms, but did not release any of the pressure in his fists. He looked into the face of Lucius Malfoy, eyes blazing with hatred and simply said to the quite room, "You are going to fucking die."

Harry was about to explain all the painful ways he was going to watch Lucius Malfoy pay for killing his friend, when he heard the last thing he expected at that moment. Muffled just a little by the dirt wall to his left, Harry heard the unmistakable voice of Draco Malfoy calling out his name in anguish.

"Harry!"

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Thirty-Three - Into The Dark

A/N - All my many thanks go to C Dumbledore for his beta work on this chapter.

The small group of Order members charged through the dirt tunnels, hexing any Death Eater they came across before most had a chance to even raise their wands in defense. They did not take a moment to reflect on how quickly everything was happening, they did not have a moment to spare on such trivial things. Neither did they question why or where they were charging to at a full run in the dim, dank underground lair. They had all the reasons and directions they needed.

Draco's scream.

James Potter could think of only one reason he was hearing so much anguish in a voice calling his son's name, and it was anything but a happy reason. He found himself fervently hoping he was not going to have another reason to hate Albus Dumbledore after tonight. Harry was his single reason for living now, he would not think favorably of anyone who caused that to be taken away from him.

He fired off a trio of particularly painful hexes at a pair of Death Eaters and charged off down the corridor they had fallen back in to. His anxious run turned into a full sprint just as Draco and the others came into view. When they were only feet from the others, Draco's scream ended with a crack and a sob.

“Headmaster, everyone, MOVE!” Without giving much time for anyone to register the sudden appearance of the half-giant, McGonagall, Snape, James, and the two Aurors, Hagrid charged full force into the dirt wall that Draco was now beating his fists against. Spreading his arms as wide as he could, he repeated his actions at the entrance. When he stepped back a large chunk of wall was gone, exposing the room behind.

“You son-of-a-bitch!” Draco was the first to slip through the gap and had his borrowed wand pointing at his father. In his quick stride across the room, he barely registered the presence of Percy, let alone the fact that Voldemort was actually there and watching everything unfold with a small grin. His rage was acting as blinders to anything other than Lucius.

“Now, now, Draco. I believe your father has already spoken to you about your manners...” Draco snapped his attention to Percy, who was standing a few feet away with his wand already swishing around with a curse. Deciding he had little time remaining to rid the world of Lucius, Draco started to fling the first curse he could think of at his father.

"Ava..."

“Petrificus Totalus!” Draco was startled to hear a spell being cast by someone behind him, but had little time to think on it as he dove to avoid the spell Lucius had cast while he'd been distracted.

“Draco!” Harry withdrew his hidden wand and sprinted to where Draco had landed on the ground. Without any thought to where they were, or the fact that Lucius Malfoy had a wand trained on them, Harry kneeled next to Draco, placed his hands on either side of his face and placed a desperate,

hard kiss on his lips. "Merlin, I thought I'd lost you."

Draco threw his arms around Harry and hugged him close. "Harry, I..." Before he could voice his own worries, a cold hissing voice brought both of them back to the reality of their situation.

"Ahh, so we have the real Draco Malfoy!" Voldemort clasped his hands together and took a few steps toward them. "And such a wonderfully touching reunion."

"That's close enough Tom. I don't believe either of those boys wants you laying another hand on them. Ever." Dumbledore strode through the gap, followed closely by the rest of the group that had not already rushed inside the room. Coming up behind Arthur, he placed a reassuring hand on the man and dropped his voice to just above a whisper. "You did what was required. And a fair deal nicer than many would have bothered."

Arthur nodded silently, still training his wand on his son. Percy simply glared daggers from the floor at them both as Albus stepped over his frozen body.

"I believe the rest of this fight is between the two of us, Tom. There is no need for anyone else to die tonight, other than you."

"Dumbledore?!" Voldemort was shaking with uncontrolled rage as he turned to face the older wizard. "I have had enough of your meddling, old man." Both raised their wands to cast, but at the last second Voldemort turned his aim on Harry and Draco. "It ends here!"

"Avada Kedavra!" Both Lucius and Voldemort screamed the curse with their wands pointing at the couple. Harry watched the twin beams of green light speed across the room toward him and Draco, as time seemed to slow down long enough for him to take one last look around the room at his friends.

Ron and Hermione were leaning heavily on each other to stand, but Ron was still finding the ability to kick Percy a few times in the side as they stood next to Mr. Weasley. Seamus was slumped against the wall where he had pulled Dean's body unnoticed, holding the now un-glamoured boy in his lap. Hagrid and McGonagall were helping Snape fight off a group of Death Eaters that were trying to come through an actual door, with Ginny and Neville helping as much as they could by throwing clumps of dirt. James Potter was stretching out his arm to his son as he tried to get around Dumbledore and across the room.

And then he turned his eyes to Draco. One look into those burning silver eyes and Harry was relieved of fear and filled with conviction. This would be the night the prophecy was fulfilled. This would be the moment the Wizarding World had waited for since he was one year old. Tonight, Harry Potter was going to kill Lord Voldemort.

As time seemed to catch back up with reality, Harry heard Draco call out "Vivificus Contego!" With in seconds, the two killing curses reached them. They were instantly surrounded by a shimmering green light that crackled like lightning as it danced around their globe of protection. Harry watched the last of the hexes fade away into nothing and could not help the smile that spread across his face as he looked up into first Lucius' and then Voldemort's eyes.

"You didn't really think it would be that easy, did you Tom?" Harry rose to his feet, helping Draco stand as well. He could feel the magic being poured into the shield around them from Draco.

"Draco, lower that damned shield now!"

Harry looked quizzically at Lucius, wondering if the man had actually thought that would have worked. "My dear, dear Lucius. I believe I still owe you for the death of my friend."

As Lucius Malfoy turned his full attention to Harry, preparing himself to duel, Voldemort began taking small steps back towards his throne, unnoticed by everyone except Albus.

"I told you that you were going to fucking die."

Lucius began firing off a quick succession of Unforgivables, only to watch every single one be absorbed by Draco's protection charm. Harry watched the man's face distort with first frustration and then a desperate rage. Draco gripped his arm, hoping to keep from falling back to the floor. His charm was designed to replenish the caster, but after more than a few killing curses, even the best shields started to grow taxing.

"Harry, anytime..." Draco whispered into his ear. Harry turned his cheek into Draco's lips and nodded his understanding after receiving a weak kiss.

Turning his attention back to Lucius, Harry raised his wand before speaking. "Malfoy, I want you to know one thing before you die." Making sure he was looking the man in the eye, Harry smirked. "You failed."

A look of complete rage reclaimed Lucius' face and he growled, charging straight for the two teens. "You failed to create an evil Death Eater clone of yourself!" Lucius reached them and found himself repelled by the shield and flung a few feet into the air. Rising from the floor, he charged them again.

"You failed to ruin the wonderful person your son is." Again, Lucius found himself hurled backwards into the air when he reached the shield.

"Harry! Do it now, I'm losing my hold..." Draco slumped fully into Harry's back, barely able to focus on anything other than holding the shield in place.

"You failed. And I won."

With one last moan, Draco slipped into unconsciousness, all his weight collapsing into Harry as soon as the shield disappeared. Lucius made what sounded like a half laugh, half howl and charged them again.

"Minuo Siccus!" Harry watched as numerous cuts appeared all over Lucius. The man's clothing was soaked through with blood by the time he hit his knees, crying out in anguish. Looking behind Lucius, Harry saw a shaken Seamus lower the wand in his hand and spit in the direction of the bleeding man before walking back to Dean's body and sitting calmly next to him. Harry let his own wand drop back to his side, unused.

Snape came up behind Harry and looked down at the man he had once called friend. "Please, Severus..." With a quick flick of his wand, Severus ended the man's suffering forever.

"Potter, what are you waiting for, an invitation?" Harry's eyes followed Snape's nod to the other side of the room where Harry found Albus and Voldemort locked in a fierce duel. The dimly lit floor around them was being painted brilliantly with flashes of color, only to be replaced seconds later by a new burst of magic. "Go! I will make sure he survives," Snape yelled when Harry looked back to Draco.

He was prevented from running across the room by a gentle hand on his shoulder. "Harry, you don't have to do this."

Looking back into his father's eyes, Harry grinned sadly. "Even if that were true, we both know I would never leave him alive if I had the chance to rid the world of such an evil thing."

"Then we do it together." Harry was surprised to see Draco standing next to James, looking ready to pass out, but too determined to be talked out of anything. A very disgruntled Snape was sending a glare after Draco, letting Harry know he had already tried and failed to do just that. "There was something in those runes about enemies teaming up to fight and their powers being doubled, or it may have been weaknesses. I'm not really sure as we never really got a chance to figure out all the structure and..."

"Draco. You don't have to say anything else. I get it; we do this together." Taking both their hands, Harry began walking toward his destiny. More assured of the outcome than he had ever been. And more sure that he wanted to survive his confrontation with Voldemort than he had ever thought he would be. There was too much to live for now.

VvVv

Albus could feel it in his bones. He was losing and there was nothing he could do about it. He cursed his old age, he cursed his inability to stay out of these situations, but mostly he cursed Fate for always leaving him to fight all the evil in the world.

"You're hardly the threat to me that you once were." Albus let the taunt wash over him. There was little use in denying the fact when it was rather obvious that he was having some trouble keeping up with the pace of hexes Voldemort was throwing at him.

"That was always your problem, Tom. You never knew how to tell the difference between your enemies and your friends. I was only a threat to you once you made yourself a threat to the world. You could have done so much..."

"Shut it, you old fool! Your words meant nothing when I was a stupid boy in school, why would they mean anything to me now?"

Out of the corner of his eye, Albus saw Harry, Draco, and James walking towards them hand in hand. He took a deep breath, preparing himself to keep Voldemort distracted as long as possible. Deciding to take the offense, he switched to more aggressive hexes and spells, feeling his magic draining with each muttered incantation. Voldemort stumbled backwards under the onslaught, but

still managed to counter everything thrown at him.

His breathing was labored and coming in short gasps, but still Albus pressed his swiftly slipping advantage. "You can never win, Tom. Whether it is by me, or another, you will meet your end tonight."

Dumbledore looked over into Harry's eyes and smiled warmly at him. "It is time, my boy." Completely drained, Albus stood up straight and saluted the three by taping his wand to his forehead. "To the next adventure!"

As Voldemort cast the killing curse, Dumbledore bowed slightly to the three men watching in understanding horror. With a final twinkle in his eye, Albus slowly lowered himself to the floor as the spell robbed him of life. By the time the spell had finished its work, the old wizard looked like he was simply taking a nap, lying on his stomach with his head resting on his crossed arms.

VvVv

Ron had just finished placing another kick into his brother's stomach when a gasp from Hermione called his attention. He followed her line of sight and felt a small moan escape his throat. Dumbledore was slowly laying himself down, the flash of green light still lingering in everyone's eyes. As soon as Albus stopped moving though, the green immediately began being replaced by a burning white.

Neville knew that light, he had watched it sweep across the lake after filling him and Ginny with hope. He suddenly doubted he wanted to be so near the next time it was released. "Um, anyone else think we should get away?"

"Yes, Mr. Longbottom, that is an excellent idea." The four teens looked at Snape with looks of unrestrained shock. McGonagall let a small smile break her scowl at their reaction, then leapt into action. It was, after all, a very good idea to not receive the full brunt of the energy building itself up across the room.

"Now, you four! Get moving as best you can!" She looked over to where Seamus was still sitting, his hand stroking the top of Dean's head. "Severus..."

"Go, I will get him out." He looked over to where the other four were doing their best and realized they were in even worse shape than he had thought when they had reached them in the hall. "And get those damned Aurors to at least carry one of those four out of here. They're barely standing."

Even though Snape had been looking directly at McGonagall, Arthur nodded and began calling out orders to the Aurors, taking up Ginny on his own back. When they got back to where Percy was laying, Arthur looked down sadly at him. "I don't suppose I should let you die here. Your mother would feel cheated of the chance to kill you herself."

Percy glared back into his eyes, but could tell by the man's expression he was not joking. "When I release the spell you had better run, and I mean far away. I never want to see you again. If you ever show yourself in the Wizarding World, I will personally see you thrown into the darkest cell in Azkaban."

When Percy felt the ability to move return to his body he immediately moved to grab onto Arthur's legs. "Please, dad. I...I didn't mean to...please, don't..."

Arthur kicked himself free, doing his best to remain standing even with his daughter on his back, arms clinging tightly around his neck. "You are no son of mine!"

"But...I haven't even got my wand anymore..."

"If you want to go ask Seamus to return your wand, then be my guest. Just don't be surprised if he uses it on you first." Without looking back once, Arthur followed Hagrid through the hole in the wall.

From his place on one of Hagrid's shoulders, Neville sent an encouraging smile back to Ginny, not really sure what else to do. He was relieved when she returned it, followed by an appreciative nod from Arthur.

VvVv

"Mr. Finnegan." Snape glared down his nose, trying to convey how little time they had to deal with foolishness at the moment through his eyes. It was not working. Severus doubted Seamus even knew he was there. He certainly had not reacted to his presence.

"Mr. Finnegan, I will not say this again. We must get as far away as we can, little time remains!" He bent down over Seamus, forcing himself in to his view. "We do not have time for this, Potter is about..."

"Sir, we have to get Dean to Hogwarts."

Snape briefly closed his eyes, placing his hand over his mouth, then pulling it to pinch the bridge of his nose. He knew there were words to say, comforting words that would force Seamus to realize that his friend was truly gone. Snape knew there were nice ways to put things, but he had never had time for any such nonsense, and he certainly was not going to be able to come up with any of his own in their current spot.

"Dean is dead. There is nothing we can do for him. All we can do is get ourselves out of here and live." He could imagine the glare Minerva would give him when she learned of what he'd just said, but there really was no time to waste. "We must get out of these tunnels so we can Apparate back to Hogwarts."

Seamus glared up into the face just inches away from his own. He knew there were tears falling from his eyes, he knew his breathing was stuttered and shaky from crying, but worst of all, he knew his best friend was dead. "I know he's dead! I meant I will not leave him here. He doesn't deserve to be left down here, not with them." Seamus' eyes gazed out at the numerous Death Eaters lying dead around the room, his stare becoming blank once more.

Snape looked down at the broken boy, closing his eyes against the pain that burned through his heart for him. He knew it was never easy to lose a friend, especially the first time. "Mr. Fin...Seamus!" Their eyes met then, Snape not wasting any of Seamus' slipping attention. "I would

never ask you to leave him. We will take him with us, but we must hurry."

Seamus looked up, noticing the growing field of energy around Harry for the first time. "Um, professor..." Seamus simply pointed behind Snape, unable to actually find the words.

After glancing behind him, Severus cursed his never ending bad luck and picked up the body of Dean Thomas. "You will follow me now, we have but one hope."

"And that is?"

"That Draco's got one hell of a powerful shield working." They began walking as fast as they could towards the three figures they could just barely see within the light. "And that we can actually get inside with them before..."

"Severus!" Snape had just enough time to look into Draco's eyes before his entire world was washed away by glaring white light, then consciousness slipped from his grasp.

VvVvV

Voldemort felt the power of death flow through him, filling him with the rush he always got from casting the Killing Curse. He felt an intense joy bursting what was left of his heart, as he watched the last twinkle fade from Dumbledore's eyes. He had finally done it, he had killed Albus Dumbledore. So much for the supposed 'greatest wizard of the age' bullshit. The world was his now, there was nothing standing in his way.

Nothing except Harry Potter.

Feeling cheated out of his victory over Dumbledore, Voldemort turned to face the boy standing a few feet away from him. He turned his red eyes on each of the three now standing opposite him, their hands linked and their faces confident.

Voldemort felt a tremendous amount of magic pouring from the direction of those three, and for the first time in many years, he felt fear for his own life. He actually felt doubts flooding his mind about his ability to survive the coming duel and was watching one of the possible outcomes play out in his mind. He watched himself drop dead to the floor at Potter's hand and he stood transfixed to the scene playing out in his mind's eye. It was when he heard laughing coming from Harry that he realized what was happening, though it made him actually fearful of what the boy was capable of.

"Potter! Stay out of my head!"

"Oh, sorry, Tom. I just thought I'd give you fair warning. You know us Gryffindors, always trying to be fair to our enemies right up to the end." His eyelids dropped to half closed before he said anything else. Voldemort watched as the entire area around them began to flood with white light. "It is time to really put an end to all of your plans. Tonight you die, Tom. I hope you're ready."

VvVvV

Draco stood in the middle of the building magic and felt completely in awe of Harry. He could

actually feel the magic brushing against his skin, filling his lungs with each breath. He looked to his left and watched the grin on Harry's face grow with his confidence as the look on Voldemort's face betrayed his own doubts. Letting go of Harry's hand, he reached up and touched the back of his fingers to Harry's face, stroking his cheek gently with his thumb until Harry looked over at him. Having received his attention, Draco leaned over and brushed a kiss on Harry's lips.

"Let's go home," Draco whispered, when their lips broke apart.

"Just one more thing..." Harry said, turning his gaze back to Voldemort. Harry raised his voice to be heard above the magic circling around him. "This is the end, Tom."

Draco looked to the other side of Harry and saw James mouthing something to him while gesturing with his head. Draco looked behind him and saw Snape carrying Dean's body, with Seamus limping as fast as he could behind him. He looked back at Harry, transfixed momentarily by the look on his face, then realized it was too late to stop him from releasing the power swirling around them.

"Severus!"

James maneuvered himself behind Harry to be close enough for Draco to hear him. "Draco, grab onto Harry and cast your shield! If the runes are right, you should be able to cast a strong enough one for us and them."

Nodding his understanding, and hoping for the best, Draco recast the same shield he had used earlier. Just as he felt it slip into place, the very air around them seemed to explode with the release of magic. He watched as wave, after wave of pure energy pulsed from around them and spread out through the room.

He held on to the shield and his consciousness for as long as he could, but eventually the darkness won out and he was pulled deep into nothingness.

VvVv

Voldemort watched the two kiss, their silhouettes burned into his memory by the blinding magic being gathered by Harry. He had thrown a few hexes unsuccessfully into the swirling light until his wand had been ripped from his hand. There was nothing else to do now, but to await his end. Which, judging by the look Harry Potter was giving him now, was not far from coming.

The first wave to pulse from the trio knocked him hard into the wall five feet behind him. Before he could even get back to his feet, he began to be assaulted by repeated blows of pure energy. He could feel it ripping his flesh away, then his muscles and bones. He tried to ball himself against the pain, but quickly found his legs and arms being pulled out straight, forcing his back against the wall to take the brunt of the magic full on.

As his eyes dissolved inside his skull, Voldemort attempted to separate his soul from his body, only to find there was no escaping his doom this time. His body was now completely dissolved, leaving his spirit bound to the wall. He could not look away from Harry's face as it broke into a full smile.

Harry's hands came up, palms outwards, and all the remaining light focused itself into a straight

line of energy and headed straight for what remained of Tom Riddle. When the beam struck him, Voldemort screamed with the agony of actually feeling his soul being stripped away. He felt every last bit of himself dissolve into nothingness, eventually consuming him completely and silencing his thoughts and screams forever.

Harry watched the last of Voldemort disappear and then allowed himself to give in to the exhaustion screaming through his body. He dropped to the floor, landing on top of Draco and James, joining them in unconsciousness.

It was over. Harry Potter had fulfilled the prophecy that had robbed him of ever having a normal life. He was now the Savior of the Wizarding World.

Here are the translations for the words used in the spells.

Contego - Shield

Vivificus - Life-restoring

Minuo - To bleed someone

Siccus – Dry

Something To Sleep To

Chapter Thirty-Four - Epilogue

A/N - Many thanks to the wonderful C Dumbledore for the Beta!

VvVvV

A lone figure stood in the Hogwart's graveyard, a small breeze rustling his cloak. He was standing directly in front of a small, simple headstone, his head bowed slightly towards it. Opening his eyes, he began to speak aloud after brushing away a stray tear from his cheek.

"Hard to believe it's been five years. Five years today, exactly." He cleared his throat before continuing. "It seems impossible that so much has happened since then."

"I know I've already told you about how everything happened that night. I mean, who doesn't know the amazing tale of how Harry Potter saved us all from certain doom?" A soft sigh ended the attempted joke. "I know I can still remember that night..."

VvVvV

"Dean is dead. There is nothing we can do for him. All we can do is get ourselves out of here and live. We must get out of these tunnels so we can Apparate back to Hogwarts."

Seamus glared up into the face just inches away from his own. He knew there were tears falling from his eyes, he knew his breathing was stuttered and shaky from crying, but worst of all, he knew his best friend was dead. "I know he's dead! I meant I will not leave him here. He doesn't deserve to be left down here, not with them."

"Mr. Fin...Seamus!" Their eyes met then, Snape not wasting any of Seamus' slipping attention. "I would never ask you to leave him. We will take him with us, but we must hurry."

"Um, professor..." Seamus simply pointed behind Snape, unable to actually find the words.

"You will follow me now. We have but one hope."

"And that is?"

"That Draco's got one hell of a powerful shield working." They began walking as fast as they could towards the three figures they could just barely see within the light. "And that we can actually get inside with them before..."

"Severus!"

Seamus pushed Snape forward into the expanding shield, throwing himself after him. He watched Voldemort be completely destroyed, allowing his relief to drain the last bit of adrenaline from his system. He could feel his consciousness slipping and clutched Dean's body to his chest.

"We're going home, Dean. It's over."

VvVv

The tears were flowing freely down his face, blurring the letters on the stone. Crossing his legs underneath him, Seamus lowered himself to the ground and simply stared at the name carved in front of him until he had some control over his voice again.

"You know, I will never get used to seeing your name on this damned rock. No matter how long it's been since we buried you and Moody here with Professor Dumbledore. I've got every word memorized, and they all haunt me, Dean. 'Here lies Dean Thomas. Beloved son, unfailing friend, and undeniable hero. He gave his life so that many could live free.' I...I see them every time I close my eyes to sleep."

Seamus stretched his legs out in front of him and leaned back on his hands. "There really is a lot to fill you in on about this year, though. I guess I should get started. You know how I hate this place after dark."

"Let's see, since I was here last year..."

VvVv

"Harry, will you give it a rest? Everything is going to be perfect!"

"But Mione..."

"Don't you even start with me mister. It is a hot day, I'm eight and a half months pregnant, and I've had to deal with two of the most whiney-arsed, spoiled, gay men the world has ever seen for two days straight. I'm liable to just kill you both and be done with all this mess!"

"Careful, mate. I think she means it. She nearly had me beheaded for making a joke about losing the rings."

"And you deserved anything less? You don't mess with a pregnant woman, Seamus. Not when it's something this serious. You do have the rings, right? It was a joke..."

"All right. Hermione, Harry, I think you both need to take a moment and breathe. Don't worry, I've got the rings. I am after all, the Ring Bearer." He said the title with a dramatic flair, sending both Harry and Hermione's eyes rolling.

A soft knock on the door announced the arrival of Ron. "Hey Seamus, Draco is threatening to throw a fit 'unlike anything we've ever seen from a Malfoy' if he is not reassured that you actually did make it here with both rings. He heard someone make an off-handed comment about Hermione threatening you with your life for losing them."

"You can tell him everything is great and that I will remember to not make a joke around any of you again."

"And don't forget to come right back here, Ron. You are Harry's Honor Attendant. Draco's got Neville."

"Don't worry about it, Ron. I'll go and ease the git's mind. You stay here."

VvVvV

"You would have loved the ceremony. It was so beautiful and blessedly short. Of course, the reception afterwards was the party to end all parties, at least that was how it was billed."

"The twins did their best to ensure that no one forgot that night, no matter how drunk they got..."

Seamus sat back up, placing his face in his hands and rubbing away the stiffness of dried tears from his face. "I guess the best part of the night would have to be when Hermione went into labor..."

VvVvV

"Hey, Ring Bearer, any reason you're sitting here alone when there are so many attractive and unattached people getting drunk and making idiots of themselves?"

"It does seem strange that I'm not jumping at the chance for attention, huh?"

"I didn't necessarily mean it like that..."

"It's okay, Hermione. I know what you meant. I am usually the one making the biggest spectacle of himself. I guess I just let myself get too distracted."

"Your missing him."

"Yeah, but it's not as hard as it used to be. Your wedding was the hardest, I have to say. I think that was the last time I actually cried in public, though, so at least I'm making progress."

"Seamus, I...Oh!"

"What's wrong?"

"It's nothing. Probably just all the stress ge...OH!"

"Maybe I should go get Ron."

"Yeah, that might be a good idea..."

VvVvV

"She nearly had that kid right there in the middle of the party, Dean. It was crazy. And amazing. They had a boy, Caspian. Our friends from school have a baby boy. It makes me feel so old just to think about it."

"But that brings me to some great news of my own, well, I think it's great anyway." He gazed up to the sky, watching a few clouds pass slowly overhead before continuing. "I, um...I'm going to be a dad myself. Twins even. You don't know her, she didn't go to Hogwarts. I met her at St. Mungo's, she's a Healer there."

"I'm not really sure how everything happened, but, well...it obviously did. I was hoping, you know, if you didn't mind, to name them Dean and Thomas. That is assuming they're both boys and all."

He closed his eyes and swallowed against the pain in his chest. "God, Dean. I miss you." He stood up and wrapped his cloak around him. "You were supposed to be here for all of this shit. Who...who do I talk to about being scared out of my mind about having kids? Who do I make their Godfather? It's just not fair."

"Harry and Draco have each other. Hermione and Ron have their family now. Hell, even Neville's got Ginny. It's just not fair. We were supposed to be friends for the rest of our lives. What am I supposed to do now?"

Seamus stood alone in the graveyard, waiting for an answer until the last bit of the sun dipped below the horizon. A cold rain drop landed on his forehead, causing him to look up from his best friend's tombstone. The muscles in his neck groaned from being held stiff for so long.

As the rain began falling, soaking his hair and running down his face, Seamus sent a sad smile to the ground beneath him. "Maybe next year I'll figure out the answer to that."

He began walking back towards the castle in the fading daylight. Closing his eyes briefly, he whispered, "I will always miss you, my friend. I will always love you."